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JEWELLER'S 19-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER TO TURN JAIN NUN IN HYDERABAD

Hyderabad | Agencies

A 19-year-old girl from a rich family in Chittor, who should be enjoying life, modern amenities and fashion, will soon wear only white robes and lead an austere life.

Leaving behind many worldly comforts that her Marwadi jeweller father can provide, Yogitha Surana will not use a fan, light, toothbrush, soap, shampoo or any such material comforts for the rest of her life.

Yogitha, who is the daughter of a Rajasthani Jain, could have managed their family business but she has opted to become a nun for the sake of achieving salvation.

She will turn into a nun at a ceremony that will be held at Jain Samaj in Hyderabad next week.

She said before taking 'deeksha (initiation)' for becoming a nun, she transformed herself from a person with worldly desires to one who wants nothing.

"I had many desires such as wanting to become a pilot, CA, and IAS officer. They kept changing as I was growing up. There was no end to desires. I wanted to detach myself from the desires and worldly comforts. I always wanted to go out of this and attain 'moksha (salvation)' and that is why I am becoming a nun," said Yogitha who was accompanied by her parents Padmaraj Surana and Sapana Surana and elder sister



Bhavna and younger sister Prachi.

Her decision initially came as a shock to her parents. "Later my mother understood and supported me. Subsequently, my father also followed suit. In our community, it is a must for both parents to accept that their child will become a nun out of free will," she said.

"Jainism considers Disha, the process of turning an ordinary person into a Jain nun or monk, the

eight wonder," said Swarupchand Kothari, a community leader. A religious procession with elephants, camels and horses will be taken out in which the girl will be dressed up in her finest clothes for the last time before she transitions to the life of a nun. The ceremony is a long process in Jainism.

"I was groomed with all the spiritual teachings for the past year. Now the final function is a long one and

continues for five days. Nearly 50,000 people are expected to attend it," she said. Yogitha has discontinued her studies. She speaks Hindi, Telugu and English. She said her parents had given freedom to all three daughters to choose whatever they want to do in their lives.

"I want inner peace which is more important than other worldly possessions and comforts," she added.

Bengaluru | Agencies

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Saturday said that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be used to monitor traffic violations in the city.

"More than 6,000 driving licences have been cancelled in the last three years. As per NCRB data, two-wheelers are involved in most of the accidents. It is important that two-wheeler riders compulsorily wear helmets," the Deputy Chief Minister said during his speech on the occasion of National Road Safety Month-24 at Kanteerava Stadium.

He said that one should have confidence but not over-confidence while driving. "Life is precious, follow traffic rules. Don't indulge in footpath riding and signal jumping," the Deputy Chief Minister urged youth, while emphasising the need to impart education about road safety.

The government has also released a handbook called 'Molakeyalu Thiddiri' (correct them in formative years) to create awareness among children about traffic rules, discipline, tolerance, etc.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that during the previous



Congress government, they had introduced 'CM Santwana Harish' scheme to provide immediate treatment to accident victims.

"Population of Bengaluru is increasing rapidly and so is the vehicular population. We are formulating a plan to ease traffic in the city in collaboration with BBMP, Police Department and Transport Department. Traffic management models of other countries are also being studied," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

On eviction of street vendors, the Deputy Chief Minister said that these evictions are happening as per the High Court orders.

"Footpaths are meant for pedestrians and can't be

taken by street vendors. Street vendors will be allowed to do business at a suitable location after valid registrations with authorities. The government is even willing to provide them financial assistance," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

Asked if Priyanka Gandhi will consider contesting from Karnataka or Telangana in the upcoming parliamentary elections, he said, "I don't have any information, nobody has spoken to me about it."

When asked about BJP leaders' allegations that there is no safety in the state, he said, "They are perhaps referring to their rule. We do not support moral policing at any cost."

Delhi records coldest morning with min temp of 3.6 degrees



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid a cold wave, the dense fog engulfed the national capital on Saturday with minimum temperature dropping to the record breaking 3.6 degrees Celsius, four notches below the seasonal average, the India Meteorological Department said. The city, on Saturday morning, was blanketed by dense to moderate fog with lowest visibility of 300 m at Safdarjung at 7:30 a.m., while the Palam recorded 350 m at 8 a.m. 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, a total of 18 trains

were running late by hours due to fog and cold waves.

The IMD said that cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are likely over North India during the next two days while Cold day to severe day wave conditions are likely over plains of Northwest India during next three days and abate thereafter. The IMD also predicted that dense to very dense fog conditions are likely to continue to prevail over North India during the next five days. In its daily bulletin, the weather forecast agency said that minimum temperatures are in the range of 3-7 degrees Celsius over most parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan, in some parts of Uttar Pradesh, south Rajasthan, north Madhya Pradesh and in isolated pockets of Bihar.

With 27% increase in waterbirds, Kaziranga among India's top 5 habitats of resident & winter migratory birds

Guwahati | Agencies

The Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR), India's seventh UNESCO world heritage site famous for its one-horned rhinos, and home to more than 2,613 one-horned Indian rhinos and other animals including tiger and elephants, has recorded a 27 per cent increase in the number of resident and winter migratory waterbirds.

The two-day fifth waterbird census, findings of which were revealed on Friday, conducted through the citizen scientist initiative from January 9 across the 1,302 sq km wildlife reserve, confirmed the presence of 84,839 birds, which was 18,063 more than the number recorded during a corresponding survey in 2021-22. KNPTR officials said that the Kaziranga is now among the top five habitats of waterbirds in the country. Kaziranga's Field Director, Sonali Ghosh, said that this time the bird census was conducted in major wetlands adjoining the tiger reserve along with the water bodies within the reserve. "In the Kaziranga-Hukuma Beel in Biswanath found 3,049 birds while the Joysagar Doloni in Kaliabor recorded 1,765 birds, highlighting their conservation and protection," she said.

Other prominent wetlands adjoining the KNPTR that recorded significant bird presence were Gonak Beel (973), Sahala Beel (424), and Sisubari Beel



(348). The bird census, which was launched by Assam Environment and Forest Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary on January 9, was conducted simultaneously across 115 water bodies in three divisions of the KNPTR. The three divisions are -- Eastern Assam Wildlife, Nagaon Wildlife and Biswanath Wildlife.

In all, 108 enumerators and 354 volunteers as well Forest officials and staff were involved in conducting the survey. During the survey, 37,606 birds across 155 species were recorded in the Eastern Assam Wildlife Division followed by 35,231 birds of 98 species in Nagaon Wildlife division and 12,002 birds across 82 species were spotted in the Biswanath Wildlife Division.

Some of the unique, rare, and endangered species reported during the January 9-10 survey were Baer's pochard, Baikal teal, greater scaup, gull-billed teal, greater white-fronted goose, great crested grebe, Pallas' gull, black stork, black-headed gull, and cotton pygmy goose.

In the first census in 2018, a total of 10,412 waterfowl belonging to 80 different species were recorded in Kaziranga while the second survey in 2020 revealed a total of 34,284 birds belonging to 98 species while 93,491 birds belonging to 112 species were recorded in 2021. According to the officials, with its unique terrestrial and aquatic habitats, Kaziranga is one of the best-protected preserves in the world.

Let Test matches continue with T20, says Sir Clive Lloyd

Kolkata | Agencies

Cricketing legend and former skipper of West Indies cricket team, Sir Clive Lloyd on Saturday strongly pitched for continuation of test matches besides the popular T20 series.

In his remarks at his felicitation programme organised by the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) here on Saturday evening, the legendary cricketer described T20 as an "exhibition" and a test match as an "examination".

"I have no qualms with T20. I would love to see the players earning their money. But I would love to see either three or five Test matches in any bilateral series. I would call a T20 an exhibition and a test match an examination," he said.

Asked what brand of cricket he would like to play if he had his team come here today, he said he would love to play it all.

"The crowd loves their cricket here. But I am a Test match guy," he added.

He also talked about the distribution of money from the ICC so that cricket can flourish and thrive in the



Caribbean, which is a conglomerate of 14 islands.

"This is a plea from me, and let's see what happens," he said.

Sir Clive also did not hide his nostalgia associated with Eden Gardens.

"It is special to return here at Eden Gardens. I had my first match here as Captain. I have so many good memories of this ground. The West Indians love to come to Kolkata for the love that is showered on them. I have felt the same love this time also, and I am overwhelmed. I would like to thank the association for their warmth and love," he added.

Sir Clive was felicitated by the CAB with a gold wristlet with his name engraved on it and the customary blazer.

CAB President Snehasis Ganguly said that his immediate memory that comes to his mind as a flashback is of 1974 when Clive Lloyd came as captain to Eden Gardens.

WHO WARNS OF PERSISTENT THREATS FROM COVID

Geneva | Agencies

Public health risks resulting from the Covid-19 virus remain high globally, with the virus circulating in all countries, a senior expert from the World Health Organization (WHO) said here. According to estimates based on wastewater analysis, the actual circulation of Covid-19 is two to 19 times higher than the number of reported cases, Maria van Kerkhove, the interim director of WHO responsible for epidemic and pandemic preparedness and prevention, told a special briefing in Geneva.

She also expressed concerns regarding the emergence of post-Covid conditions (also called "long Covid") affecting multiple organs. While there has been a drastic reduction in Covid-related deaths since the peak, around 10,000 deaths per month are still reported from



50 countries. Van Kerkhove expressed concerns about the evolving nature of the virus, with the Covid-19 JN.1 variant representing around 57 per cent of global sequences analysed by the WHO. Defined by specific criteria, including symptoms like severe fatigue, lung impairments, neurologic issues, and cardiac impairments persisting for four to 12 months or longer after the acute phase of the disease, the post-Covid condition is a matter of concern, she said.

Estimates suggest that one in ten infections could lead to post-Covid conditions, including severe cases. "No treatments are available yet because it's still so new," van Kerkhove said. "There is insufficient attention and funding dedicated to this area," she added.

She also warned of the rapid increase in the number of influenza infections in the northern hemisphere, with influenza positivity standing at around 20-21 per cent in week 51 of 2023. The expert also emphasized the need for simultaneous flu and Covid-19 vaccination to mitigate the burden on healthcare systems. She also called for more booster vaccination, which is at a low level globally, with only 55 per cent of older adults (over 75 or 80) having received a dose. By the end of December 2023, more than 7 million people had been reported to the WHO as having died from Covid-19.

Amit Kumar praises 'Indian Idol 14' contestant for 'Aake Seedhi Lage'; calls it 'difficult song'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer and actor Amit Kumar was left mesmerised by the performance of the 'Indian Idol 14' contestant Piyush Panwar as he sang the soulful rendition of the song 'Aake Seedhi Lage Dil Pe Jaise', and shared how he used to sing this song in Kolkata during his teen days.

Amit is the son of legendary singer Kishore Kumar. The singing reality show celebrated the life of Kishore Kumar in a special episode titled 'Hum, Aap Aur Kishore', in the presence of Amit.

In a humble tribute to Kishore Kumar, who is widely regarded as one of the greatest and most dynamic singers in the history of Indian music, the contestants sang memorable songs of renowned music composers who have worked with Kishore Da.

Rajasthan's Piyush belted out the song, 'Aake Seedhi Lage Dil Pe Jaise'



from the 1962 film 'Half Ticket', the same way Kishore Da did in the origi-

nal movie, and also acted out the parts. His performance was lauded by

one and all. Complimenting Piyush, Amit said: "This is a very difficult song to sing. I used to sing this song in Kolkata in my teens. The way you sang the song, hats off to you, it was out of the world! But I have one question, why did you choose this song?"

Replying to Amit, Piyush said: "I am a big fan of Kishore Da and I'm familiar with all his songs. When I was given the song list, 'Aake Seedhi Lage Dil Pe Jaise' seemed like a challenge and I wanted to perform it as a playback singer in this two-fold male vocal and female vocal version."

Amit then goes on to reveal how Lata Mangeshkar was supposed to sing the song, along with Kishore Da, but she could not make it for the recording and that's how Kishore Da took up the responsibility of singing both the male and female versions of the song.



NOT BELIEVING IN LORD RAM IS AN INSULT TO CONSTITUTION: DHANKHAR

Jaipur | Agencies

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday said that not believing in Lord Ram is an insult to the Constitution as there is mention of Ram Temple in the Constitution as well.

"Those who do not believe in Lord Ram are insulting the Constitution. Ram Temple is mentioned in the Constitution. If we look at the Constitution, the photos of Lord Ram, Sita and Lakshman are hidden," the Vice President said while addressing a gathering on occasion of World Electropathy Day in Rajasthan's International Center Auditorium.

On newly elected Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, the Vice President said that the future of Rajasthan is in



safe hands today.

"When I came to Rajasthan during the previous government, my helicopter was not allowed to land. The incumbent Deputy Chief Minister Prem Chand Bairwa asked

the District Collector to give us the permission for landing," the Vice President said.

The Vice President was in Rajasthan to attend the seminar on World Electropathy Day which was titled

Rajnath approves Rs 10 lakh insurance for BRO's Casual Labourers

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday approved a proposal to launch a Group (Term) Insurance Scheme for Casual Paid Labourers (CPLs) engaged by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), General Reserve Engineer Force for the ongoing project works.

According to the Defence Ministry this scheme will provide the insured value of Rs 10 lakh as an insurance will be given to the next of kin in case of death of a labourer during project.

"Keeping in view the severe risk posed to the lives of CPLs posted in hazardous work-sites, inclement weather, inhospitable terrain and occupational health hazards, and



considering the deaths occurred, reported during their engagement,"

according to the defence ministry. The provision of insurance cover-

age on humanitarian grounds will prove to be a great morale booster to the CPLs. This scheme will serve as a social security and welfare measure to the CPLs working in remote and far-flung areas of the nation. It will go a long way in securing the livelihoods of their families, it added.

Ministry of Defence said that it may be recalled that Defence Minister recently approved many welfare measures for the betterment of the CPLs. These include, preservation and transportation of mortal remains and Transport Allowance entitlement of the attendant. Enhancement of Funeral Assistance from Rs 1,000 to Rs 10,000. Advance payment against ex-gratia compensation of Rs 50,000 as immediate help in case of death, etc.

INS CHEETAH, GULDAR & KUMBHIR DECOMMISSIONED AFTER 40 YEARS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian Navy Ships Cheetah, Guldar and Kumbhir were decommissioned after rendering four-decades of service to the nation.

The Ministry of Defence said that the decommissioning event was conducted at Port Blair on Friday, where in the National Flag, the Naval Ensign and Decommissioning Pennants of the three ships were lowered for the last time, at sunset.

Cheetah, Guldar and Kumbhir were constructed at the Gdynia Shipyard, Poland as Polnocny class Landing Ships and were commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1984, 1985 and 1986 respectively, official added. The Commanding Officers of the three ships were Cdr V B Mishra, Lt Cdr SK Singh and Lt Cdr J Banerjee respectively.

During the initial years, Cheetah was based at Kochi and Chennai for brief periods, and Kumbhir and Guldar were based at Visakhapatnam. The ships were subsequently re-based at Andaman and



Nicobar Command, where they served till their decommissioning, official added. The Ministry of Defence said that these ships were in active Naval service for nearly 40 years, and collectively traversed about 17 lakh nautical miles, spending over 12,300 days in sea. As the amphibian platforms of the Andaman and Nicobar Command, these ships have conducted over 1300

beaching operations for landing of army troops ashore.

These ships participated in numerous maritime security missions and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations.

Notable among them are their role during Operation Aman as part of IPKF operations and Operation Tasha, a joint operation carried out between Indian Navy and Indian

Coast Guard in May 1990. The operation was to control smuggling of arms and ammunition and illegal immigration across Indian Sri Lankan border. It also made stellar contributions in relief operations post 1997 cyclone off Sri Lanka and the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, official added.

INS Cheetah, Guldar and Kumbhir have left an indelible mark on the maritime landscape and their decommissioning marks the end of a significant chapter of the Indian Navy's history, official added.

The decommissioning ceremony witnessed the presence of esteemed dignitaries, including Air Marshal Saju Balakrishnan, Commander-in-Chief Andaman and Nicobar Command, Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, Flag Officers, former Commanding Officers, and the commissioning crew. The event holds a unique significance as three warships of the same class bid farewell simultaneously, marking the closure of a remarkable chapter in the history of the Indian Navy.

Piyush Goyal rules out lifting export curbs on wheat, rice & sugar

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday ruled out the lifting of the government ban on the export of wheat, rice and sugar.

"There is no proposal as of now to remove export restrictions on wheat, rice and sugar. India will not import wheat or sugar either," Goyal told media persons.

The government has banned export of these essential food items to increase domestic availability and rein in prices which were adding to the inflationary spiral in the economy. As per the official figures, released on Friday, India's retail inflation rose to 5.69 per cent in December up from 5.55 per cent in November with high-



er food prices stretching household budgets.

The figures show that food inflation, which accounts for close to half of the overall consumer price index (CPI), shot up by 9.05 per cent from 8.657 per cent in November. The prices of vegetables,

pulses, spices and fruits rose sharply during the month.

The prices of cereals such as rice and wheat have also gone up by 9.93 per cent while sugar turned costlier by over 7 per cent during the month, as per the official figures.

Drugs valued at Rs 9.43 cr seized in Mizoram & Assam; 3 held

Aizawl/Guwahati | Agencies

The Assam Rifles troops have seized drugs valued at Rs 9.43 crore, Rs 10,500 fake Indian currency, and apprehended three drug peddlers including a woman in this connection in different operations in Mizoram and Assam, an official said on Saturday.

Officials said that acting on an input, the Assam Rifles personnel accompanied by Customs officials recovered 628 gram heroin valued at Rs 4.39 crore from Zokhawthar and 95 cases of foreign origin cigarettes valued at Rs 1.23 crore from Champhai-Aizawl road in Champhai district on Friday night. In the Champhai-Aizawl road raid, a 29-year-old woman was also arrested.

In another operation, the para-military force seized 22,000 highly addictive Methamphetamine tablets



(also called Yaba tablets) valued at Rs 3.8 crore and fake Indian currencies of Rs 10,500, and apprehended two drug peddlers in Assam's Patharkandi in Karimganj district in this connection on Saturday. Officials said that these drugs and the fake Indian currencies were smuggled from Myanmar.

Meanwhile, Major General Vinod Kumar Nambiar,

Inspector General, Assam Rifles (East), met Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma in Aizawl and assured him that Assam Rifles would continue to operate against the move of drugs and contraband and break the drug cartel to which the Chief Minister complimented the efforts of the force and promised outright cooperation by the state government.

Body of ex-model Divya Pahuja recovered from Haryana canal 11 days after murder

Gurugram | Agencies

The body of former model Divya Pahuja, who was shot dead at a hotel in Gurugram earlier this month, was recovered from a canal in Haryana's Fatehabad district 11 days after the murder, police said on Saturday.

"The body in a decomposing state was recovered from the Bhakra canal in Tohana," Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime) Varun Dahiya said. Divya was shot dead in room number 111 of the City Point Hotel located near the Gurugram bus stand on January 2.

According to the police, Divya and Abhijeet Singh, the owner of the City Point Hotel, were in a relationship and the latter her in a fit of rage after she refused to delete some of his objectionable photos from her mobile phone.

Abhijeet's friends -- Balraj Gill, a resident of Sector-5, Panchkula, and Ravi Banga, from Gurudwara Road Model Town, Hisar -- are suspected to have dumped Divya's body.



The police have so far arrested five persons -- Abhijeet, his aides Om Prakash, Hemraj, Balraj and a woman, Megha.

Ravi Banga is still absconding. The woman had helped Abhijeet in discarding the murder weapon,

throwing away documents and other personal belongings of the victim.

Om Prakash and Hemraj had helped Abhijeet drag Divya's body into the boot of a BMW car. Later, Balraj and Ravi fled with the body. Megha told the police that when

she reached the hotel on January 2, she noticed Divya's body. Abhijeet then asked her to dispose of the belongings of the deceased woman, but she was too scared to follow his instructions, sources said.

The police have recovered the BMW car which was used to take the body to Patiala. During questioning, Abhijeet told the police that Divya used to blackmail him and also extorted money.

Divya came in contact with Abhijeet through a jailed gangster, Binder Gujjar, who is believed to be the prime conspirator in the alleged "fake encounter" of gangster Sandeep Gadoli, along with the Gurugram Police, which took place in Mumbai in 2016. Divya was the prime accused in the case. Later, she was arrested in connection with the gangster's murder, and she spent seven years in jail. She was granted bail last year in June by the Bombay High Court. Divya's family has alleged that her murder was conspired by Gadoli's family members, along with Abhijeet.

15 years after Aarushi Talwar's murder, lingering mystery & trail of police lapses

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Fourteen-year-old school student Aarushi Talwar was found dead in her bedroom, with her throat slit and head bludgeoned, at her Noida home on May 16, 2008.

Initially, the Talwar family's live-in servant, Hemraj, bore the brunt of suspicion as the prime suspect until his body, bearing identical injury marks, was found a day later in a pool of blood after two days.

Law enforcement, entertaining the possibility of an honour killing, starting scrutinising Aarushi's parents. Despite their suspicions, no evidence or forensic findings substantiated this theory.

Rajesh and Nupur Talwar, Aarushi's parents, underwent lie detector and narco tests as the police attempted to unravel the perplexing circumstances surrounding the murders. Following the Allahabad High Court's exoneration of Aarushi's parents in 2017, the lingering mystery revolves around the identity of her murderer. Another perplexing aspect is whether the case is genuinely so intricate that neither the Uttar Pradesh Police, nor two CBI teams



could unravel it.

While the CBI has a reputation for successfully resolving some of the world's most challenging cases, the High Court, in this instance, raised doubts about the efficacy of the investigation. As per experts, the case, often described as a classic whodunit, has exposed glaring inadequacies in the investigative and judicial systems.

The local police's initial handling of the crime scene was marred by amateur moves, with family members and neighbours contaminating crucial evidence before the authorities arrived. The Noida police's failure to discover the body of the Talwars'

domestic help, Hemraj, on the terrace only compounded the investigative blunders. Post-mortem and forensic reports also raised more questions than answers, adding confusion to an already complex case.

A startling revelation that has come to light is that the Noida police was so unfocused on the morning of May 16, 2008, because of then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the NCR town. This distraction left lower-ranking officers at the crime scene, which could have botched up a proper probe.

When the call came in regarding the killing of the daughter of a doctor

couple in Jal Vayu Vihar, located in Noida's Sector 25, only the officer in charge of the local police outpost and one or two constables reached the location. In the midst of all this, fundamental policing procedures were overlooked.

"Aarushi's residence was initially not searched, and the surrounding areas were not thoroughly examined. The assumption that their domestic servant, Hemraj, was the culprit arose due to his absence. To locate him, a police team was dispatched not only to Noida and Delhi but also as far as Nepal," said Anil Mittal, a former Delhi Police officer.

"Had the Uttar Pradesh police maintained separate teams for law and order and investigation, the unit arriving on the morning of May 16, 2008, could have focused exclusively on the murder inquiry without concerns about VIP duty," he said.

"This approach would have likely led to the discovery of alcohol bottles, beedis, a cold drink, and three used glasses in Hemraj's room on the same day, indicating that he had visitors," said another retired police official, who did not wish to be named.

Delhi Police arrest two brothers after 24 years in kidnapping case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Crime Branch of Delhi Police has arrested two brothers after 24 years, who were wanted for kidnapping a worker at a shop in the Chandni Chowk area, an official said on Saturday.

The fugitives were identified as Puneet Aggarwal (48) a resident of Gurugram, Haryana, and Vinit Aggarwal (50), a resident of Pitampura.

The officials said that to evade arrest, the fugitives were regularly changing their hide-outs. According to police, on January 29, 2000, information was received at Kotwali police station that one person named Shrinath had been kidnapped from Kinari Bazar, Chandni Chowk, Delhi.

"On January 30, 2000, Shrinath arrived at Kotwali police station with his shop owner and alleged that persons named Suneet Aggarwal, Puneet, and Vinit had kidnapped him from his shop and asked for a ransom to release him. Later, accused persons left him near Tughlak Road, Delhi and fled away," said the Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Ravindra Singh Yadav. During investigation, accused Suneet was arrested in the above mentioned case, however, Puneet did not join the investigation, therefore he was declared proclaimed offender by the court on May 22, 2000.

Vinit was formally arrested in the same



case. During trial, accused persons did not appear before the court and were declared proclaimed offender on October 15, 2004.

The Special CP said that recently specific input was that brothers Puneet and Vinit are residing in the area of Gurugram, and Pitampura. "After tracing their specific locations, raids were conducted at the place of information and Puneet was apprehended from Sector 62, Gurugram and Vinit was apprehended from Pitampura area," said the Special CP. On interrogation, the accused disclosed that to earn easy money, they made a plan to rob the shop owner in Chandni Chowk area. "To execute the plan, they kidnapped a person who was working at that shop and made a demand of Rs 50,000 from the owner of the shop," said Yadav. They further disclosed that after committing crime, they went to Mumbai for 10 years and did not contact anyone.

Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated. Confucius

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INDIA BLOC APPROVES KHARGE AS CHAIRPERSON



Team Absolute | New Delhi

INDIA bloc has approved Mallikarjun Kharge as the chairperson of opposition parties during a virtual meeting on Saturday. However, INDIA bloc is yet to officially announce Kharge's name. Sources said that Bihar Chief

Minister Nitish Kumar was the contender for the post of convener of INDIA bloc. However, during the meeting, he said that someone from Congress should assume the charge. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, former president Rahul Gandhi, senior leader K.C. Venugopal; Bihar Chief Minister

Nitish Kumar along with Lalan Singh and Sanjay Jha; former J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah; RJD President and Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav; NCP Chief Sharad Pawar; Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal; Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin besides other leaders partici-

pated in the virtual meeting. "Appointing a chairperson is just a first step only. There are many challenges ahead for the INDIA bloc. Even several parties of India bloc itself believe that one of the major challenges is the sheet sharing," political experts said. They said that it might be tough for the alliance partners to negotiate the sheet sharing formula in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar. There have also been two meetings of the INDIA bloc to discuss the Delhi and Punjab seat sharing arrangement with both parties saying that the talks are going in the right direction. However, sources said that there are some contentious issues between the two political parties. Congress wants four seats in Delhi and seven seats in Punjab, but AAP is not ready to comply. In both Delhi and Punjab, the ruling party wants the bigger share of seats. Besides, AAP also wants to contest in Goa, Haryana and Gujarat under the sheet sharing formula. INDIA bloc is a group of opposition parties, including the Congress. The parties have come together to take on the NDA, which is led by the BJP, and to prevent it from winning a third straight term at the Centre in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

SRK, Messi asked to appear before consumer commission on April 12



Patna | Agencies

The district consumer commission in Bihar's Muzaffarpur has asked Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan and prominent footballer Lionel Messi to appear before it on April 12 in a case related to an educational institution. Khan and Messi are brand ambassadors of the institution against which a case was filed a person named Mohammad Shamshad Ahmed. Complainant's lawyer S.K. Jha said that Ahmed's two

sons had taken admission to a course in the institution and also "paid the fees for the period they have studied in the institution. As they were not satisfied with the institution, they left the course. Despite that, the institution issued two loans in different categories and asked Ahmed to repay it". Subsequently, Ahmed filed a case in the district consumer commission on October 30, 2023 against the institution. During the hearing, a full bench of the commission chaired by

Piyush Kamal Dixit served notices to seven persons including the institution's Managing Director and brand ambassadors Khan and Messi. They were asked to appear before the bench on January 12, 2024. On Friday, lawyers of Khan and Messi appeared before the commission but failed to furnish the original case documents. Subsequently, the bench asked Khan and Messi to appear before it on the day of next hearing on April 12 with original case documents.

Priyanka Gandhi likely to contest LS polls from K'taka, Telangana

Bengaluru | Agencies

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi is likely to contest on two seats from Karnataka and Telangana during the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Sources said that AICC -- without informing the local Congress unit -- has already conducted surveys in Koppal constituency of Karnataka and is also considering fielding Priyanka Gandhi from another seat in Telangana. Koppal is one of the most backward districts of Karnataka and among the 8 assembly segments, 6 are with the Congress. The survey, undertaken by AICC, has suggested that it is a safe seat for Priyanka Gandhi. Currently, Koppal constituency is represented



by BJP's Karadi Sanganna. Earlier, former prime minister Indra Gandhi had also got political rebirth after

winning the Chikkamagaluru parliamentary seat from Karnataka in 1978. Presently, the constituency is called Udupi-Chikkamagaluru seat represented by Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shobha Karandlaje. Sonia Gandhi contested from Ballary seat in Karnataka in 1999 against late senior BJP leader Sushma Swaraj and emerged victorious after a close battle. Sources said that if Priyanka Gandhi will contest from Karnataka, it will have a positive impact across the state for the Congress as it will galvanise the workers to take on BJP. Earlier, the state Congress leaders had said that any member of Gandhi family should contest from Karnataka which will be beneficial for the party.

NORTH INDIA SHIVERS AS IMD WARNS OF SEVERE COLD WAVE TILL JAN 15

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday said that the lowest minimum temperature of 3 degree Celsius was reported at Narnaul (Haryana), Ayanagar (Delhi) and Kanpur (East Uttar Pradesh). The IMD said that cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are very likely to continue in some parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi till January 15 and cold wave conditions in isolated pockets on January 16. In its daily bulletin, the weather forecast agency also predicted that dense to very dense fog conditions are likely to continue to prevail over North India during the next 4-5 days while cold day to severe cold day conditions are likely over plains of Northwest India during next 4 days and reduction thereafter. The IMD also warned that cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are likely over plains of Northwest India during next three days and improve thereafter. It said that minimum temperatures are in the range of 3-7 degree Celsius



over most parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, north Madhya Pradesh and in some parts Rajasthan and in isolated pockets of Bihar while in the range of 8-10 degree Celsius over many parts of south Rajasthan. "These are below normal by 1 degree Celsius to 2 degree Celsius in many parts of North and adjoining

Central India except over Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan where these are normal to above normal," said the IMD. The IMD also predicted that dense to very dense fog conditions are very likely to prevail for a few hours at night/morning in some/many parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi till January 16 and dense fog in isolated

pockets on January 17. "Dense to very dense fog conditions are also very likely to prevail for a few hours at night/morning in some/many parts of Uttar Pradesh till January 15 and dense fog in isolated pockets on January 16-17," said the IMD. It also said that dense to very dense fog conditions are also very likely to prevail for a few hours in the morning in some parts of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand during Saturday and Sunday and dense fog in isolated pockets on January 15. Issuing an alert, the IMD said that cold day to severe cold day conditions are very likely to continue in some parts of Uttar Pradesh on Saturday and Sunday and cold day in isolated pockets of West Uttar Pradesh on January 15. "Cold day conditions are also very likely in isolated pockets of Bihar on Saturday and Sunday," said the IMD. The IMD bulletin also predicted that ground frost conditions are very likely over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, and east Rajasthan on Saturday and Sunday and over west Rajasthan on Sunday.

SC ISSUES DIRECTIONS IN RELATION TO COMPENSATION IN HIT AND RUN CASES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday issued a catena of directions in relation to the grant of compensation in hit and run motor accidents cases. Comparing the number of hit and run road accidents reported and the number of cases registered for seeking compensation, a bench of Justices Abhay S. Oka and Pankaj Mishra found that negligible number of victims have taken advantage of the Compensation of Victims of Hit and Run Motor Accidents Scheme, 2022. The bench noted that in the last five years, there were 660 deaths in hit and run cases and 113 injury cases, while only 205 claims were received under the Scheme during the financial year 2022-23. "The Standing Committee must look into the causes of non-implementation of the Scheme and direct corrective measures to be taken to ensure that every claimant who is entitled to the benefit of the Scheme is encouraged to take



benefit thereof." The apex court said that "no efforts are made to ensure that the persons entitled to seek compensation file their claims" and appropriate directions will have to be issued. It asked the Standing Committee to issue elaborate directions for developing public awareness and

for sensitisation of the members of the public about the Scheme. Further, it directed the Standing Committee to consider the annual report submitted by the General Insurance Council and to make necessary recommendations to the Union government for the amendment of the Scheme. The Supreme Court said that the Standing Committee may also issue directions for the effective implementation of the Scheme. "We grant the time of four months to the Standing Committee to report compliance with the directions mentioned above to this Court," it added. The Compensation of Victims of Hit and Run Motor Accidents Scheme, 2022 was brought into force with effect from April 1, 2022 superseding the Solatium Scheme, 1989. The 2022 Scheme provides for the setting up of the Standing Committee at the central level to undertake periodic review and to make recommendations to the Central government for the amendment of the Scheme for its better and more effective implementation.

Andhra Deputy CM booked in Hyderabad for derogatory comments on Sonia

Hyderabad | Agencies

The police in Hyderabad have registered a case against Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh K. Narayana Swamy for his alleged derogatory comments on Congress leader Sonia Gandhi. A case was registered at Begum Bazar police station on a complaint by Telangana state Congress senior vice-president Mallu Ravi. Narayana Swamy had made certain comments linking Sonia Gandhi to the death of former Andhra Pradesh chief minister Y.S. Rajasekar



Reddy in a helicopter crash. Mallu Ravi along with some other leaders had lodged a complaint last week. Police had made an entry of the complaint and sent it for legal opinion. After taking legal opinion and analysing video footage of the comments made by Narayana Swamy, police reg-

istered a case under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) and 505 (2) (statements conducing to public mischief). Narayana Swamy had repeated his comments after Mallu Ravi's complaint. He had stated that not just he but the entire population of Andhra Pradesh has doubts about the helicopter crash that killed YSR. He said that TDP president and former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Sonia Gandhi were behind YSR's death.

'No license to bully..' Maldives President makes fresh jab at India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the ongoing row, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, fresh from his China visit, made another indirect jab at India, accusing it of "bullying" his "small" nation. "We may be small but this doesn't give them the license to bully us," he said at a press conference on his return from China, according to a viral video. He also said that the Indian Ocean doesn't belong



to any "specific country" and that Maldives is one of the countries with "the biggest share" due to its large EEZ.

President Muizzu's remarks follow a bad blood between the two countries after three Maldivian ministers made derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi following his Lakshwadeep visit. While the three ministers were dismissed, the incident created tension with various Indian celebrities and companies asking people to avoid visiting the Maldives and taking other action to deter Indians visiting the Indian Ocean archipelago nation.

BJP SWEEPS AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL ELECTIONS IN ASSAM

Guwahati | Agencies

The BJP has swept the 13th North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) elections in Assam, winning 25 out of the 28 seats. Two of the three independent candidates who won seats are rebel BJP candidates. The results of the polls were announced late Friday night. In the 2019 autonomous council elections, the Congress had secured two seats. This time however, neither of the party candidates prevailed. In this year's autonomous council election saw the defeat of candidates from the Trinamool Congress, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the BJP's ally in the Assam Assembly. Prior to the election, the BJP candidates won six of the council's 28 seats without facing any opposition.

On January 8, the remaining 22 seats were put to a vote. According to representatives of the State Election Commission, around 70 per cent of the 1,41,124 voters had cast their ballots. Despite the calm conduct of the election, Trinamool Congress claimed that the BJP prevented voters from exercising their right to vote. Debobal Garlosa was tipped by the BJP to be the autonomous council's Chief Executive Member (CEM). The saffron camp had also fielded some surrendered insurgents. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had claimed responsibility for bringing the militants into the mainstream throughout the campaign and assured that those who turned themselves in would receive skill development training to help them find employment. According to Garlosa, the BJP's campaigns were greatly influenced by the ways in which Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's policies had improved the lives of those living in their council. "Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was also one of the main factors in our win, aside from Modi Ji's development programs. He led us in every scenario and all the major plans are being carried out under his direction," Garlosa mentioned. Trinamool Congress leader Sushmita Dev had said during the election that her party was hoping to win some seats and take the lead opposition position in the autonomous council. After the results, she said they were pleased with the votes they got and that this is a fresh start. "We see this as a positive development. We shall keep fighting for the residents of the NC Hills Autonomous Council in the upcoming years because we have gotten a sizable amount of votes," she told IANS.



Sheena Bora-Das murder case: A sordid saga of love, lust and treachery

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A sensational and cold-blooded murder involving big players that would have gone undetected, was accidentally uncovered in Mumbai around 13 years ago, proving that crime never pays.

The murder grabbed national headlines because it involved big business players, former media executives and was a sordid saga of love and treachery coupled with lust for money and power.

A young executive working for Mumbai Metro One, Sheena Bora-Das, suddenly vanished on April 24, 2012, but strangely a missing person complaint was never filed by her mother Indrani Mukerjea or her mother's husband Peter Mukerjea -- both former media honchos -- and she gradually faded from public memory.

After over two years of Sheena Bora-Das' disappearance, the Mumbai Police acted on a tip-off and kept tabs on Indrani's driver Shyamvar Pinturam Rai. They arrested him on August 21, 2015 in an illegal arms possession case.

During sustained interrogation, Rai spilled the beans on what emerged as one of the most scandalous cases of filicide. Sheena's murder was allegedly masterminded by her mother Indrani, along with her ex-husband Sanjeev Khanna, current husband Peter Mukerjea and the driver Rai willy-nilly becoming a partner-in-crime.

When Sheena came to Mumbai years ago, Indrani had passed her off as her 'younger sister', but the fact that Sheena was actually her daughter came to light only after the murder when Sheena's bitter and shocked brother Mikhail made the stunning revelation.

Given the sensitivity of the case and the sensational elements with potential political implications, the case was probed directly by top Commissioner-level officers of the Mumbai Police.

Over the days, gory and shocking details emerged, ensuring that the crime grabbed headlines for months.

After Rai revealed the family's dirty secret, the police shadowed Indrani, her ex-husband and sub-



sequently, even Peter Mukerjea.

Finally, after gathering witnesses and evidence, the Mumbai Police arrested Indrani in August 2015, and Peter was nabbed after three months, in November 19.

As the probe picked up pace, the police nabbed Indrani's ex-husband Sanjeev Khanna and later also traced her ex-partner, Siddhartha Das, who was purportedly the biological father of Sheena, in September 2015.

The entire real-life blood-curdling saga -- that is more chilling than any Agatha Christie murder mystery -- was laid bare by all the arrested-accused, while the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) entered the scene later and lodged its own FIR and probe.

It was way back on April 24, 2012, that Sheena allegedly took leave and then sent in her 'written resignation' to the company and allegedly even sent a 'break-up' message to her fiancé Rahul Mukerjea -- the son of Peter Mukerjea who was actually Sheena's step-sibling but didn't know that at the time.

Indrani, however, claimed to the Worli Police that her 'sister Sheena', ostensibly apprehensive of Rahul's alleged 'stalking', had quietly left for the US to pursue higher studies, and the matter ended there. In his confession, the driver Rai blew the lid off the sordid abduction-cum-murder of Sheena planned by Indrani in connivance with her ex-husband Khanna. Her husband Peter allegedly connived by surveying a possible spot to dump her

body. Khanna flew down from Kolkata to Mumbai on April 24 and stayed at a Worli hotel. Putting the murder-plan in high gear, Indrani hired a car and asked Sheena to meet her that fateful evening along with Khanna at the Worli hotel.

After Rahul Mukerjea dropped her off in Bandra, Indrani, Khanna and Rai picked her up. Sheena sat in the back seat with her step-dad Khanna. They took her to one of the deserted bylanes in Bandra and he strangled her in the moving car, as per the probe.

Later, they calmly took Sheena's body to Indrani's Worli home, packed it up in a bag and stuffed it in the trunk of the hired car. While Khanna returned to his hotel, Rai spent half the night in the same car with the body lying in the boot.

In the wee hours of April 25, 2012, the trio drove some 85 kms to the Gagode Village in Raigad, and at around 4 am they stopped the car at a desolate spot in the jungle.

Sheena's body -- which was kept in an upright position to avoid police attention en route -- was again stuffed into the bag and they poured petrol over it and set it on fire.

They waited till it completely burnt down and then drove down to Mumbai as if nothing had happened, and Khanna left for Kolkata later that day.

The diabolic deed came to light after nearly three years with Rai's arrest in the illegal arms case, leading to a series of high-profile arrests, stories of falsehoods, deceit, betrayal and the violent end of a young girl.

Now divorced, Peter and Indrani, as well as the killer mom's former husband Khanna secured bail at various points, while Rai has turned an approver in the horrifying case.

As per the CBI probe Indrani allegedly killed Sheena because she disapproved of her relationship with Rahul. She also had financial disputes with Sheena, the agency said.

Nearly 13 years after the merciless murder and nine years after all the accused were arrested, the case continues and the verdict is awaited.

Actor Radhika Apte locked in airport for hours, no access to loo, water



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Radhika Apte today shared her ordeal at an airport when she and other co-passengers were locked inside the aerobridge after the flight was delayed. The actor did not name the city or the airlines.

Sharing photos and videos on Instagram, the 'Sacred Games' actor said that the passengers were put in the aerobridge after the flight was delayed and the airlines staff locked them in.

"Today morning I had a flight at 8:30. It's 10:50 now and the flight has still not boarded. BUT the flight said we were boarding and put all the passengers in the aerobridge and LOCKED IT," she said.

"The passengers with small babies, elderly people have been locked in for over an hour. The security won't open the doors. The staff has ABSOLUTELY NO CLUE," she added. Radhika Apte shared a clip of several people behind a locked glass door. Some of the passengers were seen talking to the security staff in the aerobridge. The 38-year-old Bollywood star said that the airlines informed the fliers that they would be stuck there for at least an hour more.

"now I'm locked inside. AND they just told us that we will be here till minimum 12pm. all locked in. No water no loo. Thanks for the fun ride," she wrote.

The actor said that the airlines staff said the delay was

as the crew had to be changed, and the new staff still hadn't arrived.

"Apparently their crew hasn't boarded. The crew had the change and they are still waiting for new crew but they have no idea of when they will arrive so no one knows how long they'll be locked inside. I managed to escape briefly to speak to the very stupid staff woman outside who kept saying there is no issue and no delay," she wrote.

Radhika Apte last played a cameo in the movie 'Merry Christmas', which stars Katrina Kaif and Vijay Sethupathi. She is known for her work in Sacred Games, Shor in the City, Badlapur, Andhadhun, PadMan and Manjhi - The Mountain Man.

SS(UBT) invites President Murmu for puja at Nashik Kalaram Temple on Jan 22

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) President and former chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said his party would perform a solemn puja at the historic Shree Kalaram Temple in Nashik on January 22 for which President Droupadi Murmu is invited.

"We shall be conducting a special Godatiri Pooja at the Shree Kalaram Temple at Panchvati in Nashik. We have humbly and respectfully invited the President to grace the event," Thackeray told mediapersons. Flanked by party MP and Chief Spokesperson Sanjay Raut, the SS-UBT chief said that after the prayers at the Shree Kalaram Temple,



the party would also organise a huge public rally in Nashik that day. To a question whether he would go

for the 'Pran Pratistha' of the Lord Ram in Ayodhya, Thackeray shot back asking why the President was not invited for that function, and cited a similar precedent of the first President Rajendra Prasad.

"I shall go to pray at the Ayodhya Temple at the appropriate time... Lord Ram is not anyone's private property... We demand from the Centre that the President should be invited to perform the temple's Pran Pratistha ceremonies there on January 22," Thackeray said. Responding to a question, Thackeray hit back asserting that he was a devout Hindu, a strong proponent of Hindutva, and a 'desh-bhakt' (patriot), but not an 'andh-bhakt' (blind follower).

Massive fire engulfs Thane highrise, no casualties

Team Absolute | Thane

A massive fire broke out on the 11th floor of a multi-storied building in the Lodha housing complex here on Saturday, officials said. According to an official of the Dombivli Fire Brigade, the fire was reported from the 11th floor of the Casa Aurelia building, and it quickly spread to several floors above and below. A



team of fire fighters along with water tankers rushed there and managed to douse the inferno in the E Wing of the upcoming Phase II of the housing complex, and now cooling operations have been launched. The cause of the fire -- in which there were no reports of any casualties so far -- is not known and further probe is underway by the police and the fire brigade.

Air Force's Helicopter stunts, Aerial Aerobatics at Mumbai Air show

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Indian Air Force (IAF) on Friday kick-started its "Mumbai Air Show" as part of an outreach programme aimed at creating awareness and fostering a deeper connection between the IAF and the local community.

The IAF, in coordination with the Maharashtra Government, will host the aerial show till January 14 between 12 pm to 1 pm over Marine Drive.

The captivating displays and demonstrations will showcase the skills, capabilities, and professionalism of the IAF, a defence release said.

"The event will comprise aerobatic displays by the Suryakiran Aerobatic Display Team (SKAT) and the 'Sarang' Helicopter display team," a defence release said.

The event would also feature a diverse range of aerial activities, including a flypast and low-level aerobatic display by the Su-30 MKI, freefall and parachute displays by the 'Akashganga' team and C-130 aircraft, said the release.

The one-hour-long aerial display on each day can be viewed from the iconic Marine Drive, a 3km long sea-facing road that curves along the Arabian Sea coast.

Ahead of its three-day aerial display in the metropolis, the IAF conducted preparatory drills in south Mumbai, which showed jets conducting breathtaking aerobatic manoeuvres in the skies. The Suryakiran aerobatic team, after its first display on Friday, posted on social media, "Back again in the city of dreams 'Aamchi Mumbai' after 20 years."

Businessman Anand Mahindra, praising the IAF for its aerial display, wrote on X, "The IAF air show rehearsal in Mumbai today. Precision & Excellence. The approach we should use in every task we undertake. To say that the IAF is inspiring would be an understatement..." (sic) "Mesmerised with the enthralling airshow by Suryakiran Aerobatic Team in Aamchi Mumbai," actor R Madhavan wrote.

In view of the 'Mumbai Air Show 2024', the Mumbai Traffic Police has made traffic arrangements which will be in place from 9 am to 5 pm today.

Meanwhile, two runways of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport will also remain closed from 12 pm to 1 pm on January 13 and 14.

"Passengers are urged to verify their scheduled flights with their respective airlines before heading to the airport during these days," the CSMA posted on X.



'Love, not lust': Bombay HC grants bail to man who had sexual relations with minor

Team Absolute | Nagpur

The Bombay High Court has granted bail to a 26-year-old man charged with raping a 13-year-old girl, holding that the sexual relationship between them was out of "love, attraction and not lust".

The accused, hailing from Amravati, was booked and jailed for raping the minor girl three years ago, and the court said that she stayed with the man at several places without complaining of any sexual assault.

Noting that the girl was a minor and her consent was not relevant, Justice Urmila Joshi-Phalke said that she had given her statement to the Investigation Officer which showed that she left home on August 23, 2020, on the excuse of buying a book, went missing and had joined the accused voluntarily, and also admitted her love for him.

Justice Joshi-Phalke, of the court's Nagpur Bench, said that it was apparent she was in the company of the accused petitioner, and both were mutually in love.



The accused was nabbed by personnel of the Anjangaon police station in Amravati on August 30, 2020, the charge sheet was filed on October 26, 2020, but there was no progress in the trial. Later, he applied for bail, which has been granted, after the court said that "no purpose would be served by keeping him behind bars".

The complaint was lodged by the minor girl's father, who said that after she went missing, they tried to trace her after which they approached the Anjangaon police, who tracked her with the accused in Bengaluru and nabbed him.

Teen, missing for 20 months, found living with man

Team Absolute | Latur

A 17-year-old girl was rescued by the police 20 months after she was reported missing by her family in Maharashtra's Latur district, an official said on

Saturday. Based on a complaint lodged by the girl's family, the police had registered a case under section 363 (kidnapping) of the Indian Penal Code in 2022, the official said.

Using cyber cell inputs, the anti-human trafficking unit traced the girl to Dharashiv district, where she was living in a village with a man, he said, adding that the teen was rescued on Friday and brought to Latur.

"I Had To...": Uddhav Thackeray on why he skipped INDIA bloc's virtual meet

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday didn't attend the virtual meeting of the opposition INDIA bloc citing a scheduled programme. He also said the party had already informed (the opposition bloc) about its inability to attend the meeting.

"There shouldn't be any misunderstanding in this regard. I have expressed my inability to attend the meeting as I had to attend a scheduled programme which involved a lot of moving around. In such a scenario, attending the meeting would have been difficult," Thackeray said.

Leaders of the bloc met virtually and discussed various aspects of the alliance and the preparations for the Lok Sabha elections, due in April-May.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) leader is visiting the Kalyan-Dombivli Lok Sabha constituency, cur-



rently represented by Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde, son of Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde.

As many as 28 opposition parties have come together under the banner of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) to take on the BJP in the coming Lok Sabha elections.



Constantly inspect the jails and focus on rehabilitation of prisoners: CM Dr. Yadav

Ensure alternative arrangements for meat vendors and DJs. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav reviewed law and order in the division level meeting in Shahdol

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav instructed the collectors to continuously inspect the jails and ensure better arrangements in them. Focus on rehabilitation of prisoners lodged in jails and also provide them legal aid if necessary. The Chief Minister has directed that strict action should be taken against criminals who continuously commit crimes. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav was reviewing arrangement for law and order in the divisional level meeting at divisional headquarters Shahdol. Reviewing the efforts to ban illegal sale of meat in the open, Chief



Minister said that municipalities should make alternative arrangements for meat sellers and provide them safe places to sell meat. The Chief Minister also directed that efforts should be made to ensure that the employment of DJs is not affected. ADGP Shri D.C. Sagar informed about the innovations made to maintain better law and order in Shahdol division.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that all collectors should

conduct surprise inspection of departments and bring transparency and efficiency in departmental work. He directed not to harass anyone unnecessarily during surprise inspection but to motivate the officers and employees to do positive and result oriented work. The Chief Minister directed that efforts should be made to stop crimes in the tribal dominated remote areas of the state. He said that the fear of police should be

removed from the minds of common people, officers and employees of the police department should make positive efforts in this direction. Inspire and encourage the youth to do positive work.

In the meeting, Minister Kunwar Vijay Shah, Minister of State (Independent Charge) Cottage and Village Industries Minister Shri Dilip Jaiswal, MP Himadri Singh, President of Women Finance Development Corporation Amita Chapra, District Panchayat President Prabha Mishra, MLA Jaisingh Maravi, Meena Singh, Manisha Singh, Shiv Narayan Singh, Sharad Kol, Additional Chief Secretary Ashok Varnwal, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister. Raghavendra Singh, Commissioner Gopalchandra Daad, Forest Conservator Shahdol Lakhn Singh Uike and other public representatives and senior officials were present.

"I Am A Former Chief Minister, Not A Rejected One": Shivraj Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Amid speculation about what he and the BJP are planning for his future, Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said he is addressed as a former chief minister but is not a rejected one, and that people's love for him has remained strong despite stepping down from the top post in Madhya Pradesh.

"I'm now addressed as the former chief minister, but I'm not a rejected chief minister. Many times, chief ministers quit the post when people start abusing them for being in power for too long.

But, even after quitting the chief minister's post, people shout for me and call out 'Mama' wherever I go. The love of the people is my real treasure," Chouhan, whose popular nickname means uncle, said while addressing an event at the MIT School of Government in Pune on Friday.

"Stepping down from the chief minister post doesn't mean that I will leave active politics. I am not in politics for any post, but for serving the people," the BJP's longest-serving chief minister said.

Speaking about his long electoral career, starting with his maiden assembly polls triumph from his home seat of Budhni in 1990, Chouhan attributed his victories to contesting elections honestly.

"I don't speak the language of arrogance. I have won 11 elections but I don't campaign for myself in the elections.

I go to the constituency just a day



before filing the nomination, when the people of the village come to me with money and a list of contributors. If you contest elections honestly, people will side with you," he asserted.

The remarks come a month after Mohan Yadav was named the chief minister in Madhya Pradesh and not Mr Chouhan, who was looking for a fifth term. The BJP had swept the elections in the state, winning 163 out of 230 seats despite being in power there for nearly 20 years.

Soon after the results were declared on December 3 and there was a buzz about a new face becoming the next Madhya Pradesh chief minister, Chouhan had said, "While other BJP leaders are going to Delhi, I won't go to Delhi. I would prefer dying rather than going to Delhi to ask something for myself."

Cryptic Remarks

The former Madhya Pradesh chief minister has also hit the headlines for a few cryptic comments made over the past few weeks. Just a few days after Dr Mohan Yadav replaced him, Chouhan had said "Sometimes one gets 'vanvas' (exile) while a 'raj tilak' (coronation) is imminent, but whatever happens actually takes place for a bigger purpose."

A few days later, while addressing a spiritual organisation's event in Bhopal, he had said, "There are also people who change their colour if one isn't the chief minister anymore. They treat his feet like a lotus, but once he isn't in power, then his pictures disappear from hoardings like horns from the head of a donkey."

BHEL bags Rs 15,000 cr EPC contract from NLC India for Odisha project

Team Absolute | Chennai/Bhopal

Integrated lignite and coal mining and power generation company NLC India Ltd has awarded over Rs 15,000 crore engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract to Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) for 2,400 MW pit head green field thermal power project in Odisha, the two companies said. In a regulatory filing, NLC India said the 2,400 MW(3x800 MW) pit head power project will come up at Jharsuguda District in Odisha based on Ultra Super Critical Technology. EPC contract scope includes engineering, manufacturing, supply, erection and commissioning of equipment such as boilers,



turbines, generators, balance of plants and others. "The entire power of 2,400 MW is tied up with the states of Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Kerala and Puducherry and PPAs (power purchase agreement) already executed," NLC India

said. The coal linkage is available from 20 MTPA Talabira II & III OCP mines of NLC India which is already operational from the year 2020 in Jharsuguda and Sambalpur districts of Odisha. The water required for the project is

linked from Hirakud Reservoir. Boilers will be designed to suite the co-firing of Bio mass as part of Green initiative. The first unit of project is scheduled for commissioning in the FY 2028-29.

Being a pit head thermal power project, the variable cost will be competitive and NLC India, will be generating and providing low-cost power to its beneficiaries, the company said. According to BHEL, the equipment for the project will be manufactured at its Trichy, Haridwar, Hyderabad, Jhansi, Bengaluru, Ranipet, Bhopal, Rudrapur and Varanasi plants.

As to the order size, BHEL said: "In excess of Rs 15,000 crore excluding taxes & duties."

Allotment of Rs 200 crore for the improvement of roads of urban bodies

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Urban Development and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargya has sanctioned the allocation of Rs 200 crore under Kayakalp scheme for the improvement of roads of urban bodies in the state. Departmental Minister Vijayvargya has directed that the amount allocated to the civic bodies should be delivered soon. Commissioner Urban Development Bharat Yadav has asked the officials of urban bodies to prioritise road maintenance within

their jurisdictions. Urban Development and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargya, during the review of departmental schemes in Bhopal instructed the officials to ensure that citizens in urban areas get basic facilities with no compromise in quality. He said that the roads in the urban areas should be according to the expectations of the general public.

Minister Vijayvargya has said that road construction should be undertaken on priority in the bodies where approval has been given

under Kayakalp scheme. Under the scheme an amount of Rs 200 crore has been approved. Earlier, an amount of Rs 350 crore was released by the department under Kayakalp Scheme.

In the meeting, Urban Development Minister Vijayvargya had given instructions to the departmental officers to ensure that the employees working in the civic bodies continue to get regular salaries and honorarium.

The department has transferred an amount of Rs 226 crore 74 lakh as octroi

compensation to the urban bodies. Minister Vijayvargya has given instructions to utilize this amount for the right purpose. Minister Vijayvargya met representatives of urban areas during his recent visit to the state. During his visit, he learnt about problems regarding salary and honorarium. It is in this context that this amount has been released. There are a total of 413 urban bodies in the state. Of these, the number of Municipal Corporations is 16, Municipal Councils are 99 and the number of City Councils is 298.

Students from Bhawan's College, Mumbai visited AIIMS Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On 13th January, 2024; a group of 65 students of BA & MA Psychology visited Department of Psychiatry at AIIMS Bhopal. The said educational tour was organised on the request of Dr Kranti Gowali, Prof. & Head, Department of Psychology, Bhawan's College, Andheri West Mumbai. This tour was coordinated by Dr Vijender Singh, Prof. & Head, Department of Psychiatry & his team. This educational tour was planned to assist exposure of graduate and post graduate student of psychology to make them aware of the treatment facilities at AIIMS Bhopal for persons with mental illnesses. The group of students along with their teachers who accompanied the group, visited patient care areas like outpatient & inpatient department of psychiatry and interacted with psychiatrists and clinical psychologists posted in the department.



The group also visited Student Wellness Centre (SWC) at AIIMS Bhopal, to be aware of the kind of services being offered in SWC. Dr Kranti Gowali, also had a brief meeting with Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director AIIMS Bhopal in presence of Dean

(Academic) and HOD Psychiatry AIIMS Bhopal.

The group of students provided their feedback about the facilities and kind of services rendered by department of psychiatry and they deeply appreciated it.

Youth dies due to bike slip

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Youth riding a bike was seriously injured due to bike slip in Ratibad police station area and died. Police station said that 20 year old Ajay's father Amar Singh, living in village Rasulia Pathar, used to do private work. Last night around 12:30 he was returning home on bike after completing his work. On the way, suddenly his bike went out of control and slipped on the main road of village Bajaria. Due to the bike slipping at high speed, Ajay fell on the road along with the bike and was dragged. He suffered fatal injuries in the accident. With the help of people passing by, he was taken to the hospital for treatment but by then he had died. Police arrived on information received from the hospital, established a route and handed over the body to the family members after the PM. Police are conducting further investigation into the accident.

Case of simultaneous dismissal of 6 women judges, Supreme Court takes suo motu cognizance

Team Absolute | Jabalpur

The Supreme Court on Friday took suo motu cognizance of the dismissal of 6 women judges by the government in Madhya Pradesh. A bench of Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice Sanjay Karol appointed advocate Gaurav Aggarwal as amicus curiae to assist the court in this case. In fact, taking a big decision in Madhya Pradesh, 6 women judges were dismissed from their jobs together. These women judges were accused that they were not working properly.

The government said that all these 6 women judges were not able to do satisfactory work. In such a situation, the government dismissed all these 6 women judges from their jobs. The Law and Legislative Affairs Department of Madhya Pradesh has taken this big action. In such a situation, the Supreme Court, taking suo motu cognizance, has appointed advocate Gaurav Aggarwal as amicus curiae.



It is being told that the dismissal of these women judges was recommended in the administrative committee meeting and full court meeting of Madhya Pradesh High Court. On the basis of this recommendation, Madhya Pradesh government has taken the decision. All these women were posted in different districts of the state. After dismissal from services, a notification in this regard has been issued in the Gazette.

CM Dr. Yadav congratulated on Makar Sankranti, Lohri, Pongal, Bhogli Bihu and Paush festival.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has congratulated the people of the state on Makar Sankranti, Lohri, Pongal, Bhogli Bihu and Paush festival. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav has said that the culture and tradition of our country gives the message of unity in diversity and our relationship with nature. These festivals celebrated in different regions of the country define the unity in diversity of our country. On this occasion, Chief Minister Dr. Yadav has wished for the happiness and prosperity of all the people of the state and development of the state and the country.

21st World Rose Convention 2028 will be held in Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Social Justice, Disabled People's Welfare, Horticulture and Food Processing Minister Narayan Singh Kushwaha inaugurated the 43rd All India Rose Exhibition at the Rose Garden in Bhopal on Saturday. Praising the work of Madhya Pradesh Rose Society, he said that it is a matter of pride for the state and the country to host the 21st World Rose Convention 2028 in Bhopal. Minister Kushwaha said that Madhya Pradesh Rose Society along with the Horticulture Department has been organizing All India Rose Exhibition for the last 43 years. Many nurseries and rose growers participate in it. This is a good initiative. He said that the Horticulture Department is also



doing remarkable work in the state. The state ranks first in the country in the production of many horticultural crops.

Minister Kushwaha congratulated the participants in the rose exhibition. He said that the rose garden has been prepared by the Horticulture Department. The officers and employees of the Horticulture Department are working hard in this. Rose Garden is the pride of

Bhopal. The inauguration program of the two-day rose exhibition was organized by Additional Chief Secretary Horticulture and Food Processing J.N. Kansotiya also addressed. He said that he comes to the rose exhibition every year.

He said about moving forward in the field of production and processing of horticulture crops in the state. Director Horticulture Nidhi Nivedita gave information about departmental schemes and programs. At the beginning of the program, President of Madhya Pradesh Rose Society, Lakshmi Maheshwari gave the welcome address. Treasurer of World Rose Society, Sushil Prakash also addressed the program. Trophies and certificates were given to the winners selected in various categories.

Police station Civil Line Dewas selected in top 10 among all the police stations across the country

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Every year, the Home Ministry of the Government of India evaluates all the police stations in the country and selects the ten best police stations. In the same sequence, in the year 2023, Police Station Civil Line, District Dewas has been selected among the 10 best police stations of the country. After evaluation based on crime prevention, law and order situation, disposal of old cases, community policing, conviction of crimes and field survey, Police Station Civil Line, Dewas has been ranked tenth out of 16955 police stations across the country.

This was announced by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) at the All India Director General of Police Conference, New Delhi. DGP Sudhir Kumar Saxena, who came to participate in the said conference, gave this information.

Expressing happiness over this achievement, DGP Sudhir Kumar Saxena congratulated Dewas District Superintendent



of Police Sampat Upadhyay and all the staff. He has given instructions to the Superintendents of Police to make other police stations of Madhya Pradesh also excellent.



'The White Lotus' season 3 adds 5 to cast, including Christian Friedel



Los Angeles | Agencies

The White Lotus' Season 3 has added five new cast members. Milos Bikovic, Christian Friedel, Morgana O'Reilly, Lek Patravadi and Shalini Peiris have all joined the highly-anticipated new season of the series. They join previously announced new cast members Leslie Bibb, Dom Hetrakul, Jason Isaacs, Michelle Monaghan, Parker Posey,

and Tayme Thapthimthong, reports Variety. It was also announced that 'The Gilded Age' star Carrie Coon is joining Season 3, while Natasha Rothwell will return to the show in a reprisal of her role from Season 1. As per Variety, the show is set to begin production in and around Koh Samui, Phuket, and Bangkok, Thailand, in February. Exact plot details are being kept under wraps aside from the fact it will follow a new group of guests at a White Lotus resort property. Mike White created 'The White Lotus' and

serves as executive producer and director. David Bernad and Mark Kamine also executive produce. HBO has partnered with the Tourism Authority of Thailand to support the filming and promotion of the third instalment. 'The White Lotus' proved to be an immediate hit for HBO when it debuted in 2021. The first season, set in Hawaii, received 20 Emmy nominations and ten wins, including best limited or anthology series. The second instalment, which premiered in December 2022 and was set in Sicily, earned 23 Emmy nominations, including best drama series.

Bruno Mars' 13-year relationship with girlfriend Jessica Caban is 'on the rocks'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Bruno Mars' long-term relationship is reportedly "on the rocks." The 38-year-old singer has been dating model Jessica Caban for 13 years, having started their relationship back in 2011. The 41-year-old is said to have spent Christmas and New Years away from Bruno, amid the reports about their shaky relationship, reports Mirror.co.uk.

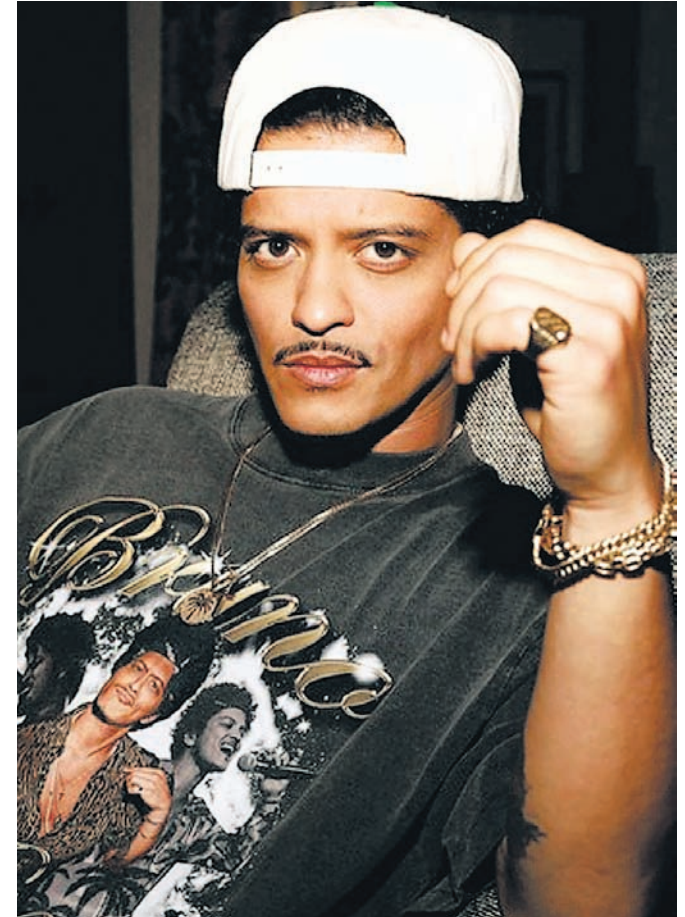
Sources told The Sun: "Bruno Mars and Jessica barely spend time together anymore - it is really sad. They are living separate lives so it doesn't bode well for their relationship. It feels like things are fizzling out between them." "They have so much history together but we aren't sure whether they will be able to save things this time," an insider explained.

As per Mirror.co.uk, Bruno Mars is currently performing in Tokyo but is set to return to the US to perform in Los Angeles.

The couple started dating when the 'Just The Way You Are' hitmaker saw Jessica in an NYC restaurant and decided to introduce himself. They tend to keep off social media and were said to be living in Hollywood Hills with their dog Geronimo.

Bruno usually stays quiet about his romance with the model, but told Rolling Stone that he was "happy" with her, but seemingly

had no plans to propose. When asked if he'd get down on one knee, he seemed taken aback and said: "Jesus! She's my best friend. My rock. What's wrong with that? We're just happy".



Ariana Grande's music makes me feel empowered: Selena Gomez



Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-actress Selena Gomez is a true fan of Ariana Grande's music. The 'Only Murders in the Building' actress (31) made a guest DJ appearance on SiriusXM Hits 1 and gushed about how the 'Thank U, Next' singer (30) has a catalogue of songs that always put her in a great mood.

Before playing Grande's 2019 single '7 Rings', Selena confessed, "Here's another song I love, Ariana Grande. I cannot do anything fun without listening to Ariana," reports 'People' magazine. "I feel so empowered, and I think she is incredible, and I just have so much fun," the Rare Beauty founder continued of her fellow pop star. "I'm the girl that's playing Ariana all the time, and I think people kind of notice that, but I love it! I think she's amazing."

As per 'People', more than three years after Ariana Grande released her latest album 'Positions', the 'Wicked' star returned Friday with a high-energy new single, 'Yes, And?' with an accompanying music video.

Ahead of the song's release, the 'Dangerous Woman' hitmaker shared a fun teaser on Instagram showing several people gossiping about her comeback. "Real exclusive, typical Ari" one said, while another added, "I think I liked her better when her ponytail was a few centimetres higher."

As others joined in to discuss rumours surrounding Grande, who's dating actor Ethan Slater, another individual said: "Well I read it on the internet so it must be true." Earlier this week, Gomez revealed in an Instagram Story that she was taking a break from social media "for a while" and "focusing on what really matters."



Tom Cruise is 'working on Top Gun 3' with new production despite contract with rival studio

Seoul | Agencies

Hollywood star Tom Cruise is working on 'Top Gun 3' with Paramount, despite his huge deal with a rival studio.

The 61-year-old actor, who is best known for starring as IMP agent Ethan Hunt in much-loved franchise 'Mission: Impossible' and Pete Mitchell in 'Top Gun', is developing a new sequel of the latter, reports Mirror.co.uk.

As per reports, Tom is working alongside Paramount to produce a new 'Top Gun' movie, despite having just signed a deal with Warner Brothers.

Just a few days ago, Tom and Warner Brothers' chief David Zaslav shook hands when they announced the 'Mission: Impossible' star was being brought in as a key producer for several franchise films with the iconic film studios.

As per Mirror.co.uk, despite him now working with rival studio Warner Brothers, Tom is working on a new 'Top Gun' movie with Paramount, with "a script being written" by Maverick writer Ehren Kruger.

The likes of Miles Teller and Glen Powell are all expected to return for the third instalment of the hit movie franchise. Although the news of a new 'Top Gun' sequel has only just emerged, 'The Hollywood Reporter' has said "the reality is this sequel has quietly been in development since late fall."

They also said that fans should not expect to see the new 'Top Gun' movie in the near future, because the legendary action-movie actor is currently working on an 8th 'Mission: Impossible' movie, "which will keep him occupied until at least its release, currently set for May 2025."

This comes after Tom signed a deal to develop and produce theatrical films with Warner Bros. Discovery. The movies that he will work on will also star him, with the deal dubbed as a "strategic partnership".

Jonathan Majors dropped from Dennis Rodman movie after assault conviction

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actor Jonathan Majors has lost a buzzy upcoming film role after his recent assault conviction.

The actor will no longer be playing controversial basketball player Dennis Rodman in a film with the working title '48 Hours In Vegas', reports Variety.

The film is set to document the true story of the Bulls' power forward's notorious trip to Las Vegas in the middle of the 1998 NBA finals. CNN first reported the news.

Lionsgate is also no longer involved with the project, as the studio released it back to the producers to find a new partner.

As per Variety, Phil Lord, Chris Miller and Aditya Sood will produce for Lord Miller, and Ari Lubet, Will Allegra and Rodman will executive produce. Jordan VanDina is set to write the screenplay.

Majors was convicted on December 18 of two misdemeanour counts of harassment and assault during a domestic dispute with his former partner, Grace Jabbari. He is set to be sentenced on February 6 and faces up to a year in jail, but he could also be sentenced to a lesser punishment, like probation.

Sources close to Amazon say Majors is also no longer in discussions for the studio's development project 'Da Understudy', which Spike Lee had been in early talks to direct. Marvel Studios dropped Majors from future projects on the same day as the conviction.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Michelle Keegan



HOCKEY OLYMPIC QUALIFIERS: FRANCES DAVIES' BRACE HELPS NEW ZEALAND BEAT ITALY 3-0

Ranchi | Agencies

Two late penalty corner conversions helped New Zealand overcome Italy 3-0 in the opening Pool B match in the women's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers at the Marang Gmke Jaipal Singh Astro Turf Stadium here on Saturday.

Frances Davies scored a brace off penalty corners and Stephanie Dickins struck the third with a direct attempt off a short corner as New Zealand started their campaign on winning note. However, they were not at their fluent best.

New Zealand dominated possession (57% to 43%) made 18 circle penetrations to just seven by the Italians, had 15 shots on target as compared to only two by their rivals and earned seven penalty corners, converting three of them, as against two by Italy.

But for most of the match, they were denied by a resilient Italian defence after Francis Davies scored off their first penalty corner in the seventh minute.

They failed to add to the score in the next 45 minutes of the match before salvaging the result with two late goals. Davies got her second goal of the match when he scored off a nice penalty corner variation while



Stephanie Dickins scored a minute later with a direct attempt off their seventh penalty corner.

New Zealand got off to a good start as they led 1-0 by the end of the first quarter. Frances Davie scored off a rebound in the seventh minute for the Black Sticks women after the initial attempt off their first penalty corner.

Frances Davies deflected into the goal the second attempt by a forward as the Italians used the video referral for a raised ball. The verdict came in favour of New Zealand and the goal stood. Italy were also hampered as Sofia Laurito and Maria Inaudi sat in the sin-bin with green cards. They did create one good attack but could

not capitalise on it.

Italy were a bit more competitive in the second quarter and did not allow the Black Sticks Women many chances. New Zealand did earn back-to-back penalty corners at the stroke of the half-time -- skipper Olivia Merry's attempt off the first one hit a defender's foot while the second one was not cleanly stopped. New Zealand went into the break leading 1-0.

Italy earned a penalty corner in the third quarter but could not capitalise on it as the attempt to bring the New Zealand made it 2-0 in the 53rd minute off a penalty corner when Stephanie Dickins

passed the ball behind her back off the first battery to Frances Davies for a neat variation and the 27-year-old defender swept the ball home past a stunned Italian defence.

A minute later, Stephanie Dickins made it 3-0 as she struck home a strong drag flick off their third penalty corner for New Zealand.

Though the late surge gave some respectability to the scoreline, New Zealand were not at their best in this match. Italy did create some good chances but could not capitalise on that. All in all, the Black Sticks should be happy to have started the tournament on a winning note.

Malaysia Open: Satwik-Chirag script history, enter finals

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies

World No. 2 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty etched their names in history, scripting a remarkable comeback to secure their place in the men's doubles final of the Malaysia Open Super 1000 tournament.

Their triumph over Korea's Kang Min Hyuk and Seo Seung Jae not only showcased their resilience but also marked a historic milestone as the first Indians in any discipline to reach the final of the Malaysia Open in the Open Era, which spans back to 1983.

Ranked World No. 2, the dynamic duo displayed their exceptional form from the preceding year, where they had already clinched six titles. Their prowess on the court was on full display as they faced an 11-18 deficit in the second game but rallied to register a gripping 21-18, 22-20 victory, sealing their passage to the final in emphatic fashion.

The Bukit Jalil Axiata Arena in Kuala Lumpur bore witness to this historic feat, with fans eagerly following live updates and cheering for the Indian contingent. Satwik-Chirag's journey through the Malaysia Open 2024 became a beacon of pride for Indian badminton, underscoring the nation's growing influence on the global badminton stage. As they advanced, the duo's achievement illuminated the resilience and determination that defines their partnership, setting the stage for a thrilling final showdown. Their synchronized efforts and strategic brilliance ensured a swift and decisive win over their



Korean counterparts, leaving an indelible mark on the prestigious tournament.

However, the badminton narrative unfolded with a mix of triumph and disappointment for India. While Satwik-Chirag soared to new heights, their compatriots Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto on Friday faced an unfortunate exit in the women's doubles quarter-finals on Saturday, succumbing to Japan's R Iwanaga and K Nakanishi.

Chinese pairs win two golds at WTT Star Contender Doha

Doha | Agencies

Chinese pairs clinched men's and women's doubles titles at the World Table Tennis (WTT) Star Contender Doha 2024, as two singles and mixed doubles events of the tournament will feature all-Chinese finals.

In the women's doubles final, China's Qian Tianyi/Chen Xingtong, who edged top seed Wang Manyu/Chen Meng earlier, encountered a bit challenge in the third set in their convincing win over Adina Diaconu/Maria Xia 11-3, 11-1, 11-9, reports Xinhua.

"We are glad to win our first gold in 2024, but we still must concentrate on the following singles match. We played our style smoothly in the first two sets, but our opponents made some changes during the third set, which did give us some trouble," said Chen.

"I think the key point for us to win is good teamwork; we have been cooperating for years and understand



each other very well. We also fully prepared for any difficulty before this match," added Qian.

Later on Friday, China's Liang Jingkun/Yuan Licen secured a 3-1 win over compatriots Wang Chuqin/Ma Long in the men's doubles final. "I'm so happy to win the trophy. We fought hard and tried our best," said Liang. Chinese paddlers secured all berths in the men's and women's singles semifinals. For the men's

side, Lin Shidong will face Liang Jingkun, Lin Gaoyuan will meet Wang Chuqin. Sun Yingsha will face Wang Manyu, and Chen Meng will play against Qian Tianyi in women's singles.

Elsewhere, Wang Chuqin/Sun Yingsha will face Lin Shidong/Kuai Man in the mixed doubles final.

The semifinals and finals for the men's and women's singles and mixed doubles will take place on Saturday.

Australia Open: Coco Gauff eyes "double-digits" Grand Slam goal

Melbourne | Agencies

At just 19, the American phenom Coco Gauff, already a Grand Slam champion, spoke with unyielding determination about her aspirations to clinch "double digits" of Grand Slam titles, setting an ambitious goal that fueled her relentless pursuit of excellence.

Gauff, whose journey into the Grand Slam scene began at the tender age of 15, expressed her desire to achieve multiple Grand Slam victories, highlighting the dynamic nature of her goals. After securing her maiden Grand Slam triumph at the US Open in the previous year, defeating Aryna Sabalenka in a memorable final at the Arthur Ashe Stadium, Gauff's hunger for success showed no signs of abating.

In a pre-tournament press conference, Gauff shared her mindset, stating, "I would say double digits would be pretty awesome. I don't know if it will happen, but I think that's a high goal." The young tennis prodigy emphasized that setting lofty goals served as a powerful motivator, propelling her beyond perceived limits and pushing her to continually elevate her game.



"I think setting my goals high pushes me beyond what I think I can do." While some players might find themselves at a crossroads after achieving a Grand Slam victory, Gauff's vision extended far beyond a singular triumph. "Some players' goal

is to win a Grand Slam. Once they reach that, it's kind of, 'What's next?' For me, I always knew I wanted to win multiple," she affirmed, articulating a hunger for sustained success that underscored her commitment to the sport.

In an earlier reflection on her aspirations, Gauff had expressed the audacious goal of becoming the "greatest of all time," a pursuit that required resilience and a forward-looking mindset. Despite the challenges and pressure that come with such lofty ambitions, Gauff revealed her ability to focus on the future, using past achievements as stepping stones rather than dwelling on them.

"It was kind of easy to forget about it. Not 'forget'. I think that's the wrong word. Maybe just put it in the past and look forward to the future instead of dwelling on the past," Gauff added.

The young champion's confidence received a significant boost with her recent triumph at the ASB Classic in Auckland, where she overcame Ukraine's Elina Svitolina in a thrilling final. Gauff's path to the final included notable performances in the semis of the China Open and the WTA Finals, where she faced formidable opponents in Iga Swiatek and Jessica Pegula, respectively.

As the Australian Open beckoned, Gauff stood at the crossroads of potential glory, facing Slovakia's Anna Karolina Schmiedlova in the first round.

West Indies are quite clear on playing eleven for first Test against Australia, says Kraigg Brathwaite

Adelaide | Agencies

West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite said the visitors are quite clear over the make-up of their playing eleven for the first Test against Australia happening at the Adelaide Oval on January 17.

In the practice game against Cricket Australia XI at the Karen Rolton Oval, wicketkeeper-batter Joshua Da Silva hit a century on the last day while Kavem Hodge and Justin Greaves were amongst the runs, with fast-bowler Shamar Joseph also impressing everyone with his spells.

"(I'm) quite clear on the XI. Very happy with how all the guys went about the camp (and) went about this game. This time next week it's about making West Indies proud. (Da Silva) took it with both hands, the opportunity to open, and he batted for a long period which is what you want in Test cricket so that was good to see."

"Very pleased with how (Hodge) showed he (could) come again in the second innings and do it. That's what we want," Brathwaite was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo, to reporters after the game



ended. From the team which played in the 2022 Test tour of Australia, only Brathwaite, Kumar Roach, Alzarri Joseph, Joshua Da Silva and Tegenarine Chanderpaul are in the West Indies team for the tour in the 2023/24 season. "(You can talk about) different spells you would have faced, how the

pitches played, there's a lot of information shared."

"Obviously Kumar Roach leading the young bowling attack with experience of similar, how the Kookaburra ball reacts off these types of pitches, the lengths, especially with the new ball is very important," added Brathwaite on Roach putting his vast experience of 79 Tests into use in the two-game series against Australia.

West Indies arrived in Adelaide on December 30 and spent two weeks in preparation and adjusting to the conditions for the opening Test against Australia. The focus is also on taking the catches well, an aspect where Pakistan faltered during their 3-0 Test series loss in Australia last week.

"Catching is very important, especially here in Australia. The pitches get quite a bit of bounce so especially the slip fielders have to be sharp. That's something the fielding coach speaks about, (but) we've got to keep working hard."

"Having the time to practice here in Adelaide, get accustomed to the pitches and stuff, think that was great for us. As a team we are very pleased. The facilities here are outstanding and the boys made good use of them," concluded Brathwaite.

Second half goals give Barcelona Super Cup semifinal win to set up Clasico final

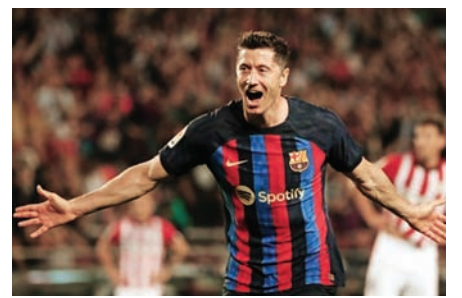
Riyadh | Agencies

FC Barcelona will play Real Madrid in the final of the Spanish Supercup on Sunday after beating Osasuna 2-0 in second semifinal.

Second half goals from Robert Lewandowski and Lamine Yamal gave Barcelona the result that will no doubt please TV rights holders and organisers as it gives the second 'Clasico' of the season after Real Madrid's 5-3 win over Atletico Madrid on Wednesday, reports Xinhua.

Barcelona were far from brilliant, but created more chances than their rivals.

The first half began at a ferocious pace, with Jose Arnaz almost setting up Ante Budimir in front of the Barcelona goal, while at the other end Ferran Torres shot just wide from outside the penalty area. Osasuna responded quickly with right back Jesus Areso shooting across the face of goal, before Lewandowski shot tamely at keeper Sergio Herrera as Barca launched a quick break. All of that happened in the first 15 minutes, after which Barca took control of the ball and began to build up possession, but without the speed to cause prob-



lems to a well-organised Osasuna defense. Lewandowski headed wide from a corner, before Yamal had to replace Raphinha, who pulled up with a muscle problem, with the young winger setting Lewandowski up for another chance that was blocked by Herrera on the stroke of halftime. There was little change to the script in the second half, but Barca took the lead after Ilkay Gundogan's through ball for Lewandowski to score. After Raul Garcia was inches away from volleying in a spectacular equalizer, Joao Felix showed his quality with a run to set up Yamal to beat Herrera for Barca's second goal.

VIJAYVEER SIDHU WINS SILVER AND PARIS 2024 OLYMPICS QUOTA PLACE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In yet another history making result for Indian Sport Shooting, Vijayveer Sidhu won silver in the men's 25m rapid-fire pistol (RFP) at the on-going Asia Olympic Qualification Rifle/Pistol in Jakarta, to give India their 17th Paris 2024 Olympics quota place, the first time ever that the squad has clinched all possible (four) Olympic spots in the 25m pistol events.

The Chandigarh lad got 28-hits in the final, to finish behind Kazakh Nikita Chiryukin, who shot 32 for gold, while also taking home the second available Paris quota in the event. Jong-Ho Song of Korea was third.

"Yes, I am very very happy. We trained very hard in the camps and also after coming here. The range is quite similar to the Delhi range. I am not too happy with my qualification score and we know the areas we need to work on after we come back, but very happy with the way I shot the finals. I want to dedicate this to my parents, family and friends and of course to my coaches for the support," said Vijayveer after prize distribution.



India now has a tally of 11 gold, 10 silver and seven bronze medals for the continental qualifiers and are quite a distance ahead at the top over second placed China. Vijayveer Sidhu's quota place was confirmed even before the first bullet was fired in the final. With a rapid-fire round of 289 on Saturday morning, Vijayveer totalled 577 in the qualification round to finish fourth among the 31 medal contenders in fray. The Kazakh topped here too with a good solid 584 while the Korean Song was second and Japan's Dai Yoshioka was third. Two more Koreans made up the top six finalists. Korea had already exhausted their two-quota limit in earlier competitions and the Japanese Dai was also a Paris quota holder before entering this competition. That qualified Nikita and Vijayveer for the two available Paris spots. The Indian then had a great start to the 40-shot (eight series of five rapid-fire shots) final, scoring four-hits in each of his first four series. Nikita meanwhile posted two fives in the first four to surge to the top. Vijayveer then shot three and four in the next two to claim sole second for the first time, one ahead of Song, as the rest of the field narrowed to three. Song faltered in the seventh series with just one hit to confirm Vijayveer's silver as there was no catching Nikita.



Shehnaaz Gill, Rubina Dilaik, Karan Kundrra, Jasmin Bhasin send Lohri greetings to fans

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actors Shehnaaz Gill, Karan Kundrra, Jasmin Bhasin, Rubina Dilaik, Karan Wahi, and Shraddha Arya have extended their warm greetings to the fans on the auspicious occasion of Lohri.

Shehnaaz, who rose to fame with her stint in 'Bigg Boss 13' took to Instagram, and shared a series of candid happy pictures, wherein she can be seen sitting in a car, and sporting a wine maroon coloured suit, with golden dupatta.

She captioned the photos as: "Always maintaining your vibrant smile as bright

because the mild of the holy bonfire. Happy Lohri".

Karan took to X (formerly Twitter) and wrote: "Lohri diyaan lakh lakh wadhaiyaan".

Jasmin took to Instagram Stories and uploaded a beautiful picture of herself from her upcoming project 'Warning 2'. She captioned it "Happy Lohri".

Rubina, who is currently enjoying the motherhood phase, took to Instagram Stories and dropped an adorable picture with her husband and actor Abhinav Shukla, and her twin daughters Jeeva and Edhaa.

She captioned it as: "Lohri Special", followed by red heart emoji.

Karan shared an awwdorable picture with his furry friend, and captioned it as: "Happy Lohri". We can also spot a bonfire, and Lohri delicacies in the photograph.

Shraddha shared heartwarming Lohri greetings, and said: "Wishing everyone a very Happy Lohri. May everyone be blessed with prosperity, happiness and good wealth."



Radhika Apte, co-passengers locked in the aerobridge at Mumbai airport

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Radhika Apte, who is known for 'Andhadhun', 'Badlapur', 'Parched' and others, had a rather turbulent morning on Saturday even before she boarded her flight to an undisclosed location. The actress along with other passengers was stuck in the aerobridge waiting for their flight.

On Saturday, the actress took to her Instagram and shared pictures showing her ordeal at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport.

She penned a long note in the caption as she shared what all went behind the incident.

She wrote: "I had to post this! Today morning I had a flight at 8:30. It's 10:50 now and the flight has still not boarded. BUT the flight said we were boarding and put all the passengers in the aerobridge and LOCKED IT! The passengers with small babies, elderly people have been locked in for over an hour. The security won't open the doors."

She further mentioned: "The staff has ABSOLUTELY NO CLUE! Apparently their crew hasn't

boarded. The crew had the chance and they are still waiting for a new crew but they have no idea of when they will arrive so no one knows how long they'll be locked inside."

She added: "I managed to escape briefly to speak to the very stupid staff woman outside who kept saying there is no issue and no delay :) now I'm locked inside AND they just told us that we will be here till minimum 12 p.m. all locked in. No water, no loo. Thanks for the fun ride."

SUNNY DEOL REMINISCES ABOUT LOHRI OF 'SIMPLER TIMES', MOM'S SWEETS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Sunny Deol has reflected upon the warmth of Lohri, reminiscing sweet memories of the celebrations. He extended greetings to his fans on the festival.

Taking to Instagram, Sunny, who enjoys 3.5 million followers shared a happy picture of himself enjoying the festival.

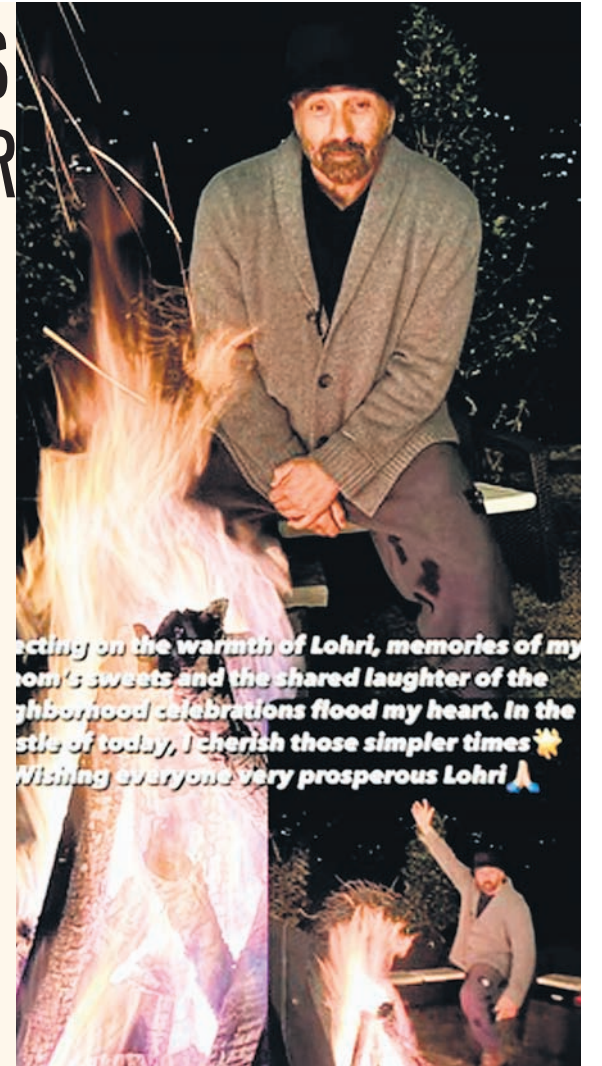
He can be seen dancing in front of the Lohri fire, wearing a grey long sleeves cardigan, black tee shirt, grey joggers, and a black bucket cap.

The 'Tridev' actor penned a heartwarming note, which read as: "Reflecting on the warmth of Lohri, memories of my mom's sweets and the shared laughter of the neighbourhood celebrations flood my heart. In the hustle of today, I cherish those simpler times...Wishing everyone very prosperous Lohri."

In 2023, Sunny marked a historic success with his action movie 'Gadar 2'.

Meanwhile, he has joined forces with actor Ayushmann Khurrana for 'Border 2'. The film, helmed by J.P. Dutta's daughter, producer-writer Nidhi Dutta, is expected to start shooting in the first quarter of 2024.

He also has 'Baap', 'Lahore 1947', and 'Soorya' in the pipeline.



Reflecting on the warmth of Lohri, memories of my mom's sweets and the shared laughter of the neighbourhood celebrations flood my heart. In the hustle of today, I cherish those simpler times...Wishing everyone very prosperous Lohri 🙏

Rupali Ganguly stands for 'Anupamaa' characters, says 'Pulling down human being is disgusting'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Rupali Ganguly, who plays the lead in the show 'Anupamaa' has expressed disappointment on the social media hate towards the other characters of the show and said one should not pull down a human being who is just doing their job. The show which stars Sudhanshu Pandey, Madalsa Sharma and Gaurav Khanna in pivotal roles, has recently taken a five year leap. The drama, which has a huge fan following since its commencement in 2020, is receiving hate comments on the internet regarding some of its characters.

One user shared a snippet and wrote: "Ye kis tarah ke bache hai who ignore their mothers like this? These kinds of nalaik and heartless kids Anupamaa ko hi kyu mile hai?"

Another fan said: "I don't understand how a child can see their mother after 5 years and be so cold."

On noticing such several hate comments on the social media, Rupali took to X (formerly Twitter) and penned a series of tweets.

She wrote: "Each and everyone who is here on #Anupamaa has connected to some character or the other in this show ... How does liking one character or actor give you the right to pull other characters down? Every actor is doing their best and every actor is important to the storyline!"

The actress known for her work in 'Sanjivani: A Medical Boon', further said that one should not pull down a human being who is just doing their job.

"Supporting ur favourite character and criticizing a character u do not like is understood but to pull down a human being who is just doing their job is disgusting especially by people who don't even have the guts to have their pic on their DP or their real identities," she said.



VETERAN CLASSICAL SINGER PRABHA ATRE PASSES AWAY AT 91 IN PUNE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Legendary classical singer

Prabha Atre passed away following a brief illness at a private hospital here on Saturday, family sources said.

Prabha was 91 and had complained of some breathing issues, but succumbed when she reportedly suffered a cardiac arrest while being rushed to a private hospital this morning. Conferred the Padmashri

(1990), Padma Bhushan (2002) and Padma Bhushan (2022), plus many other national-international honours, Prabha was an exponent of the Kirana Gharana music school, excelling in rendition of khayals, thumris, ghazal, dadri, bhajans and natyasangeet.

Prabha had penned books on music composition -- 'Swarangini' and 'Swaranjane', is credited with inventing new Raagas like 'Apurva Kalyan', 'Madhur Kauns', 'Darbari Kauns', 'Patdeep-Malhar', 'Shiv Kali', 'Tilang-Bhairav' and 'Ravi Bhairav'.

She composed music for a full-length dance recital 'Natyaprabha', a music composition adapted for jazz by a top Netherlands artist, and also created music for musical-dramas or sangeetikas.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Alaya F