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## IPL 2024: League is back with new captains, big returns



**New Delhi:** Shortly after season two of the Women's Premier League (WPL) ended with a trophy for the Royal Challengers Bangalore, the cricket fans' focus immediately shifted to whether the franchise's men's team can do the same in Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024.

It's that time of the year again when ten teams will be competing over two long months to grab the glittering IPL trophy, with passionate fans debating over who will go all the way to the title by May-end.

The IPL 2024 will be commencing with a highly anticipated clash between Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and defending champions Chennai Super Kings (CSK) at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Friday.

A day before the clash, CSK pulled off a surprise by announcing Ruturaj Gaikwad as its captain, thus replacing the talismanic M.S. Dhoni, who has been subject to adulation whenever the team played its matches in IPL 2023, on their way to winning their fifth title.

## MS DHONI HANDS OVER CSK CAPTAINCY TO RUTURAJ GAIKWAD

**New Delhi:** Right-handed opening batter Ruturaj Gaikwad will be the new captain of Chennai Super Kings ahead of their IPL 2024 season opener against the Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Friday.

"MS Dhoni has handed over Chennai Super Kings' captaincy to Ruturaj Gaikwad ahead of the start of IPL 2024. Ruturaj has been an integral part of Chennai Super Kings since 2019 and has played 52 matches in IPL during this period. The team looks forward to the upcoming season," said the franchise in a statement on its official website.

This will only be just the second time MS Dhoni won't start an IPL season as skipper of CSK, after Ravindra Jadeja had been the captain in IPL 2022, only for him to be replaced mid-way by the legendary wicketkeeper-batter.

# ED ARRESTS DELHI CM ARVIND KEJRIWAL IN LIQUOR POLICY CASE



**Team Absolute |** New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday evening arrested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the liquor policy case, hours after the Delhi High Court rejected his plea seeking protection from

## KEJRIWAL KNOCKS SC'S DOORS

**New Delhi:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday knocked Supreme Court's doors after the Delhi High Court denied him protection against "coercive action" by the Enforcement Directorate, which has issued multiple summonses to him in connection with the excise policy case.

Earlier on Thursday, a division bench of Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Manoj Jain of the Delhi High Court declined to pass any order granting interim relief to CM Kejriwal at this juncture.

Last week, the ED issued the ninth summonses to Kejriwal in the excise policy case, asking him to appear before it on Thursday.

The Chief Minister had moved the high court seeking protection against 'coercive action' by the ED, claiming that there is a clear intent to arrest him and hence he won't appear before the agency.

'coercive action' by the agency, which has

## ARVIND KEJRIWAL IS AND WILL REMAIN CHIEF MINISTER": ATISHI

**New Delhi:** Arvind Kejriwal will continue as the Delhi Chief Minister and discharge his duties from jail, the Aam Aadmi Party said today minutes after he was arrested in connection with the Delhi liquor policy case. "Arvind Kejriwal is and will remain the Chief Minister of Delhi... there are no two ways about it," said AAP's Atishi, who is currently his Number 2 in the government. "We made it clear from the beginning that he will work from jail if need be. There is no law that stops him from doing so. He has not been convicted," she added.

Calling the arrest a "political conspiracy", she said in two years, they have not been able to recover a single rupee, even though more than 500 officers were on the case.



served repeated summonses to him.

The AAP chief was arrested after over two hours of questioning by an ED team, which included a Joint Director, at his residence.

Earlier in the day, the Delhi High Court refused to grant Kejriwal any interim relief.

## Kejriwal will run govt from prison: Delhi Assembly Speaker

**New Delhi:** Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel said on Thursday that as decided earlier, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will run the government and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) from prison in case of his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Incidentally, soon after the Speaker made the remarks, the ED arrested Kejriwal from his residence after a two-hour grilling in connection with the alleged excise policy scam.

"Everyone is aware that Manish Sisodia was arrested without any evidence against him. Additionally, hundreds of people have been detained by the ED so far. The aim is to silence Arvind Kejriwal before the elections," said Goel.

Kejriwal is the biggest name to be arrested in the alleged scam, after BRS lawmaker K. Kavitha, former Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, and AAP RS member Sanjay Singh, among others.

## WHY ED ARRESTED ARVIND KEJRIWAL

- ▲ The ED in a press note had called Kejriwal a "conspirator" in the case.
- ▲ Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha allegedly conspired with Mr Kejriwal, and AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh while framing the now-scrapped liquor policy case, the ED has said.
- ▲ The alleged conspiracy involved making a policy that would benefit a liquor lobby from southern India, which the ED had called the "South Lobby".
- ▲ In return, the "South Lobby" would give Rs100 crore to the AAP, according to the ED.
- ▲ Kejriwal's name had appeared in the statements of some accused and witnesses. The ED has mentioned this in its remand note and chargesheets.
- ▲ Vijay Nair, one of the accused in the liquor policy case, frequently visited Kejriwal's office, and would spend most of his time there, the probe agency said.
- ▲ Nair allegedly told liquor traders that he discussed the policy with Kejriwal. It was Nair, who got Indospirit owner Sameer Mahendru to meet Kejriwal, the investigators have said.
- ▲ When the meeting was unsuccessful, he got Mahendru and Kejriwal talk in a video call, in which -Kejriwal said - Nair was his "child" who he trusts.
- ▲ Raghav Magunta, the first accused in the "South Lobby" and now a witness, had said his father, who is a YSR Congress Party MP, met Kejriwal to know more about the liquor policy.
- ▲ Sisodia's former secretary C Arvind in a statement in December 2022 had said that in March the previous year he got a draft group of ministers report from Sisodia.
- ▲ When he went to Kejriwal's house after Sisodia called him, Arvind said he also saw Satyendra Jain there and the document. He alleged he was surprised because no such proposal was discussed in any group of ministers' (GoM) meeting, but claimed he was asked to make a GoM report based on this document.

## Disrespecting Indira, Rajiv Gandhi's legacy: Anand Sharma on Rahul's caste census stand



**Team Absolute |** New Delhi

Congress veteran Anand Sharma, a member of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), has raised strong objections to the party's Lok Sabha election campaign centered around the caste-based census, calling it a "departure from the historic position and also amounting to disrespecting the legacy of former Congress PMs Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi".

Recalling the inclusive and all-encompassing approach of the Congress party, Anand Sharma cited popular slogans by Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi and said that the party's current stand will come as an indictment of previous Congress governments. Also, it will give political opponents of Congress a handle to throw muck at it.

"Na Jaat Par na paat par, Mohar lagegi haath par," Sharma quoted Indira Gandhi's clarion call of 1980.

He further quoted Rajiv Gandhi's historic call as the Opposition leader in the Lok Sabha in 1990, where the former PM said, "We have problems if caste is defined to enshrine casteism in our country. We have problems if casteism is going to be made a factor for Parliamentary

and Assembly constituencies. The Congress can not stand by and watch this nation being divided."

Meanwhile, The Congress party, led by its top brass including party President Mallikarjun Kharge, senior leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi and Treasurer Ajay Maken held a press conference in the national Capital on Thursday and protested strongly against the party's funds being frozen by the Income Tax Department, allegedly with the blessings of the ruling dispensation at the Centre.

"The freezing of Congress funds is a criminal action and it has been done with the blessings of the country's top leadership. It is a clear attempt to cripple our election campaign," former Congress President, Rahul Gandhi said.

MP Rahul Gandhi told the Press that the party doesn't have money to fund its campaigns. "We don't have money to buy train tickets, we don't have money to send our leaders for campaigns," he said. The senior Congress leader also questioned the timing and quantum of punishment and stated, "For an old case of Rs 14 lakh, the government has imposed a penalty of Rs 200 crore."

## MP CM Mohan Yadav distributed Samosas to the workers

**Team Absolute |** Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav suddenly stopped the car on the roadside and reached a hotel. Started distributing samosas kept in the hotel to the people standing around him. People were also stunned to see this form of the Chief Minister surrounded by workers and people. The Chief Minister also paid the amount of samosas to the hotel operator. The video of him distributing samosas to the workers is going viral.



front of the BJP office in the residence. Started distributing the samosas kept in the hotel to the people present there. People had also reached there in large numbers. After that, after having tea with the MP, he left for Jabalpur.

## 80 pc Indian workers feel drained when they have a lot of meetings

**Team Absolute |** New Delhi

About 80 per cent of Indian employees have said that they feel drained on days when they have a lot of meetings to attend, a new report revealed on Thursday.

According to the Australia-based software firm Atlassian Corporation, 90 per cent of Indian workers find it hard to get their work done on top of attending all their meetings.

"Teams that revert to old ways of working and schedule meetings without intentionality are going to see themselves fall behind effective teams who experiment and take advantage of dynamic async tools like Loom and Confluence," said Dom Price, Work Futurist, Atlassian.

The report surveyed 5,000 knowledge workers in India, the US, Australia, Germany and France (1,000 per market).

The report revealed that meetings are ineffective, with workers agreeing that meetings fail to accomplish their goals 60 per cent of the time.

Workers cited time spent in meetings as the number one barrier preventing them from completing their day-to-day tasks, which is ranked ahead of lack of motivation, unclear goals, unclear responsibilities, and unsure of who to work with.

About 70 per cent of Indian workers said they feel lonely at work, even when they attend lots of



meetings, compared to 55 per cent globally.

Around 82 per cent of workers believe most of their meetings could be done in half the time, the report noted. As per the report, 74 per cent of Indian workers have to work overtime at least a few days a week due to meeting overload, compared to 51 per cent globally.

## SBI files fresh compliance affidavit in SC disclosing all details of Electoral Bonds

**Team Absolute |** New Delhi

In a latest affidavit filed on Wednesday, the State Bank of India (SBI) told the Supreme Court that it has disclosed all the details of the Electoral Bonds which are in its possession and custody to the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The compliance affidavit sworn by SBI Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara stated that the name of the purchaser, the denomination and specific number of the bond, the name of the political party, last four digits of the bank account number of political parties, and the denomination and number of the bond encashed, have now been revealed.

"The complete bank account numbers and KYC details of the political parties are not being made public as it may compromise the security of the account (cyber security). Similarly, KYC details of purchasers are also not being made public for security reasons...SBI has not disclosed all details and no details (other than complete account numbers & KYC details) have been withheld from disclosure," the affidavit said.

The SBI handed over two sealed



envelopes afresh to the poll body on Wednesday containing all details regarding purchasers of the Electoral Bonds and all details as regards the political parties who have encashed these Bonds.



## WE'RE GOING TO TAKE SERIOUS VIEW: SC REBUKES TN GOV FOR REFUSING TO ADMINISTER OATH TO PONMUDI AS MINISTER

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday took strong exception to Tamil Nadu Governor's refusal to administer the oath to K Ponmudi as a minister in the state Cabinet.

"What is your Governor doing? The conviction of a minister has been stayed by the Supreme Court and the Governor says that 'I will not swear him in.' You tell the Governor that we will have to make some observations now. Please tell the Governor that we are going to take a very serious view of it," a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI), DY Chandrachud, told Attorney General (AG), R Venkataramani, the highest law officer of the Centre.

"How could the Governor say - after the Supreme Court has stayed the conviction - that his re-induction is against constitutional morality? We give time to the Governor till tomorrow. Mr. Attorney General, if we don't hear from you in a positive manner tomorrow, we will pass an order directing the Governor to act in accordance with the Constitution. We want to avoid that situation by giving the Governor an opportunity to set the constitutional position right," added the Bench, also comprising



Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra.

AG Venkataramani said that he was not justifying the Governor's action and would come back after looking

into the file and having a word with Governor RN Ravi.

He wondered if the relief sought could be granted in an interlocutory application filed by the state govern-

ment in a pending writ petition filed against the Governor.

Posting the matter for hearing on Friday, CJI Chandrachud said, "Mr. Attorney General, we are seriously concerned about the conduct of the Governor in the state. This is not the way because he is defying the Supreme Court of India. The two-judge Bench of the SC stayed the conviction. The Governor has no business to tell us that this does not wipe out the conviction and is non-existent."

"The Governor better be informed that when the Supreme Court of India has stayed the conviction, the law has to follow its course. We are deeply concerned with the manner in which this matter has proceeded at the level of Governor."

Former Higher Education Minister, K Ponmudi, had to relinquish his post after the Madras High Court convicted him in a Disproportionate Assets case in December last year.

The Supreme Court later stayed his conviction, following which Chief Minister, MK Stalin, sent a request to the Raj Bhavan for re-inducting Ponmudi as a minister in the state Cabinet. However, Governor RN Ravi refused to administer the oath of office to Ponmudi.

## Govt warns social media influencers against endorsing offshore online betting, gambling

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Thursday advised all endorsers and influencers on social media to refrain from promoting or advertising, including surrogate advertisements, of offshore online betting and gambling platforms.

According to the ministry, these advertisements have significant financial and socio-economic implications of online betting and gambling on consumers, particularly the youth.

The advisory cautioned that failure to comply with it may lead to proceedings under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, including removal or disabling of social media posts or accounts and penal action under the applicable statutes.



Further, the ministry has advised online advertisement intermediaries not to target such promotional content towards the Indian audience.

Social media intermediaries have also been advised to conduct sensitisation efforts among their users to refrain from publishing such content. Moreover, the ministry has reiterated the advisory by the Central Consumer Protection

Authority (CCPA) dated March 6, 2024, which had expressed concerns regarding endorsements of betting/gambling platforms by celebrities and influencers to endorse and promote their betting activities, and had cautioned that any such direct or indirect advertisement or endorsement shall be subject to rigorous scrutiny.

## Budaun murders: Second accused arrested from Bareilly

Badaun (UP) | Agencies

Uttar Pradesh Police arrested Javed, the second accused in the Budaun double murder case, from Bareilly on Thursday.

Javed was on the run after the murder of two children on Tuesday evening. His brother and the main accused Sajid was gunned down in a police encounter within two hours of the incident.

Javed was arrested on Thursday, said IG Bareilly range R K Singh.

In a video after his arrest, he is heard saying, "I ran straight to Delhi after the incident and from there I have to come to Bareilly to surrender. I have received phone calls from people about what my brother did."

He claimed that he had no idea why his brother committed the crime. He said he fled



because he feared for his own life.

Javed is now being brought to Budaun for further interrogation.

## RBI issues new rules for self-regulatory organisations of banks, NBFCs

Mumbai | Agencies

The RBI on Thursday issued an omnibus framework for recognising self-regulatory organisations (SROs) for its regulated entities such as banks, NBFCs and housing finance companies.

The omnibus SRO framework prescribes the broad objectives, functions, eligibility criteria and governance standards, which will be common for all SROs, irrespective of the sector.

The framework also lays down the broad membership criteria and other terms and conditions to be followed by the SROs for grant of recognition by the Reserve Bank.



The framework states that an SRO is expected to adhere to a set of overarching objectives for betterment of the sector they represent, foster advancement and address critical industry concerns within the broader financial system.

In particular, an SRO is expected to achieve the following objectives:

- Promote a culture of compliance among its members by encouraging progressive practices and conventions. Special attention must be given on extending guidance and support, particularly to smaller entities within the sector.
- Act as the collective voice of its members in engagements with the Reserve Bank, government authorities or other regulatory and statutory bodies, in India.
- Collect and share relevant sectoral information to the Reserve Bank to aid in policy-making.
- Encourage a culture of research and development within the sector to encourage innovation while ensuring the highest standards of compliance and self-governance. The RBI also said that existing SROs that have already been recognised shall continue to be governed by the terms and conditions under which they were recognised, unless this framework is specifically extended to such SROs.

## MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL SIGNS AN AGREEMENT WITH GURNANI RESORTS & HOTELS



Jaipur | Agencies

Marriott International, Inc. today signed an agreement with Gurnani Resorts & Hotels to introduce its globally acclaimed The Ritz-Carlton brand in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Anticipated to debut in January 2028, the 250-key resort will bring its legendary service and classic

modern design to the iconic 'Pink City of India'. The Ritz-Carlton, Jaipur is set to elevate the city's luxury hotel landscape with its destination-inspired design and highly personalized service. Jaipur, with its honeycomb-inspired palaces and towering forts, stands as one of India's architectural wonders. Nestled amidst the vibrant city, The Ritz-Carlton

Jaipur is poised to offer travelers a sanctuary of royal luxury intertwined with culturally rich local experiences. The resort's planned location enjoys superb connectivity to key tourist attractions via NH48, with historical landmarks like Amer Fort, Hawa Mahal Palace, The City Palace, Nahargarh Fort, and the iconic Jantar Mantar all conveniently located within

a 50-minute drive from the resort. This strategic location ensures that guests can easily immerse themselves in Jaipur's rich heritage and explore its fascinating history at leisure.

Anticipated to feature 250 modern guest rooms and suites, plans also call for the resort facilities to include The Ritz-Carlton Lobby Lounge, a destination spa, replete with an indoor pool, six eclectic casual and fine dining restaurants and bars and state-of-the-art meeting and event facilities. With artfully designed spaces, reflective of the history, heritage and natural environment of the destination, the brand will bring its legendary service and elegant aesthetic to Jaipur, one of India's most coveted destinations making for a culturally immersive stay.

## J&K SEPARATIST'S DAUGHTER DISTANCES HERSELF FROM FATHER'S IDEOLOGY

Srinagar: Sama Shabir, the daughter of jailed separatist leader Shabir Ahmad Shah, on Thursday distanced herself from her father's ideology and declared allegiance to India as a citizen of the country.

Through a public notice published in a local newspaper, 23-year-old Sama Shabir called herself a loyal citizen of India as she distanced herself from her father's Democratic Freedom Party and its ideology.

In the notice, she said, "I am a loyal citizen of India and I am not affiliated to any person or organisation which is against the sovereignty of the Union of India." Shabir Shah is presently lodged in jail in connection with a money laundering case related to terror funding in Kashmir.



## B'uru: Law student commits suicide by jumping in front of Metro train

Bengaluru | Agencies

A student of the National School of Law here on Thursday committed suicide by jumping in front of a Metro train at the Attiguppe Metro Station, the police said.

The deceased has been identified as Dhruv Thakkar, aged around 20 years, from Mumbai, the police said, adding that preliminary investigation has suggested the incident to be a case of suicide.

DCP S. Girish, West Division, Bengaluru city, after conducting an inspection on the site of the incident, told the media that Dhruv Thakkar was a first-year student at the National School of Law in Bengaluru.

"At this stage, it appears as a case of suicide and further investigation will have to be conducted to ascertain why he committed suicide. We are checking CCTV footage and statements will have to be recorded," the police officer said.

Earlier, the Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRC) had said: "This is to inform that one person has jumped in front of the train at Attiguppe station at 2.10 p.m." According to sources, the head and body of the youth were found severed. His body got stuck under the Metro train as



his body was dragged by the running train. The deceased had come to the station with a female and male friend.

Eyewitnesses told police that Dhruv Thakkar was talking on a mobile phone, and when the train came, he suddenly jumped onto the track in front of the train.

## LALIT SHARMA BECAME THE ADVOCATE OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Jaipur: Advocate Lalit Sharma, resident of Girdharpura village of Dausa district, has been appointed by the Ministry of Law and Justice of the Government of India as the Advocate of the Central Government (Government of India) in the Rajasthan High Court. After this appointment, Lalit Sharma will advocate in the Rajasthan High Court on behalf of various ministries of the Government of India.

Lalit Sharma has been appointed for three years from his joining. On this important responsibility given by the Central Government, he said that he will try to live up to this responsibility. He also expressed his gratitude to the Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and the successful Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi for this appointment.

## Even before finalisation of INDIA bloc's seat sharing formula in Bihar, RJD gives tickets to three candidates



Patna | Agencies

Even as the INDIA bloc's seat sharing formula has not been finalised in Bihar, the RJD has given tickets to three candidates for the Lok Sabha elections.

RJD national president Lalu Prasad gave tickets to three candidates on Wednesday evening while one will be given the same on Thursday, party spokesperson Chitranjan Gagan said.

Electorate in Bihar will vote for the first phase of Lok Sabha elections on April 19, and the filing of nomination papers is currently underway since Wednesday.

The party has given ticket to Kumar Sarwajeet to contest from Gaya reserved seat. Kumar Sarwajeet was the agriculture minister in the Mahagathbandhan government.

He was appointed agriculture minister after the resignation of Sudhakar Singh. He is expected to contest against Hindustani Awam Morcha-Secular candidate and former chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi.

Besides him, RJD has also given the ticket to Abhay Kushwaha to contest from Aurangabad, Archana Ravidas from Jamui (Reserved) and Shrawan Kushwaha Nawada Lok Sabha constituency.

Congress state president Akhilesh Singh met with RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav on Thursday to discuss the seat sharing formula.

## Rajasthan: Five family members charred to death as LPG cylinder explodes



Jaipur | Agencies

Five members of a family, including three minors, were burnt to death after an LPG cylinder exploded in Jaipur on Thursday morning.

None of the family members could come out of the house after the cylinder exploded as it was kept at a

room near the entrance gate, a police official said.

The incident took place at Jaisalya village in the Vishwakarma police station area at 7.30 a.m.

ACP Ashok Chauhan said after getting information about the incident, a police team rushed to the spot.

The deceased were identified as Rajesh (26), his wife

Ruby (24), Ishu (7), Dilkush (2) and Khushmani (4). The family hailed from Bihar's Motihari district and was living here on rent.

A neighbour said that Rajesh had changed the cylinder in the morning and the incident might have occurred due to its incorrect installation.

Two fire brigades brought the fire under control in half-an-hour.

"Rajesh was working in a factory here. He went to Bihar on leave for a few days and came back on Wednesday evening," said the ACP.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma said, "The news of the untimely demise of five civilians due to the massive fire in Jaipur is heart-wrenching."

"I pray to Almighty God to grant peace to the departed souls and to give strength to the family members to bear the loss," the chief minister said. Meanwhile, police officials said the bodies will be handed over to the family members after postmortem.

## DPS Jaipur Hosts E-Baat Session on Electronic Banking Awareness



Jaipur | Agencies

Delhi Public School (DPS) Jaipur, in collaboration with the Reserve Bank of India, conducted an insightful session on 'Electronic Banking Awareness (E-Baat)' for students of classes X and XII. The session aimed to arm students with the essential knowledge to navigate the digital financial landscape effectively.

Facilitated by Ms. Archana Mishra and Mr. Shubham Kumar Sharma, the session covered common challenges

in online transactions, various forms of online fraud, and strategies for vigilance. Students learned about digital payment methods like NEFT, RTGS, IMPS, UPI, and debit/credit cards, with updates on UPI Lite and UPI 123. Emphasizing financial inclusion and risk mitigation, the session underscored the significance of digital payments in today's era. Dr. Richa Prakash Ghosh, Principal of DPS Jaipur, urged digital mindfulness, aligning with the 'Digital India' initiative for a digitally empowered society.



## MANY LEADERS INCLUDING FORMER VINDHYA MP, FORMER MLA AND FORMER MAYOR JOIN BJP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Many leaders of Congress, SP and BSP took membership of Bharatiya Janata Party on Thursday in a program organized at the state BJP office. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, State Party President and MP Vishnu Prasad Sharma, Lok Sabha Election State In-charge Dr. Mahendra Singh, State Convenor of New Joining Group Dr. Narottam Mishra, State Government Minister Tulsi Silavat and Satna MP Ganesh Singh included him in the party.

On this occasion, Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, while welcoming the leaders who took membership of BJP, said that the family of Bharatiya Janata Party is continuously growing every day under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. With the speed with which the Bharatiya Janata Party's family is growing, it seems that Congress and other parties will have nothing left. Today, the party empowers the leaders who have taken membership of the party to go to their respective areas and get the booth level people to get membership of the party. Dr. Yadav said that even a small worker



gets big responsibility in the Bharatiya Janata Party. The party has given me a big opportunity by making me first a minister and then the Chief Minister. He said that maybe you too will get a big opportunity in the party in the coming days. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that

the temple of Lord Shri Ram has been built in Ayodhya, now everyone together will make India grand. Influenced by the ideology of the party and the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, you joined the party. We all will work together under the leadership of Prime

Minister Narendra Modi. We will work together towards making India the number one state in the world. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that your development suggestions will be taken seriously and the state will be developed by moving forward in that direction.

## LS polls: Ex-MP CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan boards train to reach Vidisha

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who is BJP's candidate from the Vidisha Lok Sabha seat, on Thursday boarded sleeper coach of a train from Bhopal to Ganj Basoda.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who is fondly called "mama" (maternal uncle) was accompanied by his wife Sadhna Singh.

During the journey from Bhopal to Ganj Basoda, which falls under Vidisha, the veteran politician interacted with co-passengers.

In a video message, shared by his office, the former chief minister said that he served the people of Madhya Pradesh for 17 years as a CM, and, now the BJP has assigned him another task to serve the people of Vidisha Lok Sabha constituency.

"I have strong connection with the people of Vidisha for the last several decades and I



will receive the same blessings this time also. My entire life is dedicated to the service to the people," he said.

Before becoming Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh

in 2005, Shivraj Singh Chouhan had won five Lok Sabha elections from Vidisha constituency. He is contesting the Parliamentary election nearly after two decades.

## So far, more than 14 thousand workers have joined BJP in Madhya Pradesh: Narottam Mishra

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Before the Lok Sabha elections, leaders are becoming disillusioned with Congress. Many leaders are joining BJP. So far, more than 14 thousand 700 Congress workers have joined BJP in Madhya Pradesh. This information was given by former Home Minister of Madhya Pradesh Narottam Mishra on Thursday.

When the media asked him questions, he said bluntly, "So far, more than 14 thousand 700 Congress workers have joined BJP in Madhya Pradesh." As of today, more than 16,000 Congress workers have joined BJP, which includes former Union Ministers, former MPs, former MLAs and other public representatives. Madhya Pradesh is moving towards becoming Congress free. If a Guinness Book record is made, it is not a big deal. I



have to say to Rahul Gandhi ji, enjoy the stampede in your country, spend at least a few days in Madhya Pradesh! ("Bhagdad ka maza lejiye apne desh me, kuch din to gauriye Madhya Pradesh me.") Let us inform that on Thursday, Congress officials, public representatives and workers from Rewa, Satna, Saver, Shahdol, Anuppur and

Jabalpur joined BJP in the state office. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav and BJP State President VD Sharma included Congress leaders in the party by giving them BJP shawls. On this occasion, State In-charge, State Convenor of New Joining Group Dr. Narottam Mishra, Minister Tulsi Silavat, Satna MP Ganesh Singh were also present.

## DEEPAK SAXENA, CLOSE TO KAMAL NATH, LEFT CONGRESS, SON JOINS BJP

Chhindwara/Bhopal: Those close to former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and senior Congress leader Kamal Nath are leaving the party one by one. Now one of his closest associates, Deepak Saxena, has left Congress with resignation from all posts.

Former Protem Speaker, former minister and Kamal Nath's closest aide in Chhindwara, Deepak Saxena, has written two separate letters to State President Jitu Patwari and Kamal Nath. In a letter written to State President Patwari, Saxena has said that he has been a member of Congress since 1974 and has contested assembly elections seven times and has also been the President of Cooperative Bank.

Referring to personal problems, he has written that he is not able to discharge the responsibilities of the party, hence he is resigning from the Congress, which should be accepted.

Deepak Saxena has also written a letter to Kamal Nath, in which he has mentioned the love and support he received from Kamal Nath. Also expressed gratitude. He has written that he was given an opportunity to contest the assembly elections and even after losing in the 2003 assembly elections, Kamal Nath had faith in him and was given the opportunity again. He has also been a minister in the Congress government twice.

Deepak Saxena has written in a letter to Kamal Nath that I will not be able to discharge my responsibilities in the current circumstances, due to which



I am resigning from all the posts of MLA representative and organization.

In the program organized at the BJP state office, Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, party's state president Vishnu Prasad Sharma, Lok Sabha election state in-charge Dr. Mahendra Singh, state organization general secretary Hitanand, state general secretary of Mahila Morcha and former Congress minister Teji Lal Sareyam from Chhindwara. Daughter-in-

law Subagwati Sareyam, gave membership of BJP to Ajay Saxena, son of former Congress minister and senior leader Deepak Saxena.

More than 400 Congress officials, public representatives and workers from Chhindwara, influenced by the ideology of BJP and the development work of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, joined the party. The Chief Minister and the State President welcomed him by wearing Angavastra.

## ASSEMBLY RIVALS FROM SATNA LOK SABHA SEAT AGAIN FACE TO FACE

Team Absolute | Satna

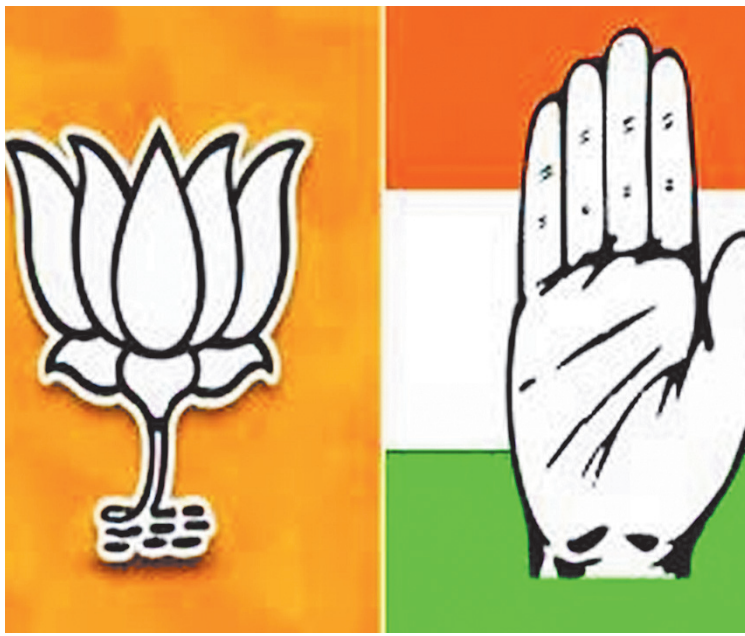
There is going to be an interesting contest on the Satna Lok Sabha seat of Madhya Pradesh. The rivals of the assembly elections held four months ago are once again face to face.

While Congress has fielded MLA Siddharth Kushwaha as its candidate, BJP has fielded Ganesh Singh, a four-time MP and who recently lost the assembly elections.

As per the situation of Satna Lok Sabha seat, one thing becomes clear that there is a majority of backward classes here. Keeping this in mind, while BJP has once again given a chance to Ganesh Singh, on the other hand Congress has fielded Siddharth Kushwaha.

Ganesh Singh comes from Kurmi caste, while Siddharth belongs to Kushwaha caste. The number of voters of both these castes is considerable here. At the same time, the number of Brahmin voters in this seat is not much.

If we look at the history of this seat, there have been 15 Lok Sabha elections so far, in which Congress



has won five times. The BJP, which also includes the Jan Sangh and the Janata Party, has won nine times. Apart from this, the Bahujan Samaj Party candidate also won in 1996. In

these 15 elections, seven times a person from a backward class won, while minorities also won twice. Congress last won here in 1991, when Arjun Singh was elected.

Ganesh Singh has been a four-time MP and is contesting for the fifth time. Siddharth Kushwaha's father Sukhlal Kushwaha has been a BSP MP from Satna. Satna parliamentary constituency has seven assembly constituencies out of which five are held by BJP and two by Congress.

In the assembly elections held about four months ago, there was a contest between BJP's Ganesh Singh and Congress's Siddharth Kushwaha on the Satna assembly seat. In this election, Kushwaha of Congress defeated Ganesh Singh by a margin of about five thousand votes. Here Bahujan Samaj Party had got more than 33 thousand votes.

From this it can be inferred that BSP also has a vote bank here.

Political analysts believe that backward class and upper caste voters are in almost equal position, in such a situation, since both the candidates belong to the backward class, the role of upper class voters can be decisive.

This election is also giving Ganesh Singh a chance to settle the score of defeat at the hands of Siddharth in the assembly elections.

## Colorful Holi celebrated in Shrinath temple of Ujjain

Team Absolute | Ujjain

The excitement of Holi is now slowly visible.

Phag festival has started from Basant Panchami in Vaishnav temples of Ujjain. In the 40-day festival, devotees celebrated colorful Holi at Shrinath ji's mansion on Ekadashi.

The celebration of Phag Mahotsav has started from Basant Panchami in the Vaishnav temples of the city. Every day in Rajbhog Aarti, Mukhiyaji is feeding Thakurji with Abeer and Gulal for Holi. On Wednesday, wet Holi has started with the sprinkling of devotional gulal on Rangbhari Ekadashi in Shrinathji's mansion. Devotees enjoyed Holi with the hymns of Lord Krishna.

The wet colored Holi has started with the Lord during Rajbhog Aarti on Wednesday



afternoon in the presence of hundreds of devotees at Shrinath ji's mansion. The devotees present along with the Lord were drenched with natural colors made from Tesu flowers. From children to old people, everyone was seen in full devotion to God.

During this period, the singing and chanting of Lord

Shri Krishna continued. Phag Utsav is being celebrated every day from Ekadashi in temples like Shrinathji, Govardhanathji, Charbhuj Nathji, Mahaprabhuji's meeting etc. Rangbhari Ekadashi: Holi will be played with wet colors from Ekadashi to Dhulendi in all the temples.

## Indore's famous Bajrabattu Sammelan will not be held this time

Team Absolute | Indore

Bajrabattu Sammelan, one of the most popular events organized in Indore on the occasion of Holi and Rangpanchami, the festival of joy, gaiety and fun, has been canceled due to the code of conduct. That means Indore's famous Bajrabattu conference will not be held this time. In the meeting the organizers decided to postpone it. This event, which is being held a day before Rangpanchami, which is famous not only in the state but throughout the country, has been happening continuously for many years on the stage right in front of Malharjanj police station in West Indore. According to Bajrabattu conference organizers Ashok Chandu, Bhupendra Singh Kesari, Ajay Lahoti, a meeting was held on Wednesday regarding the

event, in which it has been decided to postpone the event this time due to the Model Code of Conduct. Kailash Vijayvargiya, the most popular BJP leader in Indore, is the special center of attraction in this event. They attend this convention in various getups with new masquerades. Last year, Kailash Vijayvargiya had participated in the conference in the guise of the famous comic character Chacha Chaudhary. For the Indorees who were excited about Kailash Vijayvargiya's getup, last year the organizer had also announced a cash reward of Rs 1 lakh to the one who could accurately guess what Vijayvargiya would become. According to the organizers, this decision was taken only after they discussed with Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya regarding the cancellation of the event this time.

## MCU family pays emotional tribute to Professor Tripathi

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Prof. Makhanlal Chaturvedi, former professor of Noida campus of National Journalism and Communication University. A heartfelt tribute was paid to Ramji Tripathi on behalf of the university family on Wednesday. Tripathi died on March 19 at Yashoda Hospital in Ghaziabad. He was unwell for the last few days. On this occasion, Vice Chancellor of the University, Prof. (Dr.) KG Suresh remembered his journalistic and educational contributions.

He said that we have lost a successful officer, ideal teacher and good human being. Pro. Tripathi was a senior officer of the Indian Information Service. Discharged var-



ious responsibilities on this post. After retiring from the post of DG in DD News, he remained active in teaching journalism. During this period, he also served in other educational institutions including the Indian Institute of Communication.

Along with teaching at the Noida campus of MCU, he also successfully conducted the training program run at the main campus of the university. In this condolence meeting organized at Chanakya Bhawan of Makhanapuram campus, Registrar, Prof. Dr. Avinash Vajpayee, Dean Academic Prof. Dr.P. Sharing their sentiments, Sasikala and other professors, officers and employees remembered the contribution of Professor Tripathi and expressed their condolences.

## Teacher beats boy for eating sweet betel nut, case registered

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Eating sweet betel nut during the coaching class proved costly for the seventh class student. The teacher brutally beat the child. On the complaint of a relative, the police have registered a case against the coaching director teacher for assault under the Juvenile Justice Act.

According to Aishbagh police station, a 13-year-old boy living in the area is a seventh class student in a private school. For the last one month, he was going to study coaching from a young man named Javendra. Javendra teaches coaching to children up to class 12th. The student

reached the coaching center at around 7 pm on March 19. At around eight o'clock in the night, a friend sitting near him gave him a sweet betel nut and the student ate it. Seeing him eating betel nut, Javender, who was teaching coaching, got angry and while beating the student, he also pulled out his ears.

The student suffered injuries on his eyes, cheeks, ears and back due to the assault. When the mother inquired after reaching home, she narrated the entire incident. The next day the relatives took him to the police station. On the basis of the complaint, the police registered a case against Javendra under assault and JJ Act.



EDITOR'S SPECS

**Lord Ram to be the theme of Mushaira in Ayodhya**

Lord Ram will be the theme of a 'mushaira' that will be held in Ayodhya on Friday. Urdu poets and poetesses will present their works written on Lord Ram. The mushaira aims to showcase the syncretic culture of Uttar Pradesh and the event is being organised by Uttar Pradesh culture and tourism department. According to the government spokesman, the programme will be presided over by prominent Urdu poet Wasim Barelvi. Other poets participating in the event include Anjum Rehbar, Fahmi Badayuni, Farhat Ehsaas, Shakeel Azmi, Masoom Ghaziabadi, Madan Mohan Danish, Shariq Kaifi, Dixit Dankouri, Azhar Iqbal, Manish Shukla, Charagh Sharma and Shweta Srivastava Azal. Meanwhile, The Ayodhya administration is gearing up for the next big event of the year after the consecration ceremony held in January. The event is 'Ram Navami' -- the first after the opening of the temple -- and the festival is expected to attract the biggest ever inflow of devotees. Ram Navami, the festival that celebrates the birth of Lord Ram, will be observed on the ninth day of Chaitra Navratri and will fall on April 17. According to official sources, efforts are being made to ensure the safety and comfort of the devotees during Ram Navami by providing water and mats on the open floors, keeping in view the approaching hot weather conditions. The administration is also making elaborate arrangements for a dip in Saryu river and focus is also on providing public toilets and regular cleaning for which more than 2,000 sanitation workers will be involved. Ram Navami celebration will begin with a prayer to the sun early in the morning. At midday, when Lord Ram is supposed to have been born, a special prayer will be performed. People will sing devotional songs in praise of Lord Ram and rock images of him in a cradle to celebrate his birth.

**BSP's one-time foot soldiers are now leaders in other parties**

Amita Verma

They had toiled day and night to build the party. They were handpicked by late Kanshi Ram for the Bahujan Samaj movement that he converted into a political campaign in 1984 when he formed the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

Today, 40 years later, the foot soldiers of the BSP are leaders in other parties while the BSP is gasping for breath.

As the election campaign gains momentum, these one-time BSP leaders are drawing up strategies to ensure the victory of their party over the BSP.

Talking to IANS on condition of anonymity, one of the former BSP leaders said, "It is Mayawati who is solely responsible for reducing the BSP to a political nonentity. She strayed from the ideology of late Kanshi Ram, ignored those who subscribed to the party ideology and gave preference to outsiders. The loyalists naturally moved away and the party was reduced to its present position."

Dinanath Bhaskar, one of the founding members of BSP and a close and trusted associate of late Kanshi Ram, was a minister in the first SP-BSP government in 1993.

As Mayawati moved to the centre stage of politics in the BSP in 1996, Bhaskar quit the party and joined the Samajwadi Party. In 2015, he walked out of the SP and joined the BJP. Today,



he is a BJP MLA from the Aurai Assembly segment. Raj Bahadur, once a state BSP president, was known for his proximity to late Kanshi Ram but in 1995 when Mayawati became chief minister for the first time, he moved away and later joined the Congress. Dr Masood, was the education minister in the Mayawati government in 1993. Later he was expelled from the party and his political journey later took him to the SP, RLD

and then Congress.

R.K. Chaudhary, one of the tallest BSP leaders during the time Kanshi Ram called the shots, was expelled from the BSP in 2001, called back later and shown the door again.

He then joined the Congress and is now with Samajwadi Party. He is the party's candidate from the Mohanlalganj seat and will be challenging Union Minister Kaushal Kishore.

Om Prakash Rajbhar was one of the BSP's foot soldiers in the early years. He left the party in 2001, joined the Apna Dal and now heads his own party -- Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP). He prides himself as a kingmaker in contemporary state politics and knows the art of remaining in the news.

Babu Singh Kushwaha, once a trusted lieutenant of Mayawati, fell out of favour when his name emerged in the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) scam in 2011. Today he heads the Jan Adhikar party and continues to work for his community.

Two senior BSP leaders, who faced Mayawati's wrath for unexplained reasons in 2020, are Lalji Varma and Ram Achal Rajbhar. Today, both are senior members in Samajwadi Party and Lalji Varma is the party candidate from Ambedkar Nagar.

Former BSP Minister Inderjit Saroj is another leader who made his way from BSP to SP.

While SP has been the main beneficiary of exits from the BSP, the BJP has also gained leaders from Mayawati's party.

Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak started his political career in the BSP and now is among the top state leaders in the BJP.

BJP Minister Jaiveer Singh also has his roots in the BSP. Two former BSP ministers, Naseemuddin Siddiqui and Nakul Dubey, have found a haven for themselves in the Congress.

**Controversies apart, supporters of Brij Bhushan confident about his LS ticket**

Amita Verma

BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's sprawling home 'Shakti Bhawan' in Gonda, is bustling with activity even in his absence. Singh's ticket has not yet been announced by the BJP for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections but there is no uncertainty in the air.

Supporters of the six-term MP are confident. "Chunav to ladna hi hai," says one of them rather confidently before another supporter asks him to keep quiet.

Singh himself has been overly active on the social media in recent weeks, posting photographs with his grandchildren and presently a 'family man' picture of himself.

A little away from Singh's residence, at a tea kiosk, people are more vocal. "He is sure to win whether he gets a ticket or not. Even if his son Prateek Bhushan contests, victory is sure. That is why no one is worried about the delay. Besides, the Samajwadi Party is waiting with open arms to welcome Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh," says the tea stall owner on phone as his 'boys' bustle around



attending to customers.

The Samajwadi Party has not named a candidate for the Kaiserganj seat yet and the buzz is that the state's main opposition

party is ready to back the 67-year-old wrestler-turned-politician if the BJP chooses to drop him.

His winnability factor makes him an acceptable choice for other parties.

That Singh does not welcome queries from the media about his political future and the status of his case related to sexual harassment, is evident from the several skirmishes he has had in the past few months with media persons.

However, it is also noteworthy that ever since Singh has been facing charges from wrestlers, not a single senior BJP leader has opposed him publicly which confirms the kind of clout he wields within the party. Political analysts feel that dropping Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, this time, may have an adverse impact on, at least, four to five seats in eastern UP because he enjoys immense influence in the region.

international

**US says it recognises Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory**

Washington | Agencies

Recognising Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory, the US has said that it "strongly opposes" any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims across the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The remarks came with Beijing repeatedly asserting that it "never acknowledges and firmly opposes" the "so-called Arunachal Pradesh illegally established by India", following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the state.

"US recognises Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory and we strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments military or



civilian, across LAC," State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson, Vedant Patel, said. Having routinely objected to Indian leaders' visits to the state in the past, Chinese

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said that it "strongly deplored" PM Modi's visit and India's move would "only complicate" the boundary issue.

In response, India rejected Wenbin's comments and said that the Chinese side has been made aware of India's "consistent position on Arunachal several occasions."

This week, New Delhi lashed out at Beijing for "advancing absurd claims" over the territory of Arunachal Pradesh and reiterated that the northeastern state will always remain its "integral and inalienable part" of India.

"We have noted the comments made by the Spokesperson of the Chinese Defence Ministry advancing absurd claims over the territory of the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh," the Ministry of External Affairs said.

**Eight injured as Russia's missiles hit Kiev**

Kiev | Agencies

At least eight people were injured after Russian missiles hit the Ukrainian capital early Thursday "Eight people have been injured in the attack. Medics provided aid to them on the spot," Kiev Mayor Vitali Klitschko posted on Telegram, Ukrinform reported. Several explosions were heard in Kiev. The Kiev city military administration said that air defence is operating in the city and the region. The missile fragments fell on a kindergarten in the Sviatoshynskiy district and on the territory of an enterprise in the Podilskiy district.

Cars were set on fire in the Shevchenkivskiy district. As a result of falling missile debris, a fire was reported at a transformer substation and in a two-



storey non-residential building in the Podilskiy district. According to Kyiv City Military Administration, roof of a residential building caught fire in the Podilskiy

district. In the Sviatoshynskiy district, the explosions wave smashed windows in two nine-storey buildings, but there is no fire. Details are awaited.

**Blinken to visit Tel Aviv on Friday for talks on hostage deal, Rafah operation**

Tel Aviv | Agencies

US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, will visit Israel on Friday and meet the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other senior leaders.

Blinken will also be meeting senior Egyptian and Saudi leaders on Thursday in Cairo and Riyadh respectively.

The visit of Blinken, the most powerful leader of the US, to the Middle eastern countries, including Israel, is to communicate to the concerned parties and mediators on the American viewpoint regarding the hostage deal as well as on the probable ground invasion of Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in Rafah area.

US President Joe Biden has recently spoken to Netanyahu not to push forward with the Rafah ground operations as it would lead to the death of a large number of Palestinian civilians, including women and children.

An estimated 1.3 million civilian population is living in Rafah area of the Gaza Strip and the idea of Israeli troops is to evacuate the civilian population to the north of Rafah.

However, Egypt has told the Israeli and American authorities of its strict opposition to the Rafah operation since it would lead to a huge refugee exodus to its territory in Sinai region bordering Rafah.

Meanwhile, the indirect mediatory talk between Israel and Hamas is continuing in Doha, Qatar.

Israel is taking a tough stand and not agreeing to many of the demands put forward by Hamas regarding the hostage deal and therefore, the mediatory talks are not progressing smoothly.

Sources in the Israel Defence Ministry told repote that the talks would progress only on the terms put forward by the Israeli side.

Israel has demanded a two-step release of all the hostages in the custody of Hamas and has told the mediators that Palestinian prisoners kept in Israeli jails charged with heinous crimes cannot be released.

According to sources in Israel Defence Ministry, the Israel intelligence agencies, including the Mossad, Shin Bet and the military



intelligence had informed the Israel government that Hamas was completely collapsed and the Rafah area is the key to defeat the remaining resistance of the militant outfit.

It has also reported that Hamas has only four army battalions remaining in the Rafah area and if they are also destroyed, then there was no other option for Hamas but only to surrender to Israel.

The Israel Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant, considered a hawk among the Israeli leadership, has again called on the IDF to look out for Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and neutralise him.

It remains to be seen how Blinken will be able to prevent an impending ground offensive from a highly confident Israeli army in the Rafah region.

**S. Korea to suspend licence of defiant trainee doctors from next week**

Seoul | Agencies

South Korea's health ministry on Thursday said it would begin suspending the medical licences of trainee doctors who have defied a return-to-work order from next week, as the government pushed ahead with its plan to hike the number of medical students.

A month-long walkout by trainee doctors in protest of the hike in medical school enrollment appeared to slide into a territory of little compromise as the government allocated on Wednesday an additional 2,000 medical school admission seats to universities across the nation, Yonhap news agency reported.

The ministry sent prior notices of licence suspension to some 5,000 trainee doctors, and they are required to submit opinions on the punitive step by next Monday. After that, the ministry will be allowed to send



formal notices of licence suspension.

"Starting next week, the government will take measures to suspend the licence under the principle regarding violation of the return-to-work order," Second Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo was quoted as saying to reporters.

"We urge junior doctors to return to their training hospitals, not only for the sake of patients, but for your col-

leagues who are filling in for your vacancies, and for yourselves who have chosen the career of medicine," Park said.

About 90 per cent of the 13,000 interns and resident doctors have remained off the job since February 20, forcing surgeries and other public health services to be cancelled or delayed at major hospitals.

Park also cautioned that interns who fail to register in the training management sys-

tem of hospitals by the end of this month will not be eligible to become residents next year, the report said.

As junior doctors are also required to undergo additional training in the event of a gap exceeding one month, Park noted that the suspension of their licences would affect their careers. The government has been pushing to sharply raise the number of medical students to brace for the country's fast-ageing population, and a shortage of physicians in rural areas and essential areas, such as paediatrics and emergency departments. Doctors, on the other hand, say the quota hikes will undermine the quality of medical education and result in higher medical costs for patients. They have called for measures to first address the underpaid specialists and improve legal protection against excessive medical malpractice lawsuits.

**2 soldiers killed, 15 injured in suicide attack in Pakistan**

Islamabad | Agencies

Two soldiers were killed and 15 others injured in a suicide attack in Pakistan's northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Thursday, official sources confirmed.

The incident happened in Dera Ismail Khan district of the province when some unknown militants opened fire at a convoy of security forces, Xinhua news agency reported, citing sources from the Counter Terrorism Department.

The firing was followed by the suicide attack in which the two soldiers including a military driver were killed, the sources added. The area had been cordoned off for investigations. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack yet.



# Maha allows free shoots on govt premises; B-Town celebrates

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

In a major initiative, the Maharashtra government has bowed to a long-pending demand of the Indian film industry - permitting free shootings of films and tele-series on all its premises across the state, as per an official announcement.

Indian Motion Pictures Producers Association (IMPPA) President Abhay Sinha said that the state government issued the orders on March 16 to the effect, which has been widely welcomed by the film fraternity.

"Now, no fees shall be levied for carrying out shooting on any government or semi-government lands, locales and buildings anywhere in the state for films, documentaries, teleserials or even advertisements, by any film-makers from anywhere in India," Sinha told correspondent.

However, the concession will not apply to the famed Dadasaheb Phalke Chitranagari in Mumbai and the Chitranagari in Kolhapur, where the regular charges for all types of shootings shall be applicable.

Continuing its ease of doing business even for the film industry, the government has implemented a 'single window scheme' (SWC), for any shooting proposals for state properties submitted by any producers for any language film from anywhere in India.

"Through this SWC, we can freely shoot anywhere in the state... This will showcase Maharashtra in a big way, indirectly boost tourism and allied sector, plus help boost the image of the state, its people, culture and picturesque locations," smiled Sinha.



Earlier, the producers had to shell out minimum Rs 40,000-Rs 50,000 for a day's shoot at any government locations which would be a direct saving, but presently only state-owned places have been opened, with hopes that even Centre-owned premises here may also follow suit.

"All government, semi-government, local self-government bodies, aided institutions, corporations, etc. should provide free of charge for shooting movies, televisions, advertisements, and commercials in other languages, including Marathi and foreign languages," said an official order.

Certain government departments have enacted laws specifying charges for filming activities which shall be changed in the next session of the Maharashtra Legislature.

However, though there will be no fees for shoot-

ing, a nominal security deposit will have to be paid with each application - Rs 40,000 for commercials, Rs 100,000 for teleserials and Rs 250,000 for feature films.

This is to ensure that after the shooting, the premises are left clean and in case of any damage to the public properties, it will be recovered from the security deposit.

Sinha explained that on an average, 500 feature films are made in India each year in multiple languages, and more than 100 are produced in Mumbai alone.

Officials said that Mumbai has over 500 production houses, 250 theatres and multiplexes, and 150 cinema halls which provide huge employment through a well-established ecosystem for the expensive film production processes.

Through the SWC, the Maharashtra Film, Theatre and Cultural Development Corporation earns around Rs 8-10 crore per annum through filming process activities.

Bollywood circles say many places in the state, including beaches, forts, lakes, forests, historical monuments, memorials, sanctuaries, skyscrapers of Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai, promenades, mega-infrastructure sites or bridges, etc. are popular among film-makers, depending on their requirements.

Presently, free filming on government properties is allowed in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh gives certain concessions to local producers, while Maharashtra is contemplating subsidies to Marathi film production, as part of the larger strategy to make the state a "global film destination".

# Shiv Sena MP urges Oppn not to oppose Dharavi redevelopment for political mileage

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena MP Rahul Shewale from Mumbai South Central Lok Sabha seat, who is likely to be renominated, has appealed to the opposition not to oppose the redevelopment of Dharavi slum only for scoring some political points.

Dharavi is one of the six Assembly constituencies in Mumbai South Central and the redevelopment is a leading electoral plank to be flagged off by the MahaYuti and Maha Vikas Aghadi during campaigning.

"Don't try to stop the Dharavi redevelopment process by spreading false information just for the sake of politics. Otherwise the people of Dharavi and future generations will never forgive you," warned Shewale. He further said, "People are being misled by the opposition by spreading false information against the survey that has started in Dharavi."

Shewale's statement came days after the Congress and Shiv Sena Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray stepped up their attack against the Dharavi redevelop-



ment. Further, his appeal to the opposition coincided with the launch of survey by the Dharavi Redevelopment Project Pvt Ltd (DRPPL), a joint venture between the Maharashtra government and the Adani Group, to collect data from lakhs of informal tenement residents of Dharavi. The survey started from Kamla Raman Nagar in Dharavi on Monday.

"The opposition was shocked by the positive responses given by the Dharavikars during the survey. Therefore, they have started spreading confusion among the people by making baseless allegations. Kamala Raman Nagar is a part of the Dharavi Notified Area and the Slum Rehabilitation Authority had conducted a survey here before," said Shewale.

He said that since the Dharavi Redevelopment Project has been given the status of a special project, everyone here will get a home based on the state government's decision regarding eligible and ineligible residents. He urged the Dharavikars to cooperate during the ongoing survey without falling prey to false propaganda.

# Maharashtra AAP women's wing president Seema Gutte switches to Congress

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra unit of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday got a severe jolt as its state Women's Wing President Seema S. Gutte joined the Congress here.

She was welcomed into the party fold by Maharashtra unit Congress President Nana Patole and other senior leaders, who hailed her decision to join the grand old party.

"The country is passing through a difficult phase and only the Congress' ideology can save it. This



party has a tradition of giving justice to all sections of society and this faith was further strengthened

during the just-concluded Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra (BJNY) of Rahul Gandhi," said Patole.

During the BJNY, the Congress gave Five Guarantees for women's justice with special emphasis on Women's Empowerment which has been widely hailed by the masses wherever the procession travelled, he said.

Gutte, a social worker from Pune, had earlier served as AAP's Pune head, has organised social-cultural-educational activities for women and girls all over since her appointment as the state chief in July 2023.

# Man booked for raping woman repeatedly, extorting Rs 5 lakh

Team Absolute | Thane

A 27-year-old man was reportedly booked for allegedly raping a married woman repeatedly, a Navi Mumbai police official said on Thursday.

According to a news agency, as per the 25-year-old woman, she was raped by the accused after her drink was spiked in 2021 and then sexually assaulted on several occasions with the threat that her objectionable videos will be circulated on social media, the

Rabale police station official said.

"He also extorted Rs 5 lakh from her. A case under Indian Penal Code sections 376(2)(n) (rape repeatedly on the same woman) , 384 (extortion) 328 (causing hurt by means of poison) 506 (2) (criminal intimidation) and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) has been registered," the official said, the news agency reported on Thursday.

The accused is yet to be arrested, the Rabale police station official added.

# Uddhav Thackeray meets Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj in Kolhapur

Team Absolute | Kolhapur

Former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) President, Uddhav Thackeray paid a courtesy call on Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj at his Kolhapur palace on Thursday and promised to campaign for him.

Former CM Thackeray was accompanied by his son Tejas Thackeray and party MP Sanjay Raut at the meeting with the Chhatrapati, who is all set to be the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA)'s united candidate for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. He will be contesting on a Congress ticket from Kolhapur.

The Chhatrapati and his family members warmly greeted the Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders, exchanged flowers and pleasantries before posing for a mini-army of media-



persons. "We have enjoyed close family relations with the Chhatrapati family since my grandfather's days... and will continue in the same vein even for the future generations. I have sought his blessings," said ex-CM Thackeray. He expressed confidence that the Chhatrapati would be victorious from the erstwhile royal city of Kolhapur and promised to campaign for him as well as attend the

MVA poll rallies for him. He promised that Shiv Sena (UBT) cadres would work wholeheartedly for the Chhatrapati. In a warm gesture, barely two weeks ago, the Chhatrapati's son, Sambhajiraje Chhatrapati bowed out of the poll race after it became clear that his father would be the MVA candidate from Kolhapur and promised to work for his victory.

# Body massager can't be categorised as adult sex toy, be prohibited for import: Court

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A body massager cannot be categorised as an adult sex toy and hence cannot be included in the list of items prohibited for import, the Bombay High Court has said.

A division bench of Justices Girish Kulkarni and Kishor Sant on Wednesday quashed an order passed by the Customs department confiscating consignments containing body massagers.

The Commissioner of Customs had confiscated the goods claiming that the body massagers could be used as adult sex toys and such items are prohibited for import.

Opining that a body massager could be used as an adult sex toy was clearly the figment of imagination of the Commissioner of Customs, the high court said. It dismissed a petition filed by the Commissioner of Customs, challenging a May 2023 order passed by the Central Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal whereby the Custom department's order confiscating consignments containing body massagers was set aside.

The Commissioner of Customs as adjudicating officer had in April 2022 refused to clear the consignment containing body massagers noting that they were adult sex toys and hence prohibited for import as per the Customs notification issued in



January 1964.

The high court noted that the findings recorded by the commissioner are "peculiar and clearly appear to be quite astonishing and too far-fetched, when he reduces in writing his vivid imagination on what an equipment for a body massage would

be and more particularly on his perception on the perceived uses."

"It was clearly the figment of the Commissioner's imagination and/or his personal perception that the goods are prohibited items," the high court said.

# Mumbai hospital saves Nepal infant girl's gangrenous arm from amputation



Team Absolute | Mumbai

A prominent Mumbai hospital saved the arm and hand of a two-month-old girl from Nepal who was born with medical complications after birth leading to gangrene, from amputation, officials said here on Thursday.

Soon after birth, the child developed severe cellulitis on the left arm which led to infection and resulted in gangrene (necrosis) on the entire arm, alarming the parents.

The skin of the entire forearm had turned black, leading to deterioration of the child's health, and doctors at a major hospital in Kathmandu advised amputation of the limb to save her life. Unwilling to amputate their tiny girl's arm, barely three weeks after her birth, they rushed her from Nepal to Mumbai's Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital for Children (BJWHC) and immediately examined by Consultant Surgeon, Dr. Nilesh Satbhai. "We decided to salvage the limb and as soon as her medical condition permitted, we cleaned up the wounds, removed all the dead tissues and reduced the source of infection. Then we planned for wound cover and reconstruction in multiple surgical stages," said Dr. Satbhai. After the first stage of the wound debridement, it was washed multiple times and then covered

with a large abdominal flap which almost fully covered the arm, by the time the child turned one month old. The flap was kept for another three weeks and underwent a two-stage process that ensured the entire wound was covered on both sides of the child's arm. All these complex and multiple surgeries were performed in a span of five weeks, though the anaesthesia management for the major surgery on the infant was extremely challenging and critical, he added.

After all the procedures were completed, the child's arm was saved from a potential amputation, and she became stable and started achieving normal developmental milestones. "Her hand was salvaged due to timely surgical intervention and wound cover. Secondary reconstructive procedures will be needed for further functions as the child grows up. Not treating her at the right time could have led to amputation and lifelong disability," said Dr Satbhai. Later, the medics learnt that the child's mother had a bad obstetric history and out of six previous pregnancies, she had lost four children, but the exact cause of her infant's skin necrosis is not known yet.

Cellulitis is a bacterial infection that occurs in the skin layers, often manifests as painful, hot, red swelling on the body.

The main culprits behind cellulitis are Staphylococcus and Streptococcus bacteria, but antibiotics are usually effective, though in some cases, cellulitis can deteriorate rapidly if left untreated or unresponsive to antibiotics. This escalation could result in a critical medical situation and potentially a life-threatening outcome when medical expertise and advanced technology were deployed for the Nepal baby, said BJWHC CEO, Dr. Minnie Bodhanwala. In this child's case, the cellulitis led to a flesh-eating disease, "necrotizing fasciitis" which is an infection in the deepest layer of skin spreading to the connective tissue that surrounds your muscles and organs, that could result in gangrene (tissue death), and in more extreme cases, require amputation. The distraught parents, including father Abdul Awwal, are now smiling and happy and full of gratitude to the BJWHC authorities for saving the arm of their child whom they have decided to name 'Tamannah'.

# Raj Thackeray meets CM Shinde, DY CM Fadnavis amid speculation of tie-up



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, and MNS leader Raj Thackeray met on Thursday amid rumours over a possible alliance ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. The meeting took place at the Taj Lands End in Mumbai's district of



Bandra.

Earlier, MNS leader Raj Thackeray met with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi, suggesting a possible coalition with the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections 2024 to strengthen the alliance in Maharashtra. Senior MNS leader Bala Nandgaonkar described Shah and Thackeray's meetings as "positive," indicating development.

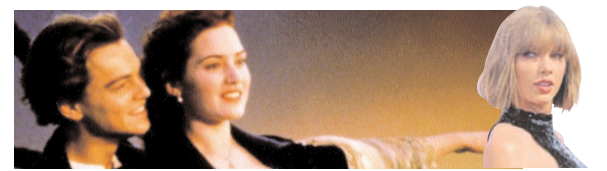
More information is likely to be published soon, the report added.

Reportedly, Deputy Chief Minister Fadnavis also stated on Wednesday that the conversations between Shah and Thackeray were positive, implying a possible agreement in the coming days.

Raj Thackeray previously separated away from the Shiv Sena, led by his cousin

Uddhav Thackeray, and created the MNS in 2006.

If the alliance is formed, the MNS is likely to be given one seat to contest from Mumbai, the PTI report added. The report further stated that Lok Sabha elections 2024 in Maharashtra will be held in five phases beginning April 19, April 26, May 7, May 13, and May 20, with vote counting set for June 4.



## Drew Barrymore shares how she overcame the 'shame' of divorce

Los Angeles | Agencies

**H**ollywood star Drew Barrymore does not shy away from talking about her past and personal life anymore. Barrymore was first married to Jeremy Thomas from 1994 to 1995. She then got married to Tom Green from 2001 to 2002.

In 2012, she married Will Kopelman and two welcomed two daughters together before divorcing in 2016.

Divorce became a topic of conversation after discussing Jennifer Lopez's 'Can't Get Enough' music video, in which she "pokes fun at being a four-time bride," reports people.com.

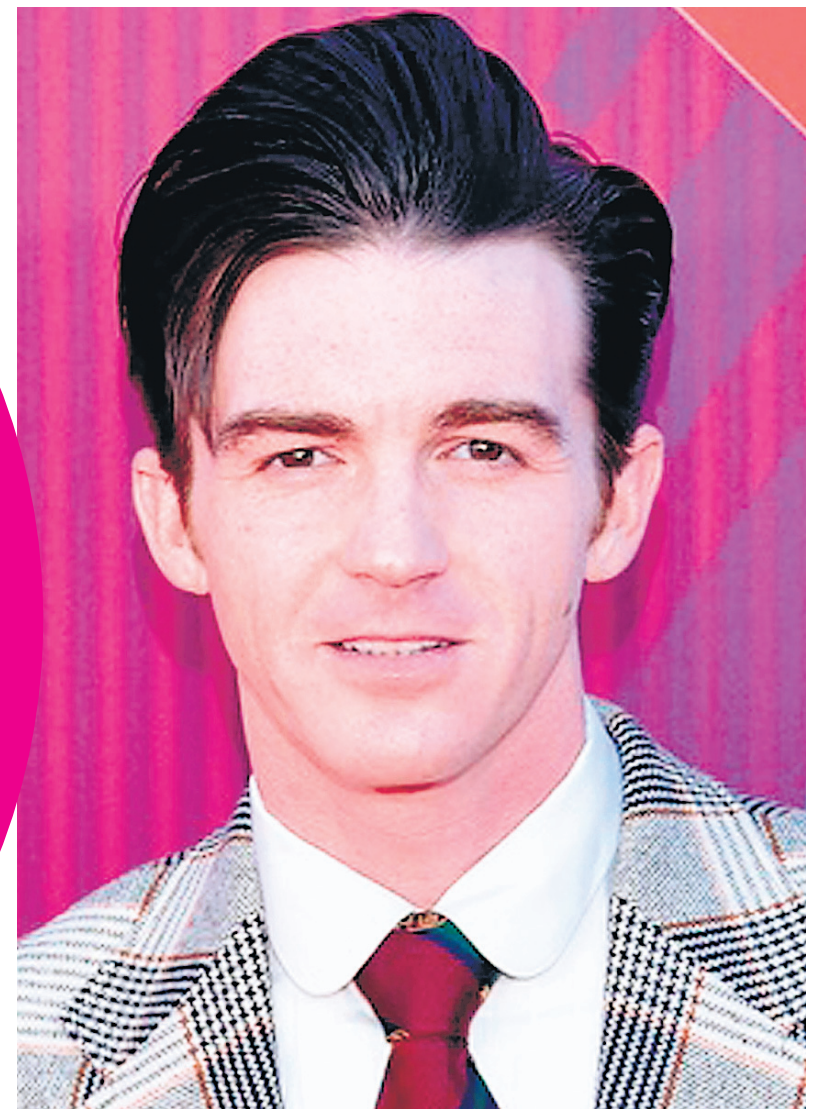
"I had so much shame around divorce and, for some reason, something happened, and I said, 'I'm no longer willing to feel this way.' And it just lifted from me," said Barrymore about her own experience with divorce.

She added that she views divorce as a way to save "the precious commodity we have on this planet, which is only our time."

The actress said: "And when you're truly in a situation that isn't functioning the way that, optimally, it hopes and wishes to be, we accept that, and we improve our quality of life by moving forward. Divorce now, to me, I don't have shame around it. I'm totally liberated."

Barrymore talked about how she felt with guest Marie Osmond, who discussed her own experience with divorce on the 'Never Been Kissed' actress' show.

Barrymore heaped praise on Lopez's music video. "Jlo, I love you. I really appreciate, again, (for) you bringing empowerment to where most people go to shame. We've all been in it. So go Jlo."



## Drake Bell takes to TikTok, defends Nickelodeon co-star Josh Peck over sex abuse row

Los Angeles | Agencies

**F**ormer child star Drake Bell, who featured in Nickelodeon's 'The Amanda Show' and 'Drake & Josh', has informed that his co-star Josh Peck reached out to him in private about the abuse allegations he made in the documentary series 'Quiet on Set: The Dark Side of Kids TV'.

Peck featured in the sitcom 'Drake & Josh' alongside Bell, who in the docuseries claimed he was sexually assaulted by Nickelodeon dialogue and acting coach Brian Peck in the early 2000s.

Peck posted a social media video littered with comments demanding he speak out about his co-stars' allegations, as TMZ reported, reports variety.com.

"I just want to clear something up. I've noticed a lot of comments on some of Josh's TikToks and some of his posts," Bell said in a video posted to TikTok.

"I just want to let you guys know that this is really... processing this and going through this is a really emotional time, and a lot of it is very, very difficult. So not everything is put out to the public."

The actor continued: "But I just want you guys to know that he has reached out to me, and it's been very sensitive."

"But he has reached out to talk with me and help me work through this. And has been really, really great. So (I) just wanted to let you guys know that and to take it a little easy on him."

## KRISTEN STEWART OPENS UP ON 'HAPPIEST SEASON' ROLE: IT WAS 'A DISASTER'



Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**ctress Kristen Stewart said that the lesbian romantic-comedy 'Happiest Season' was a disaster. The actress said: "The identity was beaten out of my goals there."

"I was getting so many studio executive notes about my hair and my clothes. I was like, 'You did read the script. You did hire me. What are we doing here?' It was annoying," Kristen told Them magazine, reports deadline.com.

According to her, the issue was apparently the studio's attempt to make the film more broadly appealing. The studio executives needed to "shroud things for everyone to easily digest."

Kristen said she's "down with that," director Clea Duvall bore the brunt of the changes.

"Hats hats off to Clea, because I don't have the patience (for) that."

Kristen's latest, Love Lies Bleeding, is "pretty sick".

## After Oprah, Stephen Fry reveals he lost 'astonishing' 31 kg using weight-loss drug

Los Angeles | Agencies

**C**omedian, actor and filmmaker Stephen Fry says his 'astonishing' weight loss of 31 kg came at a price, after a 'fat jab' caused him to throw up to five times a day.

The actor was an early user of Ozempic, an obesity drug, which is currently making news in Hollywood.

Stephen has become the latest big name star to warn of the dangers of the drug after feeling its grim after-effects, according to Mirror, reports dailymail.co.uk.

The star said he was in the US when he read about Ozempic, and asked his doctor about getting a prescription.

Stephen shared that he was pleasantly surprised by the drug's effectiveness and found it stopped



all of his cravings for food and alcohol.

The actor said: "The first week or so, I was thinking, 'This is astonishing. Not only do I not want to eat, but I also have no desire for alcohol of any kind. This is going to be brilliant.'"

"Then I started feeling sick, and I started getting sicker and sicker. I was throwing up four, five times a day and I thought, 'I can't do this.'"

"So that's it. The new variant, Tirzepatide oujaro, makes it even worse apparently."

Stephen was at his heaviest in April 2019. However, by August of that year, he had lost some weight after taking the drug.

## Hwang Min Hyun shares his hair shaving process ahead of military enlistment

Seoul | Agencies

**S**outh Korean singer-actor Hwang Min Hyun bids farewell to fans and also revealed his hair shaving process ahead of mandatory military service.

Hwang Min Hyun shared pictures of his hair shaving process with fans on Weverse on Thursday, reports allkpop.com.

The actor also told fans: "Please don't quit Weverse while I'm gone, okay? I'm going to be so sad if I see that the number of members has decreased."

Hwang Min Hyun will enlist for his mandatory service on March 21. After completing his basic training, he is scheduled to carry out the remainder of his duties as a public service worker.

Hwang Min Hyun started his journey in 2012 as a lead vocalist of the South Korean boy group NU'EST. He then became a member of Wanna One. Following Wanna One's disbandment, he rejoined NU'EST, remaining in the group until its disbandment in 2022. He was also seen in TV shows such as 'Live On', 'Alchemy Of Souls' and 'My Lovely Liar'.



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Irina Shayk

## KEVIN BACON'S MEMORIES OF FILMING 'FRIDAY THE 13TH': A VERY SMALL BATHING SUIT



Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**ctor Kevin Bacon went down memory lane as he recalled his beginnings in the industry with the iconic slasher film 'Friday the 13th'.

"There was no way I was surviving," the actor quipped, when asked about getting attacked by the character Jason on his podcast. Among the memorable deaths in the 1980 'Friday the 13th' instalment, Bacon's character Jack is stabbed in the throat with an arrow through a mattress while he lies atop it, reports people.com.

"I wasn't gonna stick around in that movie for very long," Bacon said, considering the vices his teenage camp counselor character indulged in "the combination of the speedo and the marijuana and the sex," he quipped.

"There was such a trope in horror movies that continued forever, and that was that if you had sex or did drugs, you were definitely gonna die." Over 40 years later, the swimming trunk holds a special place in some memories.

Answering a question about a scene where Jack dives headfirst into the camp's lake, "when everyone else jumped in... I'm not a diver by any stretch of the imagination." Anyone rewatching the film now "could see a very small bathing suit and a very bad

dive," said Bacon. "I remember a few years ago there was a meme of how bad my dive was... absolutely terrible." Bacon also talked about him and his co-stars Adrienne King, Harry Crosby, Jeannine Taylor, Laurie Bartram and Mark Nelson that they had only one chance to capture their group jump into the water.

"I could have done better," he said.

"But I think the whole thing was that our hair was supposed to be dry, so we had to do it in one take. As for the famously iconic skimpy swimming trunk, which left little to the imagination, Bacon said: "We always had tiny little bathing suits. That was just what bathing suits were!"



## The first feeling is I am happy that I am alive', says Pant on returning to lead Delhi Capitals

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rishabh Pant, who is returning to action after 14 months of being on a recovery route from multiple injuries suffered in a near-fatal car crash, has expressed his sentiments on his much-awaited return, saying he is happy that "he is alive" and want to enjoy the moment.

Pant, who is back as the captain of Delhi Capitals, underwent an extensive rehabilitation and recovery process at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru following a road accident in December 2022.

Speaking on how it feels like to come back to the game after the car accident, Pant recalled the days when used to walk with crutches and added that he can't describe the feeling when he first held a bat after his accident.

"The bigger picture was that I had been walking using crutches, then I didn't need them. Then I began walking, then began jogging and then running. Then batting and then wicketkeeping. I don't remember those particular dates, but definitely remember the moments," Pant said on JioCinema.

"I can't describe the feeling when I first held a bat post the accident. It was amazing. You get mesmerised because of something. The feeling was like that. I didn't feel that I was playing for the first time, but it also didn't feel like I had played before. There



was a different sort of energy and feeling," he added.

Asked if he feels any pressure returning to DC, the wicketkeeper-batter said, "The first feeling is I am happy that I am alive. If you are not alive, how can you even think of anything else. So, it's important to go with the flow and enjoy these moments."

He further revealed how he coped with the injuries and admitted that there was frustration and anger but he started focussing more on the journey instead of thinking about the destination.

"When the journey is so long, you do get frustrated. With us, we are always looking for the destination. You should enjoy the journey. When you go out to practice, then how does the bat feel in your

hand, while keeping, how does it feel to have the ball in your gloves. If we start enjoying these things, then you are surrounded by positivity," said Pant.

Pant also recalled the moments when he came to know that DC had spent Rs 1.9 crore on him at the 2016 auction.

"There was nervousness about the auction as we were playing the U-19 World Cup. We used to keep bantering about the auction. Sarfaraz (Khan) went out of the field during the drinks break and when he returned, he informed me that I was picked for Rs 1.9 crore. I told him these kinds of jokes won't work. But when we came back and I got to know, it was a really nice feeling," he said.

Further speaking on his relationship with MS Dhoni, Pant said he learnt that transfer of energy is important and one can't build that connection over phone.

"I am learning from him that one-on-one interactions are different from those on the phone. The transfer of energy is more important. You can't build that connection on the phone."

Delhi will open its IPL 2024 campaign on March 23 against Punjab Kings, which will be Pant's first assignment in 14 months. "I am nervous, I am excited. It's a mixed feeling. So, I don't want my mind to start straying in too many directions. I want to keep it simple," he added.

## 'I feel privileged': Ruturaj Gaikwad on getting CSK captiancy

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) captain Ruturaj Gaikwad feels 'privileged' about taking the captaincy reins from M.S. Dhoni and expressed confidence in the team with the blended experience of Ravindra Jadeja and Ajinkya Rahane around.

The CSK on Thursday named opener Ruturaj Gaikwad as the successor of M.S. Dhoni as their captain, leaving him big shoes to fill as he takes over from a legend. CSK secured the services of Gaikwad at the IPL 2019 player auction and since then he hasn't disappointed with the bat and will now lead the squad.

Gaikwad in a video posted by CSK, X (formerly Twitter) handle looked confident and felt privileged to get the charge of leading the team in the season-opener against Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) on Friday.

"It feels good, obviously it's a privilege to lead the team. It's a huge responsibility and I am really excited because of the kind of group we have. Everyone's experienced enough, so not much to worry about," said Gaikwad in a video posted by CSK on X.

"I have Mahi bhai in the team, Jaddu bhai (Ravindra Jadeja), Ajju bhai (Ajinkya Rahane), so nothing much to worry about. I am just



looking forward to enjoying it," said Gaikwad.

Gaikwad has played 52 matches in his IPL career so far and scored 1797 runs, with an average of 39.07, with his highest IPL score being 101 not out. In the IPL Auction 2024, Chennai acquired him for Rs 6.00 crore.

## Sr Women's Hockey Nationals: Haryana to play Jharkhand; MP face Maharashtra in semis

Team Absolute | Pune

Haryana is set to face Jharkhand while Madhya Pradesh will take on Maharashtra in the semis of the 14th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship scheduled to take place on Friday.

Haryana, the most dominant side in the tournament so far and consisting of 11 international players, reached the quarter-final by defeating Odisha 4-1. Haryana progressed to the knockout round after defeating Assam 15-0 and Le Puducherry 22-0 to top Pool D.

"We won quite comfortably in the group stage but we faltered a little bit in the quarters against Odisha. I think if we can do better defensively and not give away too many penalty corners the way we did in the quarters, we should have a good semi-final. Jharkhand is a wonderful team but if we execute our plans and convert the scoring opportunities we get, I am sure we will do well," Haryana Coach Azad Singh Malik said ahead of their semis clash against Jharkhand.

It must be mentioned that Haryana lost 1-2 to Jharkhand in the 3rd/4th place playoff in the previous edition of the tournament.



Jharkhand posted a commanding win over Andhra Pradesh 13-0 before drawing with Uttar Pradesh 2-2 to top Pool C based on a higher goal difference than Uttar Pradesh. They then went on to defeat Mizoram 2-1 in a closely contested quarter-final to set up a semi-final clash with Haryana. Jharkhand coach Sumrai Tete spoke about the team's performance and how they were going to approach the semis. She said, "The Quarter-Final was a great game. We have

played a couple of tight games in this tournament and it has helped us learn to deal with pressure. Haryana is a top-quality team filled with international players, but we have a few of them too and are certainly second to none on ability. We beat them last year and will look to repeat the performance this year."

The reigning Champions, Madhya Pradesh, secured a spot in the semis following a gripping 1-1 (4-3 SO) victory against Bengal in the quarters.

Prior to this, they emerged as leaders of Pool A by defeating Chhattisgarh with a score of 8-0 and triumphing over Bihar with a 7-1 victory.

Speaking ahead of the semis against Maharashtra, a side they defeated 5-1 in last year's Hockey India Senior Women National Championship to win the trophy, coach Paramjit Singh said, "We played the quarter-final after a break of six days and were a bit rusty. We didn't convert the multiple chances we got and that's why the game was such a close one.

I think if we do better in that aspect we can be in more control of the game. It is wonderful to be in the semis again and the players will be very happy with the opportunity. We will go all out and look to cement a place in the final."

Hosts Maharashtra beat Delhi 3-0 and Kerala 10-0 to top Pool B and set up a clash with Manipur in the quarter-finals. They beat Manipur 2-1 to qualify for the semis. They will next take on Madhya Pradesh, a team they lost against in the final in last year's edition of the tournament, in the semis.

## Ex-Real Madrid and Man City star Robinho to serve 9-year prison sentence for rape: Reports

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ex-Real Madrid and Manchester City forward Robinho will have to serve a nine-year prison sentence for rape in Brazil, the court ruled.

In 2017, Robinho was sentenced in Italy to nine years in prison for his part in a group sexual assault of a 22-year-old Albanian woman in 2013, when he played for AC Milan.

But at the time he had already travelled to his homeland Brazil, which does not extradite its nationals. As a result, Italy sought his imprisonment in his home nation.

A Brazilian court, following a request from Italy, has now ruled that he must serve out the prison sentence in Brazil, judges on Brazil's Superior Court of Justice voted 9-2 to validate Robinho's conviction, Sky news reported.

Eight of the 10 votes cast in the Superior Tribunal of Justice (STJ) case were in favour of Robinho's arrest and serving of the sentence



on home soil. Robinho's lawyer, Jose Eduardo Alckmin, stated in court that his client seeks a retrial in Brazil on the basis of national sovereignty, indicating potential appeal to the country's Supreme Court. The ex-Brazilian international, who has 100 national

caps, won two La Liga championships during his four-year tenure with Real Madrid. He later transferred to Manchester City in September 2008 for a then-British record fee of £32.5 million on transfer deadline day.

## Osaka sweeps past Cocciaretto; Rogers beats Fruhirtova in Miami



Florida | Agencies

Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka swept past Italian Elisabetta Cocciaretto 6-4, 6-3 on her return to the Magic City after maternity leave to reach the second round at Miami Open.

She took just 1 hour and 18 minutes to defeat World No.51 Cocciaretto on Wednesday. In seven appearances at the Miami Open Osaka has never lost an opening match. The Japanese last played the Miami Open in 2022, where she beat Angelique Kerber, Danielle Collins and Belinda Bencic before finishing runner-up to Iga Swiatek. At the end of that year, Osaka began her maternity leave, and she gave birth to daughter Shai in July 2023.

Osaka returned to the tour this season, so far, her best result was reaching the quarterfinals at Doha.

The 26-year-old will now have a second-round showdown against another returning

mom, No.15 seed Elina Svitolina. The Ukrainian came back from her own maternity leave less than a year ago and is already back inside the Top 20.

Later, American Shelby Rogers outlasted Czech teenager Linda Fruhirtova 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 in first-round action.

Rogers was sidelined for the second half of 2023 after Wimbledon as she underwent a second career knee surgery in the summer. She lost to Emma Raducanu in the first round of the Australian Open in her return to the tour this year, WTA reports.

The American will next face 2021 Roland Garros finalist and Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in the second-round.

Earlier in the day, the opening Stadium match had Florida native Sloane Stephens celebrating her 31st birthday by defeating 6-2, 6-3 German Angelique Kerber, another former WTA No.1, who is coming back after giving birth to her daughter just over one year ago.

## Paris Olympics: Mary Kom appointed India's Chef de Mission, Sharath Kamal named flag bearer

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Olympic bronze medallist and multiple-time World Champion boxer, MC Mary Kom has been appointed as India's Chef de Mission for the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics. Table tennis star Achanta Sharath Kamal has been named as flag-bearer for the mega sporting spectacle.

Meanwhile, Winter Olympian Shiva Keshavan has been appointed as the Deputy Chef de Mission, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) said on Thursday.

"The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is proud to announce the appointment of key officials for India's contingent at the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympic Games. These appointments represent a blend of experience, expertise and leadership that will contribute significantly to the success of our athletes on the global stage," the IOA said in a statement.



"Leading the delegation as the Chef de Mission will be none other than the iconic boxer Mary Kom. Her unparalleled dedication to sports and inspiring journey make her a natural choice to guide and mentor our athletes at the Olympics.

"Assisting Mary Kom in this crucial role will be Shiva Keshavan, appointed as the Deputy Chef de Mission. Keshavan, former Olympian in luge, brings a wealth of experience and



knowledge to support the team's management and coordination efforts."

In charge of overseeing the shooting village operations will be Gagan Narang, a renowned shooting champion and a respected figure in the Indian Sports community. "His meticulous approach and understanding of athlete needs will ensure

a conducive environment for our shooters," the IOA said about the 2012 Olympic bronze medallist in men's 10m air rifle in London.

"Lastly carrying the Indian flag with pride and honour as the Flag Bearer will be Achanta Sharath Kamal, symbolising the unity and spirit of our contingent as they compete on the Olympic stage," the statement further added. Sharath Kamal will be participating in his fifth Olympic Games and is a multiple-time medallist at the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

Commenting on these appointments, IOA President PT Usha stated, "We are delighted to have such a distinguished and capable team of officials leading our contingent for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. Their expertise, dedication and passion for sports will undoubtedly inspire our athletes to achieve their best and make the nation proud."

## Indian Open Jumps: Nayana James clinches gold with new personal best

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

Seasoned long jumper Nayana James won the gold medal setting a new personal best in the 3rd Indian Open Jumps competition on Wednesday at the Anju Bobby High Performance Center.

In her second attempt, Nayana surpassed her previous personal best of 6.55 meters with a jump of 6.67 meters. Shaili Singh, the silver medallist at the U20 World Championships, jumped a season-best 6.40 meters to secure the title, while Sushmita finished on the podium with a jump of 6.28 meters.

Meanwhile, Shaili Singh, mentored by none other than India's legendary long jumper Anju Bobby George, showcased glimpses of brilliance. Starting strong with a 6.35-meter jump, she steadily improved with each attempt, reaching a commendable 6.40 meters, securing the silver medal. However, she struggled to find her footing in the later jumps, faltering amidst the pressure and settling for a series of distances that fell short of her potential.

As Nayana continued to demonstrate her consistency and form with jumps of 6.64 meters and 6.48 meters.



However, both Nayana and Shaili fell short of the elusive Olympic qualification mark of 6.86 meters. This was the second tournament for Nayana in the year as she started her season at the Asian

Indoor Championships with the best jump of 6.23m. She won the silver medal last year at the 37th National Games in Goa with a best jump of 6.52m.



## Vicky Kaushal opens up on how love unfolded between him and wife Katrina

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Vicky Kaushal, who was recently seen in the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer 'Dunki', has shared how romance unfolded between him and his wife Katrina Kaif. The two tied the nuptial knot in December 2021, after a few years of dating.

Vicky recently appeared on the sixth season of the streaming chat show 'No Filter Neha', and gave audiences a peek into his personal life and shared how things worked out with Katrina.

The actor said: "Just two people meeting and genuinely finding a connection, and that's how it literally happened. Like we kept meeting, and we just kept feeling that there's a connection, and till we just took it to the next level, we just felt like okay, this is just happening without effort. It's just very naturally feeling right, and that is how it happened."



## Big B reveals 'multiple benefits' of lazing around; gives you time to have paani poori

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan spent a day lazing around and even shared the benefits of it, which he said was the opportunity to enjoy 'paani poori'.

The cine icon took to his blog, where the actor wrote: "The lazing around yesterday had multiple benefits... primarily the opportunity to consume - 'paani poori' or 'puchka' or 'gol gappa'... different names from different regions of the Country -- Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi... BUT ALL HAVING THE SAME TASTE...!!!"

Big B said: "That is what Bharat is all about. We are different but we are ONE and the same taste!"

The cine icon then talked about his daughter Shweta Bachchan's birthday.



"So the greetings and the emotion of Shweta's Birthday with family at home, a personal family matter, to be used to justify their own AI construct... My mention of 'progress report' in the family environ is a reference, in harmonious jest to, and known to all within family, as reference to Shweta and Abhishek... for they are the 'progress reports' of Jaya and Me... "...and the communicator with such immense 'ingenuity' (sarky) connects it up to make their AI effort look genuine as, me wanting to clarify my illness 'report'... O BOY...!"

## Madhuri Dixit will miss her children on Holi; says 'they are at university'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Madhuri Dixit Nene has shared that she will be missing her children during Holi this year, but she will be celebrating the festival of colours with her friends. Madhuri is married to Shriram Madhav Nene, a cardiovascular surgeon from Los Angeles.

The couple have two sons, Arin and Ryan. The actress, who is currently the judge of 'Dance Deewane' expressed her thoughts about celebrating Holi, and said: "This time during Holi, I feel like I'll miss my chil-

dren. They are not here; they are at university. But I will celebrate with friends; all friends will come together. Whether we will play with colours or not, I am not sure, but everyone will come together."

"That's the significance of this occasion -- to be together with everyone, with parents, with children, with friends, celebrating Holi. Celebrating Holi with 'Dance Deewane' feels wonderful because the entire team is also our family. So, when we celebrate Holi with them and their families, it's a lot of fun. I extend my heartfelt Holi wishes to all our fans," added Madhuri.

## Shraddha says 'mummy ne kaan ke neeche bajaa diya'

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress Shraddha Kapoor, who was last seen in 'Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar', shared an elegant picture of herself in a shimmering gown, and the internet can't keep calm.

On Thursday, the actress took to her Instagram and shared a set of pictures donning her latest outfit. In the pictures, she can be seen donning a crepe-coloured gown with a halter neck.

She kept her tresses open and opted for minimal jewellery. She wrote in the caption, "Kuch nahi vro... Mummy ne kaan ke neeche (drum emoji and diya emoji)" which presumably reads, "Kuch nahi bro, mummy ne kaan ke neeche baja diya (nothing bro, mom just smacked the hell out of me)". The actress also had a lot of fun with her followers in the comments section as she engaged in a banter with them. One fan wrote, "Mummy ko bolo kaan ke peeche kala tikka lagaye (ask mom to put a teeka behind ears)". Shraddha humorously replied, "array yaar tikka se paneer tikka yaad aa gaya (Now, you've reminded me of Paneer Tikka)". Another fan quipped, "Do only blue tick owners get a reply from you?" to which Shraddha responded, "yahan reply walon ko blue tick mil jaata hai (The one whom I respond gets a blue tick)".



## Women still face challenges to prove they deserve more : Raveena Tandon

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Raveena Tandon, who essays a lawyer in the upcoming streaming film, has said that the corporate race isn't kind to anyone, more for the women.

From managing household chores to running companies, the world has become more progressive. But, women still face challenges to prove they deserve more.

Raveena pointed out the same as she said: "For years, women had to walk extra miles to prove her place in the world, Tanvi has too as well. Being the only female attorney in the court, she has to work extra hard compared to any other attorney. Let's face it, the corporate race hasn't been kind to anyone, especially women and 'Patna Shukla' brings that in perspective in a very mindful way."

The actress further mentioned, "It was comparatively easy for me to get into that mind space and deal with struggles as Tanvi, all I had to do was tap into all the challenges I faced at work. I think these small elements make 'Patna Shukla' a very raw and authentic portrayal of a woman's journey."

The film takes the viewers on the journey of a fearless lawyer, who takes matters into her own hands when she sees a student entangled in an education scam and soon realises that she is pitted against a Chief Minister candidate.



Nitibha Kaul



Nitibha Kaul