

absolute india



VOL. 11, ISSUE 183, MUMBAI | THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2024 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM MUMBAI, BHOPAL AND NEW DELHI

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Climate change made extreme April temperatures hotter affecting billions in Asia

BURNING ISSUE

Extreme temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius that impacted billions of people across Asia in April were made hotter and more likely by human-caused climate change, according to rapid attribution analysis by an international team of leading climate scientists from the World Weather Attribution group.

- Asia was hit by severe heatwaves this April. In South and Southeast Asia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam broke records for their hottest April day, and the Philippines experienced its hottest night ever.
- In India, temperatures reached as high as 46 degrees.
- Heat-related deaths were widely reported, with at least 28 in Bangladesh, five in India and three in Gaza during April, while surges in heat deaths have also been reported in Thailand and the Philippines this year.



there were hundreds or possibly thousands of other heat-related deaths in Asia during April.

The heat also led to crop failure, loss of livestock, water shortages, mass die-off of fish, widespread school closures, and the heat has been linked to low voter turn-out in Kerala. Climate change, caused by burning oil, coal and gas, and other human activities like deforestation, is making heatwaves more frequent, longer and hotter around the world. To quantify the effect of human-caused warming on the extreme temperatures across Asia, scientists analysed weather data and climate models using peer-reviewed methods to compare how these types of events have changed between today's climate, with approximately 1.2 degrees of global warming, and the cooler pre-industrial climate. The analysis focused on the periods when the heat

was most dangerous in two regions: the three-day average of maximum daily temperatures in a region of West Asia that included Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine and Jordan, and the 15-day average of maximum daily temperatures in the Philippines.

The scientists also analysed the possible influence of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that shifts between El Niño, neutral and La Niña conditions.

The study also analysed historical weather data for a region of South Asia that includes India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia. The researchers did not carry out a full attribution analysis for this region as the World Weather Attribution conducted similar studies in 2022 and 2023, and the data from weather observations showed that the attribution results

would not be significantly different. In West Asia, the scientists found that April heatwaves with temperatures above 40 degrees are more frequent due to warming caused by human activities. In today's climate, with 1.2 degrees of warming, similar heatwaves are expected to occur about once every 10 years.

Climate change made the heat about five times more likely and 1.7 degrees hotter. In the future, extreme temperatures in West Asia could become even more frequent and intense. If warming reaches 2 degrees, as they are expected to in the 2040s or 2050s unless emissions are rapidly halted, similar heatwaves will occur about once every five years and will become another one degree hotter, the study noted.

El Niño does not have an influence on the high temperatures in West Asia. The study was conducted by 13 researchers, including scientists from universities and meteorological agencies in Malaysia, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Britain.

Mariam Zachariah, Researcher at the Grantham Institute - Climate Change and the Environment, Imperial College London, said: "Climate change is bringing more days with potentially deadly temperatures to Asia every year. This result is unsurprising, but important for highlighting the dangers of extreme heat in Asia." "Unless the world takes massive, unprecedented steps to reduce emissions and keep warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, extreme heat will lead to even greater suffering in Asia," Zachariah added.

Cabinet may be expanded next month in Madhya Pradesh

Khan Aashu | Bhopal

There may soon be some changes in the 5 month-old government of Mohan Yadav of the state. There are preparations to include some new names in the existing cabinet. In this new influx, preference is likely to be given to those people who left the Congress and came to strengthen the BJP. In this extension, posts can also be given to those MLAs who have given better performance during the Lok Sabha elections.

At present, a total of 28 ministers are present in the Dr. Mohan Yadav government of the state, which came into existence in December 2023. These include 18 cabinet ministers, 6 ministers with independent charge and 4 ministers holding the rank of Minister of State. Considering

the size of the state cabinet, there is currently scope for inclusion of some more ministers in it. Accordingly, discussions have started on shaping the cabinet expansion. Sources say that in the expansion exercise, first preference will be given to those MLAs who have fled from Congress and have come to the shelter of BJP. Among these, the names of Ramniwas Rawat and Kamlesh Shah are being counted on priority. It is being said that perhaps one point might have been included in the conditions for the influx of these MLAs to BJP. Even during the previous Shivraj Singh Chouhan government, there was still scope for accommodating about 4 MLAs in the cabinet. Throughout the tenure there were speculations that there would be an extension. But after the com-

pletion of the full term, this expansion was given shape at the time of the last assembly elections. If this possible cabinet expansion of Mohan government is done next month, then the tenure of Dr. Mohan Yadav will be highlighted as the government will be expanded in just 6 months.

Report card will also work
Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who came to Bhopal amid the elections, had talked about preparing report cards of MLAs from this election. Those who have given their best performance during the elections can benefit from the promises made by Shah. MLAs representing different areas of the state can be given a place in the state cabinet.

Slovak PM Shot Multiple Times After Cabinet Meeting, Suspect Detained

Bratislava | Agencies

Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico, who has taken his central European country to a neutral stance on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, was shot on Wednesday as he interacted with the public after a government meeting, and his condition is "life-threatening", reports said.

The incident occurred in Handlova town, around 180 km northeast of Bratislava, as per local media reports. Multiple shots were fired at Fico, 59, RT reported, citing Slovakia's TA3 News. According to reports, he was also shot point-blank. The PM collapsed and was carried to a car by his security detail, it said.

Fico was shot "multiple times" and his condition is "life-threatening", the Prime Minister's office announced on Facebook. He



is currently being airlifted from Handlova to a hospital in Banska Bystrica as flying him to Bratislava would take too long, it added. "The next few hours will decide" whether he survives, the PM's office said. A Slovak Interior Ministry spokesman confirmed it was an assassination attempt. The suspect was restrained by police and arrested, Slovakian newspaper Dennik N reported.

Congress believes in 'destructive idea' of budget allocation based on religion: PM Modi

Kalyan | Agencies

Slamming Congress' 'divisive' agenda, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the party is not only adamant on taking away reservation from SC/ST/OBC and the poor to give it to Muslims, but also believes in the "destructive idea" of budget allocation based on religion.

"They have started this experiment in Karnataka. After coming to power there, they issued an order overnight that all Muslims are OBCs. They looted the OBC reservation quota and gave reservations to Muslims. Congress wants to do this in the entire country," claimed PM Modi in his address at the campaign rally for Shiv Sena nominee Shrikant Shinde from



Kalyan and the BJP nominee from Bhiwandi, Kapil Patil.

"But what has Congress' intention been? Today, I'm going to reveal this to all 140 crore countrymen for the first time. It's a serious topic that needs to be addressed. Congress believes that 15 percent of the government's budget should be exclusively allocated to minorities,

essentially budget allocation based on religion. Many years ago, Congress approved this idea of budget allocation based on religion. Just imagine how destructive this idea is," he added.

The Prime Minister, in his speech, accused the Congress of even considering confiscating properties to appease their vote bank.

CAA comes to fruition HOME MINISTRY HANDS OVER FIRST CITIZENSHIP CERTIFICATES TO 14 INDIVIDUALS

New Delhi: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday issued the first set of citizenship certificates to at least 14 applicants under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). "The certificates were handed over by Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla in the national capital," the MHA said in a press note.

Notably, the Centre notified the CAA rules for implementation on March 11, 2024, as the law remained in the 'dormant' state for a couple of years.

The applications for citizenship under the CAA were moved from persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian communities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, who entered India till December 31, 2014, on account of religious persecution.

The Empowered Committee headed by Director (Census Operation) after due scrutiny of papers granted citizenship to 14 applicants.

The CAA, seeking to give Indian citizenship to persecuted minorities from neighbouring nations including Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh was passed by the Parliament in 2019.

Rahul Gandhi urges people to save Constitution

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday urged the voters in Odisha to save the Constitution by voting in large numbers for the INDIA bloc.

While addressing a public gathering at Bolangir constituency, Gandhi said that the biggest issue in this election is to save the Constitution and the ideas propounded by B.R. Ambedkar, and Mahatma Gandhi.

He said if the constitution ends then the rights of common people, their land, the reservation system, and public sector firms will also come to an end.

Gandhi warned the people that the country would be controlled by 22 billionaires following the "destruction" of the Constitution.

"For the first time, a political party has said to the country that if it wins then it will destroy the



Constitution. Whatever the poor, Dalits, minorities, tribals, farmers and labourers have secured, it was given because of the Constitution. BJP senior leaders are saying that they will tear this book (Constitution). I want to say to every BJP worker and leader that

none in the world can dare to touch the Constitution," said Gandhi. He said that the BJP leaders also boast about ending reservation, the weapon provided to Dalits, Adivasis, and backward people by Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Not Necessary To Make Arrests In Every GST Case: SC to Centre

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday told the Centre that there is no need for making arrests in all Goods and Services Tax (GST) cases and that it can be done only if there is credible evidence and tangible material to prove culpability.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna, MM Sundresh and Bela M Trivedi, which reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity and interpretation of provisions relating to the Customs Act and Goods and Services Tax Act, said the power of arrest is different from necessity of arrest.

"The legislation does not say that for completion of investigation you need to be arrested. It is not the object of



the legislation. It is not necessary for you to arrest in each and every case of GST. It has to be based on some credible evidence and tangible material," the bench told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju. Section 69 of the GST Act deals with the powers of arrest, while section 104 of the Customs Act of 1962 allows an officer to arrest someone if they have reason to believe the person has committed an offence.

Women's internet adoption on mobile phones reach 37 pc in India: GSMA

► In 2023, an additional 120 million women connected to the internet via mobile globally.

► More women in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) are using mobile internet than ever before, 1.5 billion (66 per cent) in total, according to the report by the GSMA, a global organisation that represents mobile network operators worldwide.

► However, an alarming 785 million women remain unconnected, with approximately 60 per cent in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, said the annual 'Mobile Gender Gap Report 2024' by the GSMA.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Women's internet adoption on mobile phones has reached 37 per cent in India, while adoption among men remains stable, narrowing the gender gap from 40 per cent to 30 per cent, a global report showed on Wednesday.

Claire Sibthorpe, Head of Digital Inclusion at the GSMA, said that the reduction in the mobile internet gender gap is promising but "sustaining momentum is fragile".

"We are collaborating with the industry, policymakers and other relevant partners to address key barriers including affordability, awareness and digital skills," Sibthorpe added.

The GSMA estimates that closing the gender gap in mobile ownership and usage across LMICs could deliver an additional \$230 billion in revenue to the mobile industry over an eight-year period. The gender gap in mobile



ownership and usage across LMICs could deliver an additional \$230 billion in revenue to the mobile industry over an eight-year period. The gender gap in mobile

internet adoption across LMICs has narrowed for the first time since 2020, driven by women adopting it at a faster rate than men, particularly in South Asia. Women are now 15 per cent less likely than men to use mobile internet across LMICs, the findings showed.

Across LMICs, there are now 1.4 billion women who own a smartphone, meaning that 60 per cent of women now own a smartphone device. However, there are still 40 per cent of women in these countries, totalling 940 million, who do not own a smartphone.

"Mobile remains the primary -- and often only -- way people in LMICs access the internet, accounting for 84 per cent of broadband connections in 2023," the report noted.

INDIA'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DECLINES IN JAN-MARCH QUARTER

New Delhi: The unemployment rate in India's urban areas decreased to 6.7 per cent during January-March 2024 from 6.8 per cent in the same period of the previous year for persons aged 15 and above, reflecting a continued improvement in the job markets, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Wednesday.

The figures show that the female unemployment rate in the urban areas decreased from 9.2 per cent in January-March 2023 to 8.5 per cent in January-March 2024. There has also been an increasing trend in the Worker Population Ratio (WPR) for persons aged 15 and above from 45.2 per cent in January-March 2023 to 46.9 per cent in January-March 2024. This also shows an increase in employment as WPR is defined as the percentage of employed persons in the population.



DESPITE OBJECTIONS FROM OPPOSITION PARTIES, POK BECOMING PART OF INDIA IS REALITY: HM SHAH

Kolkata | Agencies

Despite opposition from a section of political parties in the country, the event of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) becoming an integral part of India is now a reality, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday.

"Rahul Gandhi might oppose it. Mamata Banerjee might oppose it. But now it is a reality that PoK will be a part of India," HM Shah said while addressing an election meeting.

HM Shah was in Serampore Lok Sabha in Hooghly District on Wednesday in support of BJP candidate Kabir Shankar Bose.

According to HM Shah, it is the credit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that "azadi (freedom)" slogans are now raised in PoK instead of Jammu & Kashmir.

"Previously 'azadi' slogans were raised in Jammu & Kashmir. Now those slogans are being raised in PoK. Previously stone-pelting incidents took place in Jammu & Kashmir, those things are now happening in PoK. So, however the Opposition par-



ties might oppose it, no power can stop PoK from becoming a part of India," HM Shah said.

He added that the current Lok Sabha elections were a contest

between dynastic parties on one side and a dedicated and honest politician coming from a humble background on the other.

"Mamata Banerjee wants her

nephew to succeed her as the chief minister. Sharad Pawar wants his daughter to be the chief minister. Even Stalin wants to see his son as the chief minister. Above all Sonia Gandhi wants Rahul Baba to become the prime minister of the country. On the other side, there is an honest and dedicated leader born in the family of a tea-seller," he said.

HM Shah drew a comparison between Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and PM Modi. "On one hand Rahul Gandhi makes frequent trips to Bangkok, on the other hand, the Prime Minister spends his Diwali in the midst of the Indian Army jawans and has sweets with them," he said. Taking a swipe at the Mamata Banerjee-led government, he referred to the legendary Indian movie, 'Hirak Rajar Deshe (In the land of diamond king)', directed by the iconic filmmaker late Satyajit Ray, which depicted the rise and fall of an autocratic and oppressive ruler. According to HM Shah, had Ray been alive now he would surely have directed a movie titled 'Hirak Ranir Deshe (In the land of diamond queen).'

INDIA bloc will double the quantity of free ration: Kharge

Lucknow | Agencies

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday announced that if the INDIA bloc is voted to power it will increase the ration quota for the poor from 5 kilograms to 10 kilograms.

"It was the Congress that brought in the Food Security Act and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is now taking the credit for it. INDIA bloc government will double the amount of free ration for the poor," he said while addressing a joint press conference with Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav here on Wednesday.

He further said that the INDIA bloc would implement the Panch Nyay and guarantees mentioned in the manifesto and the state would be free to add on anything they want for their areas. The Congress President said that while the INDIA bloc is with the poor and weaker sections of society,



the BJP-led NDA is with the rich.

He said that the ongoing elections are important because it is a fight between ideologies and to save the future of the country and the constitution. He further alleged that opposition leaders are being stopped from filing nomination papers and election agents are being threatened. "For an election to be free and fair, a level playing field must be ensured," he added.

Addressing the media, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav said that the

BJP is getting embroiled in its negativity.

"They are not asking for votes on the work they have done in the last ten years. It is a new language that they are using. People want change and farmers have not forgotten the atrocities," he said.

Replying to a question, he said that it was the BJP that is communalising the campaign by talking about mut-ton, machhli, and mangalutra. He appealed to the people of Bahujan Samaj not to waste their vote and support the INDIA bloc candidates.

Kejriwal involved in liquor scam, he should be opposed: Ex-Punjab CM Channi

Chandigarh | Agencies

A day ahead of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Kejriwal's visit to Punjab for the election campaign, former Punjab chief minister and Congress candidate from Jalandhar (reserved) Charanjit Singh Channi on Wednesday said Kejriwal was involved in liquor scam and instead of being welcomed he should be opposed.

"Kejriwal who is involved in the liquor scam and is out of jail for only 15 days, can't be trusted. A big liquor scam happened in Delhi and the same happened in Punjab also. We demand an inquiry into it. Instead of being welcomed, he should be opposed."



A roadshow is being planned in Amritsar on Thursday evening for Kejriwal.

AAP, a constituent of the INDIA bloc, a coalition of opposition parties, which

aims to take on NDA-led by BJP, is contesting on all 13 parliamentary seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Punjab will go to the polls in the seventh phase on June 1.

107 intellectuals write to CM Siddaramaiah seeking arrest of Prajwal Revanna, assurance to victims

Bengaluru | Agencies

Demanding that the Chief Minister ensure the immediate arrest of former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda's grandson Prajwal Revanna, 107 authors and thinkers from Karnataka have written an open letter to Siddaramaiah.

The letter lists 16 points and states that the "mass rape scandal is utterly shameful and has caused civil society to hang its head in shame. It is a criminal offense to seditiously record and store about 2,900 videos and photos, threaten victims and kidnap..."

They have expressed concern over the politicisation of the alleged sex video scandal involving JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna that is downplaying the original crime of rape and its consequences. "The irresponsible behaviour of political forces is downplaying

the original crime and its consequences. Members of Prajwal Revanna's family, including his grandfather, father, mother, brother, uncle, and aunt, have held various positions such as Prime Minister, Chief Minister, and members of the state legislature. The scandal involving this family has regressed us to a 19th-century feudal set-up that is against women. The scandal has revealed that the Prajwal Revanna family has carried out an autocratic rule under the guise of democracy," the letter charges. "It is an insult to democracy that despite this scandal coming to light, the election for the Hassan Lok Sabha seat was not halted, and the accused was allowed to contest. Even after the scandal came to light, the accused was allowed to go scot free between April 22 and April 26. The failure of agencies to track his movements has raised ques-

tions about the safety of women in society," the letter states. "It is even more shocking that the biggest scandal of this magnitude is being used for political mileage during elections by political parties and leaders," the letter mentions.

"The statements and counter-statements, caste-based remarks, and gender-insensitive comments by politicians, as well as reports projecting victims as criminals, have shattered society and peace of mind. This development is demeaning the honour of victims, who are further finding themselves in a difficult position and are hesitant to lodge complaints," the letter observes.

"The families of the victims who have been exposed are subjected to severe mental harassment. Family members and children of those families are unable to find solutions and are under great stress. Reports sug-



gest that three to four victims have attempted suicide," the letter underlines. "In this context, we demand the immediate arrest of Prajwal Revanna and the creation of a fearless atmosphere for lodging complaints. We also urge you, CM, to address the victims and provide them with strength and release video statements," the authors demand.

'Remove all illegal hoardings from railway property', BMC issues notice to WR, CR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Adopting a tough stance, the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation on Wednesday served notices to the Central Railway (CR) and Western Railway (WR) to immediately pull down all illegal and oversized hoardings on their respective lands, an official said.

The BMC has issued the notices under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, to the Divisional Managers of CR and WR, asking them to remove hoardings that violate the maximum size limit of 40x40 feet (1,600 sq ft area).

The BMC has also decided that henceforth, it would not permit erecting hoardings larger than the stipulated size in view of the geographical and coastal position of Mumbai, the weather, and wind conditions, among other factors.

The move came in the wake of the crash of a monstrous hoarding measuring around



120x120 feet (14,400 sq ft area) on Monday afternoon that killed at least 14 persons, and injured 88 others, besides causing massive damage to several homes and a petrol pump in the Pant Nagar area of Ghatkopar suburb. The hoarding was erected on a property belonging to the Government Railway Police (GRP) for which permission was reportedly given in 2021 with a validity of 10 years. Following the May 13 tragedy, the BMC has launched a city-wide drive against illegal or over-sized hoardings dotting the Mumbai skyline, and taking steps to raze them.

As per the BMC, there are 1,025 big/small hoardings/billboards in the city, comprising 573 illuminated hoardings, 70 lit by LED, and 382 non-illuminated hoardings.

The BMC removed one huge illegal hoarding in Malad on Wednesday, and work on removing three massive billboards in the Ghatkopar area taken up on Tuesday will be completed on Wednesday night, officials said.

Barmer Independent nominee Ravindra Bhati receives another death threat

Jaipur | Agencies

The Independent nominee from Rajasthan's Barmer, Ravindra Singh Bhati, has again received a death threat via a video message in which a young man could be seen vowing that Bhati will be killed soon for "spreading the poison of casteism".

The latest video running 1 minute and 26 seconds surfaced on Tuesday. The man seen in the video also accused Bhati of insulting their folk deities. "What does he want to achieve by spreading this kind of casteism," he asked.

Earlier on April 27, a person named Megharam threatened to kill Bhati in a Facebook post. The Barmer police arrested Megharam on



May 2 and handed him over to the Balotra police. On May 3, two personal security officers (PSOs) were deputed for the security of Bhati, who's also the Independent MLA

from Sheo. Meanwhile, after repeated threats to Bhati, his supporters are demanding strict action in the matter.

The police are probing the matter.

JHARKHAND CONG MINISTER ALAMGIR ALAM ARRESTED AFTER ED GRILLING IN RS 35 CRORE CASH HAUL CASE

New Delhi: Days after the recovery of mounds of cash, amounting to more than Rs 35 crore, Jharkhand minister Alamgir Alam was on Wednesday arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The Congress minister was arrested after two consecutive days of questioning by the ED sleuths in Ranchi -- for nine hours on Tuesday and for six hours on Wednesday -- in connection with the recovery of mountain of cash from the domestic help of his personal assistant.

After the cash seizure on May 6, the ED raids were also conducted at the residence of Alamgir Alam's personal assistant Sanjeev Lal and his other associates. During the raids, the ED also seized damning documents related to transfer-posting of bureaucrats.

Veteran Cong leader and ex-Gujarat Governor Kamla Beniwal passes away

Jaipur | Agencies

Former Gujarat Governor and veteran Congress leader Kamla Beniwal, who also served as the Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan, breathed her last at the Fortis Hospital in Jaipur on Wednesday. She was 97.

The funeral of Beniwal -- who was admitted to the hospital after her health condition suddenly deteriorated -- will take place in Jaipur on Thursday.

Beniwal was the first woman state minister in Rajasthan. Her son Alok Beniwal has been an Independent MLA from Shahpura.

Mourning her demise, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a condolence message on X: "Saddened by the passing away of Dr. Kamla Beniwal Ji. She had a long political career in Rajasthan, where she served the people with diligence. I had countless interactions



with her when she was the Governor of Gujarat and I was the Chief Minister. Condolences to her family and friends. Om Shanti."

Senior Congress leaders in Rajasthan, including Ashok Gehlot, Govind Singh Dotasra, and Sachin Pilot, have expressed grief over the demise of Beniwal.

Char Dham Yatra: Fake news or defamatory videos to face legal action, says Uttarakhand govt

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Radha Raturi on Wednesday convened a high-level meeting of officials and area in-charges and reviewed the arrangements for smooth vehicular traffic on the yatra route.

She also directed officials to plug the gaps and not refrain from taking strict measures for ensuring smooth and hassle-free yatra for the pilgrims.

Legal action against those spreading fake news or videos to defame the Char Yatra was another crucial decision at the high-level meet.

The officials have been directed to lodge FIR if anyone is found spreading fake pictures or videos.

This apparently comes in light of the heavy rush of devotees for the Char Dham Yatra this year, which is seemingly enormous as compared to previous years.

Instructions have been issued to stop and send back unregistered buses and vehicles.

The Chief Secretary directed the Transport Department to hold a meeting with the tour



operators on the issue of vehicles without registration, without trip card or post-dated registration.

Vehicles without registration will be identified at the check points established at various places and appropriate action will be taken.

The officials have also been instructed to take due action on any complaint of any devotee received on their mobile.

Officials have been asked to keep their mobile phones on 'switch on' mode for 24 hours and record all the complaints related to Yatra.

Rishikesh Municipal Corporation has been asked to

ensure satisfactory arrangements for food, drinking water, toilets on the Yatra route and also arrange the best possible facilities for the pilgrims, including the LIVE telecast of dhams.

According to the state government's health secretary, 184 doctors have been deployed on the Yatra route this time, out of which 44 are specialists.

The Health Department is providing all facilities to the pilgrims, from health checkups to other facilities.

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) related to the Yatra has also been issued in a total of 11 languages.

TAXILA BUSINESS SCHOOL HOSTS PREMIER MANAGEMENT CONCLAVE WITH INDUSTRY TITANS

Jaipur: Taxila Business School, renowned for its distinguished legacy and unwavering commitment to excellence under the visionary guidance of Mentor Mr. Kishore Sharma, President Ms. Anuradha Mehta, and Dean Prof. Rajat Bohra, is set to host a monumental Management Conclave on May 18th. This prestigious event promises a unique opportunity for participants to gain diverse perspectives on the global business landscape and contribute to India's economic growth. The Conclave brings together industry leaders from top-tier companies like Deloitte, Reliance Jio, Shree Cement, Suzuki Motors, Deloitte India, KPMG, Yamaha Motors, Acuity Knowledge, Weber Shandwick, and Uflex, to share their invaluable experience and lead interactive sessions. Attendees will gain first-hand insights and knowledge from seasoned professionals like these, enhancing their ability to navigate the ever-evolving business world.

The Conclave promises a holistic learning experience. Participants can forge valuable connections through networking opportunities with business leaders and fellow entrepreneurs. Industry titans will share their expertise and experiences, offering valuable insights into effective business strategies for scaling and promoting ventures. Attendees will also have the chance to engage with thought leaders shaping the future of their fields, fostering continuous learning and growth within an inspiring environment alongside like-minded professionals.



Mumbai South Central to witness contest between mass leader and ace political strategist

Team Absolute | Mumbai

There is a close fight between estranged friends and hardcore Shiv Sainiks in Mumbai South Central constituency where Eknath Shinde led Shiv Sena nominee and sitting MP Rahul Shewale is pitted against the Shiv Sena UBT candidates and former MP Anil Desai.

The fight is being portrayed by two sides as a contest between an ace political strategist (Anil Desai) and the mass leader with an ear on the ground (Rahul Shewale).

Incidentally, both Shewale and Desai, who were involved in the legal battle to retain the name and symbol of Shiv Sena, are approaching the voters making a strong claim of real Shiv Sena taking forward the thoughts of party founder later Balasaheb Thackeray.

Shewale, who was elected as the Shiv Sena (United) candidate in the 2014 and 2019 elections riding on PM Modi's wave is quite optimistic about scoring a hat trick by seeking votes on Modi's guarantee and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's pro-development plank.



Despite a vertical split in the party, Shewale is banking on the Shiv Sena's Shakra level network apart from the BJP's poll machinery and the active involvement of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena's cadres.

Desai, who is contesting a maiden Lok Sabha election, hopes to win the seat banking on the anti-incumbency of the Modi government and also against Shewale.

He is also banking on the sympathy for Uddhav Thackeray across the voters and also on the plank

to save democracy and the Constitution.

For him, Shiv Sainiks at the Shakra level accompanied by the cadres of Congress, NCP, communists and representatives of a number of non-government organisations have been a major source of strength.

There are 14 candidates in the fray. A total of 9,51,738 voters comprising 5,10,168 males and 4,41,389 females will cast their voting exercise on May 20.

What is interesting is the Marathi and Muslim voters, which constitute 57.42 per cent and 19.7 per cent respectively, will play a decisive role.

In addition, there are 8.6 per cent SC, 5.49 per cent North Indians, 1.53 per cent Gujarati, 1.1 per cent Christians and 6.16 per cent others. Both Shewale and Desai are striving to seek maximum support from the Marathi Manos apart from Muslims and others.

Shiv Sena had represented the constituency for a record 20 years from 1989 and 2009 but later Congress regained its hold in the 2009 elections. However, in the last two elections, Shiv Sena (United) won the seats.

Sachin Tendulkar's security guard shoots self in hometown

Team Absolute | Jalgaon

In a shocking incident, a State Reserve Police Force jawan (SRPF), who was attached to the security detail of cricket maestro Bharat Ratna Sachin Tendulkar, allegedly shot himself at his native home in Jamner town, an official said here on Wednesday. The deceased has been identified as Prakash Kapde who had reportedly gone on a brief vacation to his ancestral place. Kapde (39) who shot himself in the neck with his service gun is survived by his aged parents, wife and two minor children, a brother and his family members.

Senior Police Inspector of Jamner Police Station Kiran Shinde said that the incident occurred around 1.30 am on Wednesday at the victim's home and the exact reasons behind the alleged suicide are being probed.

"As per preliminary investigations, he may have taken the extreme step owing to certain personal reasons, but we are waiting



for the full details of the probe," Shinde guardedly told reporter.

Kapde's body has been sent for an autopsy and the Jamner Police have filed an accidental death report pending further investigations, including questioning his family members, colleagues and other acquaintances.

The SRPF is likely to conduct its independent inquiry into the incident as the matter involves a jawan assigned to VIP security, sources said.

I&B Secretary, Indian envoy, 'Delhi Crime' director open Bharat Pavilion at Cannes

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sanjay Jaju, Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, and Jawed Ashraf, Ambassador of India in France, opened the Bharat Pavilion at the 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival on Wednesday.

Important guests present at the ceremony included Tholoana Rose Ncheke, Chairperson of South Africa's National Film and Video Foundation, Christian Jeune, Director of the Films Department, Cannes Film Festival, and the Canadian director Richie Mehta, who's best known for 'Delhi Crime', the Netflix series.

Speaking at the inauguration, Jaju said, "It is heartening to have more Indian projects in the Cannes official selection this year, one each in Competition and in Uncertain Regard, and let me also add that both these projects have been beneficiaries of the support from the government in terms of the incentives as well as official core



"The Bharat Pavilion here would serve as a hub for networking, collaboration, and promotion of Indian Cinema on the global stage," Jaju said. "We would like to foster greater collaboration between the Indian audio-visual industry and its international counterparts, thereby enhancing the visibility and accessibility of Indian cinema worldwide," the Secretary added.

Speaking later, Mehta said, "It is such a momentous occasion for Indian cinema here. Personally for me, I wouldn't have a career if not for the film festival community. The festivals have helped me basically unlock a career."

Continuing on how he acts as an international bridge for Indian storytellers, Mehta added, "One of my missions, as a Canadian Indian, has been to export the best of Indian storytelling. And I'm not talking about a film standpoint, I'm talking from the standpoint of the stories, the people on the ground, and the amazing culture that we have to show to the world."

Productions." Hosted each year at Cannes by the Information & Broadcasting Ministry, Government of India, the Pavilion's nodal agency is the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and FICCI is the industry partner.

CDSCO approves antibody for rare skin disorder in Indian adults

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) on Wednesday approved Boehringer Ingelheim's Spevigo (Spesolimab) injection, a first-in-class treatment for adults suffering from Generalised Pustular Psoriasis (GPP) flares -- a rare skin disorder -- in India.

GPP is a rare and unpredictable systemic disease, which manifests with painful pus-filled blisters, redness, inflammation, and scaling on the skin, often accompanied by systemic symptoms like fever and fatigue. Spesolimab works as a selective antibody that blocks the activation of the interleukin-36 receptor (IL-36R) -- a signalling path-



way within the immune system shown to be involved in the pathogenesis of GPP.

In the Phase II global clinical trial, GPP patients (54 per cent) treated with Spesolimab showed no visible pustules after one week, compared to placebo (6 per cent). Most of them at the outset of the trial had a high, or very high, density of pustules, and impaired quality of

life, the company said.

In India, GPP presents a significant healthcare challenge, affecting individuals of all ages and demographics. While precise prevalence data for GPP in India is limited, GPP is widely recognised as a rare disease.

"We often take our skin for granted. However, for a small percentage of people with a rare, lifelong skin disorder,

living in constant anticipation of possible flares that could require emergency medical care is a harsh reality. Some patients often describe the feeling as akin to 'being on fire,' said Gagandeep Singh Bedi, Managing Director, Boehringer Ingelheim India. "Spevigo's impact goes beyond treatment; it's about giving patients the chance to reclaim their lives. It presents a promising opportunity for enhancing effective management, quality of life, and patient outcomes in India, instilling hope for individuals grappling with GPP," added Gagandeep. The CDSCO's decision follows existing approvals in the European Union, US, China, and Japan, the company said.

Post-poll Mumbaikars will send Cong leaders to Pakistan: Bawankule

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Tuesday said Mumbai residents will send Congress leaders to Pakistan after the Lok Sabha elections 2024 get over in the metropolis on May 20 to protect the family of Ajmal Kasab, the terrorist from the neighbouring country who was hanged for his role in the 26/11 attacks, reported news agency.

Bawankule made the statement while responding to Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar's criticism of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde for rushing to the site of a hoarding tragedy in suburban Ghatkopar, thereby delaying the rescue work.

"Wadettiwar has taken the side of



Ajmal Kasab, thus he has no right to campaign in Mumbai. In fact, after polls, people (from Mumbai) will send Congress leaders to Pakistan for the protection of Kasab's family," he told reporters.

Wadettiwar, the Leader of Opposition in the state assembly, had claimed 26/11 prosecution lawyer and BJP candidate from Mumbai North Central Lok Sabha seat, Ujjwal Nikam, hid the information that Karkare wasn't killed by Kasab, but fell to a bullet fired by a policeman linked to the RSS. The state BJP president expressed confidence about the ruling Mahayuti alliance winning all the six parliamentary constituencies in Mumbai, where the national party and its ally Shiv Sena are contesting three seats each.

Fire erupts at Mumbai hoarding crash site, doused quickly

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sparking a fresh scare here on Wednesday, a minor fire erupted in the vicinity of the petrol pump which was crushed after a monstrous hoarding crashed on it.

Eyewitnesses said that as the rescue operations continue for the third day since the gigantic billboard collapsed on Monday afternoon, a gas cutter used to cut the heavy metal rods sparked a blaze.

However as the teams of Mumbai Fire Brigade were already stationed there, they managed to douse the blaze within barely 10 minutes. There are no reports of any fresh damage or injuries in the latest instance and the rescue work resumed soon afterwards.

On May 13, after Mumbai was lashed by a sudden dust storm and thunderstorm with strong winds, a gigantic private hoarding erected in Pant Nagar in Ghatkopar tumbled



onto several houses and a petrol pump below. So far 14 persons have been killed, another 88 injured, more than 60 people were rescued, and some persons are still feared trapped under the rubble.

In view of the petrol pump and its underground storage tanks at the spot, the rescue teams are carrying out mostly manual operations, avoiding the use of inflammatory equipment, etc. to avoid any other tragedy.

Man ends life, suicide note blames neighbours



Team Absolute | Mumbai

A 43-year-old man who allegedly ended his life, in his suicide note, has accused several of his neighbours, including women, of assault and harassment by lodging a false case against him. The deceased has been identified as Tejas Gujjar whose body was found behind the VSNL residential colony in Gorai on the evening of May 6. Gujjar was involved in share trading and resided with his beautiful wife and two children in Marina Enclave, Jankalyan Nagar, Malvani area, said an officer. The Borivali police have booked all the 12 persons listed by deceased in a case of abatement to suicide and other sections. The accused persons are also residents of Marina Enclave.

Gujjar's wife reported to the Malvani police station that her husband has been missing since May 3. His body was discovered on the evening of May 6. Earlier, one of his female neighbours, who ran a beauty parlour, had accused him of indecent behavior and gestures, leading to a case filed against him in January. Gujjar had been absconding since then.

According to statements provided to the police by Gujjar's wife, the accused had been harassing him, assaulting him, and abusing him in the past. Gujjar would often intervene and raise objections to the behaviour of his neighbors during society meetings, leading to conflicts. The beauty parlour owner and her staff had allegedly filed a false FIR against him.

CM Eknath Shinde targets Sena (UBT)



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday hit out at rival Shiv Sena (UBT), saying their brand of Hindutva and nationalism means drafting 1993 Mumbai serial bomb blasts accused Iqbal Musa alias Baba Chauhan to campaign for them in the Lok Sabha elections 2024, reported news agency. Shinde also claimed the Shiv Sena headed by him will win all the 15 Lok Sabha seats it is contesting in Maharashtra, which sends 48 members to the Lower House of Parliament. Speaking at a conclave organised by Marathi news channel a week ahead of the fifth and last phase of Lok Sabha elections 2024 in Maharashtra, the CM maintained there were no differences within the Mahayuti alliance, consisting of the BJP, the Shiv Sena and the NCP led by Ajit Pawar, over sharing Lok

Sabha seats for contest among allies. Of the 48 parliamentary seats in the state, the BJP is contesting on 28, the Shiv Sena on 15, the NCP on four and Rashtriya Samaj Paksha on one.

"A 1993 bomb blasts accused was campaigning for one of their (Shiv Sena-UBT) candidates. This is their Hindutva and nationalism. The one who killed scores of people and was behind blast, and they made a discovery that (then-Maharashtra ATS chief Hemant) Karkare did not die of (26/11 terrorist Ajmal) Kasab's bullets," Shinde said. With regards to the 1993 blasts accused, Shinde was referring to the BJP's allegations that Iqbal Musa alias Baba Chauhan was seen in a campaign rally of Shiv Sena (UBT) Mumbai North West Lok Sabha seat candidate Amol Kirtkar. The allegations were denied by Musa as well as Kirtkar, both of whom claimed they did not know each other.

Second girder for Coastal Road-Sea Link connector installed by BMC

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Mumbai Coastal Road Project reached another key milestone with the successful installation of the second enormous Bow Arch String Girder at 6:07 am on May 15, 2024. This follows the earlier construction of the first girder on April 26, 2024. The second girder was carefully installed while taking into account tidal conditions in the sea, linking the Mumbai Coastal Road to the Bandra-Worli Sea Link route on both sides.

Municipal Commissioner and Administrator Bhusan Gagrani and Additional Municipal Commissioner for Eastern Suburbs Amit Saini oversaw the operation. Other notable participants included Ashwini Bhide, Managing Director of Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation, Ashwini Joshi, Additional Municipal Commissioner (City), and other senior officials and engineers.

The effective installation of the first girder had already increased confidence among the project team members. Due to limited space, assembling the second girder began at 3 a.m. and was a painstaking operation. Despite the hurdles, the 2,500-metric-ton girder was successfully placed by 6:07 am, with mating cones precisely aligned.

The installation created a sense of caution and intrigue, especially given the restricted space provided. Despite this, officials, engineers, and workers carried out the mission carefully and efficiently. The girders will be concreted in the next phase, using Japanese technology to prevent corrosion. The second girder, 31.7 metres wide



and 143 metres long, was carried from Ambala, Haryana, with numerous pre-fabricated parts. Its installation is a significant step towards connecting Mumbai Coastal Road and the Bandra-Worli Sea Link.

"The Mumbai Coastal Road Project achieved another milestone today by successfully setting up the second giant Bow Arch String Girder at 6:07 a.m. today 15th May 2024. This follows the earlier setup of the first giant Bow Arch String Girder on 26th April 2024. The second girder setup was completed by keeping an eye on tidal conditions in the sea. With this girder setup, the Mumbai Coastal Road and the Bandra-Worli Sea Link route are now connected on both sides. The work was carried out under

the guidance of Municipal Commissioner & Administrator Bhusan Gagrani and Additional Municipal Commissioner (Eastern Suburbs) Dr Amit Saini," BMC said in their press statement. "The second girder is relatively larger in weight, length, and width than the first one. The second girder measures 31.7 meters in width, and 31 metres in height, and spans a length of 143 meters. Weighing 2,500 metric tons, various pre-fabricated parts of this girder were manufactured at Ambala, Haryana. On Sunday morning, 12th May 2024, a barge departed from the Mazgaon Dock, carrying the second girder for set up," it further stated.



EDITOR'S SPECS

The rising burden of dengue in India

Rising temperatures, unprecedented floods, and challenges in public health infrastructure are all contributing to the rising burden of dengue in India, said experts on Wednesday, ahead of National Dengue Day. National Dengue Day is observed every year on May 16. The theme this year is 'Dengue Prevention: Our Responsibility for a Safer Tomorrow.' Dengue is a vector-borne disease transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito and is endemic to more than 100 countries. Urbanisation and the density of the human population also facilitate the rapid spread of the virus. According to the experts, the transmission of dengue is closely associated with three key factors: Rainfall, humidity, and temperature which dictate the geographies in which it spreads and the transmission rate. Despite the challenges, progress has been made, particularly in the development and implementation of strategies for vector control in India, which can be seen in the declining cases and death rates. As per the data from the Health Ministry's National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), dengue claimed 91 lives and affected 94,198 people in the country in India in 2023 -- a marked decline from 1,93,245 cases and 346 deaths in 2021. However, in 2022, the cases declined (23,3251) but deaths rose (303). Meanwhile, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has prequalified two dengue vaccines -- Japanese drug maker Takeda's live-attenuated TAK-003 and Sanofi Pasteur's CYD-TDV. These vaccines offer hope for reducing the incidence of dengue, although their effectiveness depends on broader strategies including vector control, public awareness, and robust surveillance systems to monitor and respond to outbreaks efficiently.

Validation of the new laws

D.C. Pathak

The Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud, addressing a conference in New Delhi on "Advance of Criminal Justice System", on April 20, lauded the new Penal Codes enacted by the Parliament in December last year, described the development as a "watershed moment" and expressed satisfaction that India was changing in synchronisation with our times. He felt that implementation of the new laws would mark a significant overhaul of the criminal justice system to better protect the interests of victims and ensure a more efficient conduct of investigation and prosecution. He emphasised the urgent need for capacity building in areas of forensic expertise, reorientation of investigating officers and investment in our court system. It may be mentioned that with the avowed objective of freeing the country of the colonial hangover on the justice system, the Indian Parliament re-designated the Indian Penal Code, 1860; Indian Evidence Act, 1872; and Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, as Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita Act, Bharatiya Sakshya Act, and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Samhita Act, respectively. The Chief Justice declared that the enactment of these laws by Parliament "underscoring India's evolving dynamics and the pressing need for innovative legal mechanisms to address contemporary challenges". In bolstering the concept of punishment acting as a deterrent against crime, the new law lays down the death penalty for the rape of a minor and also for "lynching" -- the two black marks of the contemporary crime scenario in India. The Act replaced the Indian Penal Code of 1860 repealed 22 old sections, added 8 new ones and amended as many as 175 others. A new Section 69 punishes indulgence in sexual intercourse through deception by way of making promises of marriage while concealing identity. "Snatching" has been made a distinct offence and a severe penalty was prescribed for disseminating false information through spoken words, signs or electronic means. This latter is also meant to check criminal misuse of social media. The new code for the first time punishes an act of "terrorism" that was likely to threaten India's unity, integrity, security, sovereignty or economy or spread terror among the people domestically or abroad. There has been some expression of concern by civil society groups -- particularly those building a narrative of "authoritarianism" against the present government -- that the definition of terrorist activity was being stretched to punish "anti-



regime" criticism. There is no doubt, however, in the minds of average citizens that in this era of proxy wars, advocacy of violence against a legitimate democratic government deserved to be viewed seriously. In what can be regarded as a progressive move for dispensing justice, community service has been included as a punishment for first-time offenders committing a petty crime. Besides, a new definition of "organised crime" has been incorporated in the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita Act to include among other things, kidnapping, human trafficking and cyber crimes carried out to secure material benefit. The activities of members of an organised crime syndicate are punishable with imprisonment of a minimum of five years -- going up to a life sentence if there was no death -- and, including capital punishment if a death was caused. The new Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Samhita Act has repealed 9 sections of the old Act, introduced 9 new sections and modified 160 earlier sections. It mandates forensic investigation for crimes punishable with imprisonment of seven years or more. It requires forensic experts to visit the scene of crime, gather clues and document the process. Electronic mode of giving evidence is permitted at trials, enquiries and proceedings under Section 173 and it is laid down under Section 356 that a judgement can be pronounced in the absence of a proclaimed offender who had avoided the trial. A great reform is the introduction of the concept of Zero FIR to be registered by a police station on receiving a complaint even if it did not

were otherwise protected. For offences with a maximum punishment of three to seven years of imprisonment, the police are permitted to conduct a preliminary inquiry within 14 days of the complaint to decide whether an FIR was to be registered -- this seemed to be against the judicial mandate that FIR had to be registered on any complaint alleging a cognisable offence. It is apprehended that this might allow the police to refuse to register an FIR even on a legitimate complaint. The provisions made in the new laws can improve the justice system but they could also be put to misuse by the authorities wielding power. Supervision of senior officers should be able to check the latter. With time under judicial scrutiny, hopefully, the pathway to improvement will be opened up. The introduction of two new offences in the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita that did not exist in the Indian Penal Code, have invited an acrimonious debate in human rights groups. They relate to a "terrorist act" and an act "endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India". It is said that the definition of a "terrorist" act was the same as provided in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act which was worded loosely enough to allow police to book political dissidents. It punishes even the "advice" and "incitement" to do something that amounted to a threat to India's unity, integrity, sovereignty, security and economy. Further, the inclusion of the offence of publishing "false" or "misleading" information jeopardising the sovereignty, unity, integrity and security of India -- it is alleged -- would enable the state to target media outlets and journalists who revealed information inconvenient to the government. In a nutshell, some of the new laws have been run down by the critics -- mostly the Opposition and civil society groups -- as an instrument in the hands of the regime for suppressing dissent and advancing its political interests. The people of India are sensitive to issues of governance and human rights but they would appreciate any genuine reform in the maintenance of law and order and dispensation of justice of which police is perhaps the most important systemic component. Conscientious citizens would appreciate the deterrent law enacted for offences like the rape of a minor and mob lynching that had an unsettling impact on society as a whole. (The writer is a former Director of the Intelligence Bureau. Views are personal)

international

Russia-China relations continue to develop despite challenging international situation, says Putin

Moscow | Agencies On the eve of his two-day state visit to China, which starts on Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated in a written interview with Xinhua that Russia and China are promoting the prosperity of both nations through expanded equal and mutually beneficial cooperation in economic and cultural fields. In the interview, Putin emphasised that the coordination of foreign policies between the two countries is propelling the establishment of a fair multipolar world order, which underpins the future success of the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era. Putin highlighted that contemporary Russia-China relations transcend ideology and are a strategic choice made independently by the two countries regardless of the political situation. This choice is grounded in the extensive common interests, deep mutual trust, strong public support,



and genuine friendship between the people of the two countries. Both nations are jointly committed to safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security. "In a broader sense, we are working to contribute to the development and prosperity of Russia and China by enhancing equal, mutually beneficial economic and humanitarian cooperation and strengthening foreign policy coordination in the interests of building a just multipolar world order. All this is the key to the future success of our comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for

the new era," said Putin. He noted that the partnership between Russia and China is always based on equality and mutual trust, mutual respect for sovereignty, and consideration of each other's interests. President Xi Jinping, a wise and visionary leader, plays a special and prominent role in the development of bilateral relations, he added. "We first met back in March 2010, and we have been seeing and calling each other regularly ever since. President Xi maintains a respectful, friendly, open and at the same time business-like style of communication," Putin said, adding that each meeting was not only a dialogue between old friends but also a fruitful exchange of views on bilateral and international agendas. Putin recalled that in 2013, President Xi chose Russia as the first destination of his state visit as China's head of state. After being re-elected as Chinese President in March last year, his first state visit was again to Russia. They spent nearly five hours together, holding one-on-one in-depth talks, followed by a day of substantive official events. "This unprecedented level of strategic partnership between our countries determined my choice of China as the first state to be visited after the official inauguration as the president of the Russian Federation," Putin emphasised. He pointed out that the deep and long-standing friendship and cooperation between the peoples of Russia and China has established one of the most important pillars of bilateral relations.

US plans \$1 bn Israel arms delivery despite Rafah assault: Reports



Washington | Agencies The United States is planning a new arms delivery to Israel worth more than \$1 billion, local media reported. US President Joe Biden's administration has informed Congress of this, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday, citing unnamed sources. According to the report, the package contains tank ammunition, tactical vehicles and mortar shells. According to other US media reports, the government has also initiated the authorisation process in Congress, which is still at an early stage, according to television channel CNN. The US government is currently withholding delivery of so-called heavy bombs due to Israel's actions in Rafah, in the south of the Gaza Strip. Last week, Biden threatened Israel that an Israeli offensive in the city, which is overcrowded with internally displaced persons from other parts of the Gaza Strip, could have consequences for US arms deliveries. The White House subsequently endeavoured to make it clear that the US government would not abandon Israel and that only this one delivery had been paused. On Monday, Biden's security advisor, Jake Sullivan, said Washington would continue to provide military assistance to Israel. Biden's spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday, when asked about Israel's actions in Rafah, that Washington had been assured that the Israeli army was carrying out a limited operation and not a major ground operation in Rafah.

Zelensky cancels foreign trips as situation worsens in Kharkiv



Kyiv | Agencies Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has cancelled all trips abroad in the coming days in light of the advancing Russian offensive in the Kharkiv region, his spokesman Serhiy Nykyforov said on Wednesday. Zelensky was to visit Spain and Portugal at the end of the week. Russia began a ground and air assault on Ukraine's second city Kharkiv, in the north-east and the surrounding region last week. In what analysts describe as one of the most perilous moments for Kyiv in the war, Moscow's forces have been able to capture several villages as they continue to bombard Kharkiv with missiles. Worries are mounting that Russia is using the wave of attacks on the city to possibly lay the groundwork to capture Kharkiv. The military leadership in Kyiv -- struggling with a lack of weapons, ammunition and soldiers -- said earlier on Wednesday that troops were being withdrawn from some Kharkiv positions.

Russian forces repel massive missile attack on Sevastopol: Governor



Moscow | Agencies No casualties were reported in the area of Fedorovskaya Street of Sevastopol where a downed missile fell in a private sector, city Governor Mikhail Razvozhaev said in a telegram channel on Wednesday. "Our military repelled a massive attack on Sevastopol. In the area of Fedorovskaya Street, fragments of a downed missile fell in a private sector.

Information about the victims is being clarified," Razvozhaev said, reports Xinhua news agency. He further added that Russia's air defence forces have shot down several missiles over the water area and in the area of the Belbek airfield. "The type of downed missiles is being clarified, and it is possible that undetonated submunitions may be discovered," said the Governor.

Senior Hezbollah leader killed in Lebanon airstrike: Israel

Tel Aviv/Beirut | Agencies The Israeli army says it has killed a senior commander of the Hezbollah militia in an airstrike in southern Lebanon on Tuesday evening. The pro-Iranian militia confirmed the death of one of its fighters without naming the rank. According to the Israeli military on Wednesday morning, the man is said to have been responsible for planning and carrying out numerous attacks against Israeli civilians and Israeli territory. Lebanon's state news agency NNA reported that a car had been hit in an Israeli drone attack on Tuesday evening. Two people were killed in the attack. Since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, there have been daily military con-



frontations between Israel's army and the Hezbollah militia and other groups in the border area between Israel and Lebanon. There have been casualties on both sides. The mutual shelling has caused severe destruction in villages on both sides of the border. Around 150,000 people have been evacuated from or have left the combat zone.

Ireland will recognise Palestinian statehood this month: Deputy Prime Minister

Dublin | Agencies Ireland will recognise Palestinian statehood by the end of the month, the Irish Deputy Prime Minister said on Wednesday. Ireland and Spain have been in discussions with other European countries about making a joint recognition of the state of Palestine. While May 21 had been floated as a potential date, Irish Deputy Prime Minister Micheal Martin said the specific date remains "fluid." Martin said: "We will be recognising the state of Palestine before the end of the month." "The specific date is still fluid because we're still in discussions with some countries in respect of a joint recognition of a Palestinian state." "It will become clear in the next few days as to the specific date, but it certainly will be before the end of this month, and I look forward to consultations today with some



foreign ministers in respect of the final specific detail of this." Speaking on Newstalk radio, he added: "We're doing it in the context of the Arab Peace Initiative to track towards a two-state solution and to extend the signal to the Palestinian population at large that we support their right to self-determination and

the idea of a two-state solution as the ultimate, only way that Israelis and Palestinians can live side-by-side in peace." Asked if he supported a call to fly the Palestinian flag over the Irish parliament, Martin said: "What is important here is we focus on the substantive issues of an immediate ceasefire." "It is quite shocking that Israel is moving into Rafah, and there is now a military operation underway in Rafah." "The suffering is immense. The death and destruction is immense, and people want it to stop, and the international community want it to stop." A call to fly the flag over the parliament building in Dublin for Nakba Day was rejected by the speaker of the house. The Nakba refers to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the war surrounding the creation of Israel in 1948.



PM MODI HELD 8 PUBLIC MEETINGS, 2 ROADSHOWS IN MP; RAHUL GANDHI ADDRESSED 5 RALLIES

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the last two months, BJP and Congress leaders have campaigned extensively in Madhya Pradesh for the Lok Sabha elections. Now as the voting in the state has concluded, everyone is waiting for the results to see whether the ruling BJP will repeat its performance of the previous two parliamentary elections or the opposition Congress will manage to increase its seat tally in the state.

The state witnessed high-voltage campaigns by both national parties to seek the support of over 5.6 crore eligible voters in the elections.

In 57 days (from March 10 to May 13), Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the state seven times and addressed eight public meetings for BJP candidates in different constituencies. He also held two mega roadshows -- one in Jabalpur and another in Bhopal.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP President J.P. Nadda



addressed four public meetings each in the state. Besides them, Union Ministers Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari and Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled states also campaigned in Madhya Pradesh.

Prime Minister Modi's guarantee and the government's achievements in the past 10 years. We are hopeful to make a clean sweep in Madhya Pradesh," said state BJP media cell chief, Ashish Agrawal.

leader Rahul Gandhi, who led the party's Lok Sabha poll campaign from the front, addressed five public rallies while his sister and Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra addressed just one public meeting in Madhya Pradesh.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge also addressed just one public rally in the state.

The state leadership of both parties proactively participated in the campaigning.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav topped the list of leaders who addressed maximum public meetings in the state. He held 139 public meetings and 49 roadshows.

Former Chief Minister and BJP's Vidisha candidate Shivraj Singh Chouhan addressed 66 public meetings and held 16 roadshows while state BJP chief V.D. Sharma, who is contesting from Khajuraho, addressed 72 rallies and held 18 roadshows.

who replaced former Chief Minister Kamal Nath after the party's stunning defeat in the Assembly elections in November last year, addressed 130 public rallies.

Kamal Nath, who campaigned extensively for his son Nakul Nath from Chhindwara until the first phase election on April 19, remained out of the scene in other parts of the state. Veteran Congress leader and former Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh, who was also a candidate, campaigned in a couple of Lok Sabha seats.

"Low voter turnout despite extensive campaign indicated that people have voted for a change in Madhya Pradesh and the Congress will give a good fight in nearly a dozen Lok Sabha seats," said Abbas Hafeez, the Vice President of Madhya Pradesh Congress media cell. Polling in Madhya Pradesh was held in four phases between April 19 and May 13 to elect 29 members of the Lok Sabha. Results will be declared on June 4.

Jyotiraditya Scindia's mother Madhavi Raje Scindia dies at Delhi AIIMS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia's mother Madhavi Raje Scindia died on Wednesday morning at AIIMS, Delhi.

The erstwhile Rajmata of the Gwalior Royal Family, died at 9.28 A.M. and had been on ventilator support for the last few days, Union Minister Scindia's media cell confirmed the report.

Madhavi Raje Scindia was undergoing treatment at the premier hospital for the last three months and was suffering from pneumonia along with sepsis.

A press statement said, "With great sorrow, we wish to share that Rajmata is no more. Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia's mother and the Rajmata of the Gwalior royal family, Rajmata Madhavi Raje Scindia, had been undergoing treatment at AIIMS Hospital in Delhi for the past two months. Her condition



had been extremely critical for the past two weeks. This morning at 9:28 A.M., she took her last breath at AIIMS Hospital in Delhi. Om Shanti."

She was the wife of late Congress leader and ex-Union Minister Madhav Rao Scindia, who was killed in a plane crash in 2001.

Firing between two groups over land dispute in Morena

Team Absolute | Morena

There was firing and stone pelting between two groups over a land dispute in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh. Police have registered the case on the complaint of both the parties. The video of this incident is also going viral on social media.

It has been told that a fight broke out between two groups over a land dispute in Jaitpur village of Saraichola police station in Morena district.

One side is of Sabharam Gurjar and the

other is of Jitendra Gurjar. The dispute between these two escalated so much that firing and stone pelting also took place. No one has been injured in this incident.

The video of this entire incident is going viral on social media.

On the complaint of both the parties, the police have registered a case of assault and have imposed sections of general assault. In the video which is going viral on social media, people are seen firing and pelting stones.

D.E.L.E.D. ADMISSION PROCESS FOR THE COURSE BEGINS

Bhopal: The process of registration for the teaching session 2024-25 in D.El.Ed course in all the district education and training institutes and non-government colleges of the state has been started from May 13, 2024 through MP Online.

Candidates wishing to take admission in the said institutions can get all the information related to admission by visiting the website of State Education Center Bhopal <https://rsk.mponline.gov.in/>. After this they can register themselves online.

The last date for registration for the first phase has been fixed as 26 May 2024.

Debt, crime and corruption rules in Madhya Pradesh: Jitu Patwari

Team Absolute | Bhopal

President of Madhya Pradesh unit of Congress, Jitu Patwari, while attacking the BJP government of the state and Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, said that there is rule of three C's - debt, crime and corruption in the state.

In the press conference organized at the state Congress office, Jitu Patwari said that I wrote five letters to the Chief Minister in three months and requested him to handle law and order. All the posts including the Home Minister are under him, but has he taken any action till date regarding law and order? Have you had a review meeting? Crime is continuously increasing in the state, but Home Minister Mohan Yadav has no plan to stop crime.

When I raise my voice against crime, they file an FIR against the opposition leaders, just like they filed a POCSO case against me.



Patwari admitted that Congress has lost three-four elections in the state and the entire blame for this cannot be put on BJP. We also have shortcomings, which will be rectified.

He further said that four phases of Lok Sabha elections have been completed and BJP's slogan of "This time, 400 paar" is fading. BJP's slogan of 29 out of 29 also does not seem to be bearing fruit in Madhya Pradesh. As the fourth phase approaches, BJP workers are feeling hesitant in raising the slogan of crossing 400, because Bharatiya Janata Party's formula of increasing 370 votes at every booth has failed and the vote percentage has reduced in every phase, due to which BJP workers are disappointed. Patwari alleged that the present Chief Minister, former Chief Minister of BJP and all the leaders of BJP are giving misleading statements to the public. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has insulted the tribals of Madhya Pradesh by giving the statement 'Fokat ka Anaj'. Madhya Pradesh, which is the largest tribal state in the country, the tribals here do not eat 'Fokat ka Anaj'. He is the owner of this earth.

Bank robbery in Damoh revealed within a few hours, bank employee had hatched the conspiracy

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Within a few hours, the police has revealed the robbery of Rs 41 lakh that took place in Fatehpur Madhyanchal Gramin Bank late Tuesday evening in Damoh district of Madhya Pradesh. In this case, the police have detained three accused including a bank employee and have also recovered the entire looted money.

An incident of robbery took place in Fatehpur Madhyanchal Gramin Bank of Damoh district late on Tuesday evening. It was told that five miscreants came and robbed the bank at gun-point. Also attacked an employee. The robbers had looted more than Rs 41 lakh.

When the police inspected the spot, they found two-three wads of Rs 100 notes in



the drain. The police became suspicious after examining the CCTV footage. Further investigation was conducted on that basis. According to the police, the bank employ-

ee who had lodged the complaint of robbery turned out to be its mastermind.

The accused planned and executed the robbery in film style. When the bank

employee was strictly interrogated, he spilled the beans. His two associates have also been detained. Looted amount of Rs 41 lakh has also been recovered.

WORKSHOP ORGANIZED TODAY FOR PREVENTION OF CYBER CRIMES

Bhopal: Under the DGP MP Lecture Series, 'Workshop in Hybrid Mode' on the topic 'Capacity Building of the Police Officers on the Prevention of Cyber Crime and Special Assistance to Victims' on Thursday, 16 May 2024 from 11 am to 2 pm in the Conference Hall of Police Headquarters on Thursday, 16 May 2024. (On online and offline platforms). As a special speaker in this workshop, Rajesh Kumar, CEO-14C in the Union Home Ministry, will provide guidance to the police officers regarding prevention of cyber crimes and providing prompt assistance to the victims. In this workshop, police officers from across the state will participate through online medium and will join for training.

Inauguration of Summer Nature Study Programmes - Green Cub

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal (A Regional Centre of National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi) inaugurated the Summer Nature Study Programme-Green Cub on 15th May, 2024. Dr. Beenish Rafat, Scientist-in-Charge of the museum delivered welcome address. She welcomed all participants and informed about the importance of environment in our life. Dr. Beenish Rafat also made an appeal to participants for the conservation of nature. In the continuation of programme, Shri Manik Lal Gupta, Scientist-C & Coordinator detailed about activities likes Museum visit, Nature Painting Workshop, Animal clay modeling, Origami Workshop, Visit to



Van Vihar National Park to study about reptiles, animals & bird; Environmental games; which would be organized during 15th May to 5th June, 2024.

After the inauguration programme, participants visited Nature's Network Gallery, Skeleton Gallery, Discover

Centre, Wilderness in the Dark Gallery, Temporary Exhibition on Wonder World of Butterflies, Temporary Exhibition on Save Water-Save Life, Open Air Exhibits on Wetland, Traditional Conservation, Dinosaur with explanation by Museum Interpreter.

Bansal Construction Group Bhopal fined Rs 21 crore 53 lakh in the case of illegal mining

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A fine of Rs 21 crore 53 lakh 43 thousand 600 has been imposed on Bansal Construction Group Bhopal. ADM Court Betul has imposed this fine in two separate cases of illegal excavation. The group was found guilty of illegal excavation of murram from Khedisaanwaligarh land and illegal excavation of minor mineral soil/murram from the water logging area of Godhana reservoir. ADM Jaiprakash Saiyyam's court issued fine orders.



construction work and the use of Murom in road construction cannot be ruled out.

Similarly, in another case, a case was presented against Bansal Pathway for illegal excavation from the water logging area of Godhana Reservoir by a joint team of Water Resources and Minerals Department. On behalf of the government, it was said that the excavated area in the water logging area of Godhana reservoir has been filled by the company. If the company had not done illegal excavation of mud and soil from the water logging area of Godhana Reservoir, then definitely the

company would have refused to fill the excavated area. The company did not rule out filling the excavated area of the reservoir. This makes it clear that illegal excavation has been done by him from the waterlogged area of Godhana reservoir. National Highway No. 47 from Betul to Chicholi has been constructed by the company. The fact of need and use of mud/soil in road construction cannot be denied. The company has not informed from where the mud/clay mineral used in the construction work of National Highway No. 47 Betul to Chicholi has been brought.

WILL ACTION REALLY BE TAKEN ON AMIT SHAH'S FORMULA?

15 ministers passed the voting formula, 9 did not, 6 were on the boundary line

Sanjay Saxena | Bhopal

Elections have been held on 29 Lok Sabha seats of Madhya Pradesh. After the first phase of elections, Home Minister Amit Shah had instructed ministers and MLAs to increase the voting percentage on their respective seats. It was said- If any minister gets less voting in his assembly constituency, he will lose his ministerial post. Those MLAs will get a chance to become ministers, in whose areas there has been more voting. 9 out of 30 ministers of the state have not passed Shah's voting test.

BJP has 163 MLAs in the state. If the Chief Minister and Assembly Speaker are removed, the number of MLAs is 161, out of which 30 are also ministers. That means Shah had given instructions to 30 ministers along with the remaining 131 MLAs. Regarding this, senior journalist Jai Ram Shukla says that Shah had said this to scare the MLAs and ministers, so that they can actively participate in the election process. After Shah's warning, pressure was applied, yet the voting remained less by 4 percent.

If we look at the voting percentage in the last two Lok Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh, there was ten per cent more voting in the 2019 elections



as compared to 2014. In 2014, the voting percentage on all 29 seats was around 61 percent, while in 2019 it increased to 71 percent.

This time BJP had given the target of higher vote percentage to the workers. This exercise was successful in the third phase of elections held on May 7. Maximum voting took place between 9 am and 11 am, but this was not seen in the fourth phase. The indifference of voters regarding voting in Indore Lok Sabha seat can be gauged from the fact that the polling booths were almost empty in the evening.

Voting test of 7 ministers took place in the fourth phase. Of these, 2 ministers Nagar Singh Chauhan and Chaitanya Kashyap did not pass this test. Whereas, 4 ministers Inder Singh Parmar, Jagdish Deora, Tulsi Silavat and Nirmala Bhuria have performed better than expected. A minister Kailash Vijayvargiya is on the boundary. His assembly seat got only 0.74 percent less votes than the average.

If we look at the voting figures of 30 ministers of the state government in the assembly constituencies, Karan Singh Verma is at the top in the list. In Verma's assembly constituency

Ichhavar, 5.79 percent more votes were polled than the average of Vidisha Lok Sabha constituency. Former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan is contesting from this seat. Whereas in Chandla of Khajuraho seat, voting was 6.81 percent less than the average. Dilip Ahirwar is the minister from here. There are five women ministers in Dr. Mohan Yadav's cabinet.

Out of these, only one Nirmala Bhuria got 1.14 percent more votes in the assembly. Whereas in Radha Singh's constituency the voting was equal to the average. The remaining three ministers Krishna Gaur, Pratima Bagri and Sampatya Uike had less than average voting in their assembly constituencies, but this figure was less than 1 percent.

The lowest voting among MLAs took place in Bhopal South West (-7.73%) and Sagar (-7.69%). Sagar MLA K Shailendra Jain says that this is not the first time that voting in the Lok Sabha has decreased. This has been the trend in the last several elections. Similarly, the highest voting took place in Sehore (+11.57%). Sudesh Rai, MLA from here, says that party workers played an important role in getting more and more people to vote.



Padma Lakshmi opens up on raising teenage daughter

Los Angeles | Agencies

India-born supermodel, TV host, producer, cook-book author and actor Padma Lakshmi spoke about being a mother to teenage daughter Krishna, and confessed that she is strict about certain things.

It's on social media where Padma has been easing her 14-year-old daughter Krishna into the public spotlight.

"I think any parent will be able to identify with what we're doing," Padma told people.com at the Gold Gala.

"It wasn't some conscious thing. We were just sitting on the couch talking like, 'Oh that's funny. This is funny. And so I just said, 'Let's tape it,' and we just chopped it up. It's just an experiment. It's fun to watch your children grow and become who they're going to be," she said.

She said that she is sometimes surprised by Krishna's candid answers.

"She has so many opinions... I don't think she's unlike most teenagers; she may be a little more precocious, perhaps."

Padma said that while Krishna makes appearances on her social media account, her daughter doesn't have one of her own.

"She's not on social media, at least that I know of, otherwise she'll be in trouble," she said.

"I'm strict about some things and I'm not that strict about other things that I probably should be stricter about like bedtime (as) she's 14," Lakshmi admitted.

"But I was very strict about making sure she ate a very good diet the first four, five years of her life, and I



will not abide by her being disrespectful to adults."

"She's not (disrespectful), but that's where our Asian culture shows itself — respecting our traditions like taking your shoes off before you come in the house, and calling elders uncle and auntie."



Ashley Judd diagnosed with 'sleep disorder'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actress Ashley Judd has spoken about how she has been diagnosed with a "sleepiness sleep disorder" after a long health battle.

The actress has talked about the recovery she's undergone after fracturing her leg in a "freak accident" right after her mother's death in 2022.

She wrote: "It's been a long journey to full recovery: I have had a parasite (gone now, and featured, thank you, in the New England Journal of Medicine, so exotic was it), mono, big weight gain, and now loss, finally a diagnosis of a sleepiness sleep disorder (I now know why I always napped over lunch on movie sets!), and more!"

She said: "Y'all are so awesome for cheering me on, and I notice how often you ask about my leg and foot recovery. That accident in DRC was hellacious to a factor of 10."

"I remain grateful to my siblings there who saved my life and encouraged my spirit as I was carried out of the depths of the second lung of the planet for 67 hours to get medical attention and that first pain medicine."

She also admitted she was "profoundly grateful" for the insurance she has through the SAG/Aftra union, as well as her "healthcare team."

She added: "Saved my leg, saved my life." In a video alongside the post, Ashley explained how the first accident left her with "a Schatzker V tibial plateau fracture" and a paralysed right foot, while her leg "had no pulse," reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Greta Gerwig dwells on #MeToo in address to media as Cannes jury president

Cannes | Agencies

'Barbie' super hitmaker and president of the Cannes Film Festival's competition jury, Greta Gerwig, addressed the growing #MeToo movement in France at the jury press conference on the opening day of the annual celebration of global cinema.

Gerwig, according to 'Variety', said it is only good that "people in the community of movies are telling us stories and trying to change things for the better." She was responding to #MeToo-related rumours swirling ahead of the festival.

"I have seen substantive change in the American film community, and I think it's important that we continue to expand that conversation," Gerwig said. "So I think it's only moving everything in the correct direction. Keep those lines of communication open."

Gerwig is serving as the president of this year's competition jury, which will be awarded the prestigious Palme d'Or at the end of the 11-day festival. The jury, reports 'Variety', comprises Spanish film-



maker J.A. Bayona, Turkish actress and screenwriter Ebru Ceylan, Italian actor and producer Pierfrancesco Favino, 'Killers of the Flower Moon' star Lily Gladstone, French actress Eva Green, Japanese filmmaker and producer Hirokazu Kore-eda, Lebanese actor and filmmaker Nadine Labaki and French actor Omar Sy.

The ongoing war in Gaza and the incendiary debate around Israel and Palestine came up when 'Variety' asked the jury about Cannes' decision to ban protests on the Croisette.

Earlier at the conference, Favino referred to the festival as a "free space", and was pressed on how ignoring the Gaza situation is perhaps impossible -- after all, the official Cannes programme has a film about Gaza and jury member Sy recently urged politicians to take action to stop Israel's ground invasion of Rafah, 'Variety' notes.

"When I say free space, it's not just physical space. It's also the possibility of time," Favino said, according to 'Variety'. "One of the most difficult things we could do is seek beauty. Reminding the world that there's beauty in the world with filmmakers. Movies can talk to people ... if we look for beauty, then we might look for peace."



BLANCO DISCUSSES POSSIBLE SELENA GOMEZ PROPOSAL & MARRIAGE PLANS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Selena Gomez and Benny Blanco are in it for the long haul. While speaking with Howard Stern in a new interview, the 36-year-old record producer discussed his intention to marry the "Love On" artist, 31.

However, he didn't confirm when he's planning to propose.

"You are some boyfriend, you're knocking it out the park," Howard said to Benny on The Howard Stern Show on Tuesday, May 14. "I see love here, I'm pre-

dicting marriage." In response, Benny said, "You and me both." When asked if he has a ring yet, Benny replied, "I don't have anything. I got no shoes on. I gotta get my act together."

Howard continued to press Benny on his and Selena's future. The show host asked the songwriter, "When will you propose? You should make the announcement now. When are you going to propose to your very famous girlfriend Selena?"

With a laugh, Benny responded, "When I look at her ... I'm

always just like, I don't know a world where it could be better than this."

Benny then revealed that their anniversary is coming up, noting that it's "right around [Selena's] birthday," which falls on July 22. He also called the "Single Soon" artist his "best friend" and the coolest, nicest [and] sweetest person. "People always said this to me, when you know you meet your best friend — she truly is my best friend," Benny gushed. "We laugh all f*cking day, she inspires me."

Kareena Kapoor is in awe of Meryl Streep, says 'there is no one like you'

Mumbai | Agencies

Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan shared a post about Hollywood icon Meryl Streep and said that there is no one like her.

Kareena took to her Instagram story, where she shared a post about Streep at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. In the image, the icon is seen wearing a white pantsuit featuring high-waisted trousers and a blue-and-white striped shirt under-



neath her blazer. "O Meryl there is absolutely no one like you," Kareena wrote. The actor received the honorary Palme d'Or at the 77th Cannes Film Festival on Tuesday. According to variety.com, Streep was greeted by a thunderous two-minute standing ovation. The Oscar-winning actress was so overcome with emotion that she first pretended to walk off the stage, but eventually began to dance to the applause. Streep had thanked Cannes in her speech for welcoming her back after over three decades, with her last appearance being for 1989's 'Evil Angels'.

Alum Jihae joins 'Dune: Prophecy' cast

Los Angeles | Agencies

South Korean actress and musician Alum Jihae, who is known for her work in the series 'Succession', has been added to the prequel series 'Dune: Prophecy' in a recurring guest star role.

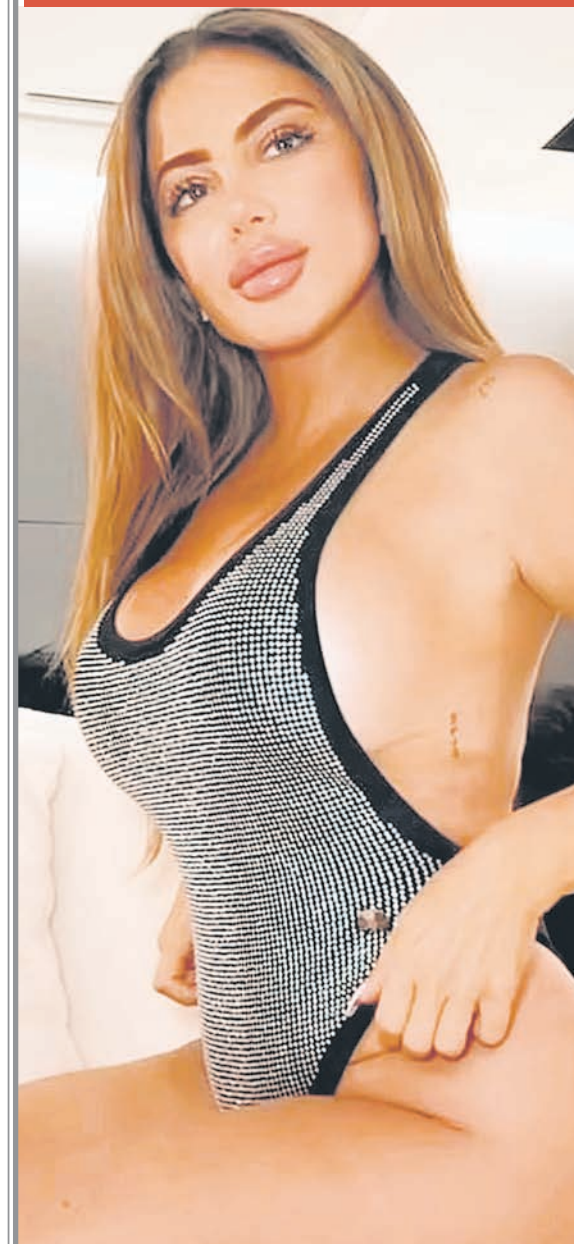
The series was originally commissioned in 2019 under the title 'Dune: The Sisterhood' and is inspired by the novel 'Sisterhood of Dune' written by Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson, reports variety.com.

The official logline reads: "From the expansive universe of 'Dune', created by acclaimed author Frank Herbert, and 10,000 years before the ascension of Paul Atreides, 'Dune: Prophecy' follows two Harkonnen sisters as they combat forces that threaten the future of humankind, and establish the fabled sect that will become known as the Bene Gesserit."

It is reported that Jihae will play Reverend Mother Kasha, described as "the Emperor's own Truthsayer and confidant. Reverend Mother Kasha occupies a position of great influence in the Imperium. But when a new challenge leads her to question the Sisterhood's intentions, she finds her role increasingly difficult to navigate."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Larsa Pippen



Neeraj Chopra returns with gold at Federation Cup

Team Absolute | Bhubaneswar

Reigning Olympic and world champion Neeraj Chopra finished on top and won the gold medal in the men's javelin final of the Federation Cup, marking his return after three years in the event, at the Kalinga Stadium here on Wednesday.

Neeraj with his best attempt of 82.27m on the fourth attempt took the lead from DP Manu, who won the silver medal with the best throw of 82.06m on the first attempt. Uttam Patil won the bronze medal with a best throw of 78.39m.

Meanwhile, Asian Games medalist Kishore Kumar Jena finished in fifth position with his best throw of



75.25m.

Manu took an initial lead on his first attempt with a throw of 82.06 from Neeraj, who threw 82.00m on his first attempt. DP Manu got a distance of 77.23 in his second attempt. However, he still maintained the lead over Neeraj as the Olympic gold medalist deliberately made a foul after not being happy with his second attempt.

Neeraj on his third attempt threw the javelin to a distance of 81.29m and later on his fourth attempt took the lead from Manu with a throw of 82.27m on his fourth attempt.

Kishore Jena was not at his best as he started with a foul and then threw a distance of 75.49m before making two consecutive fouls.

SHAKIB, WANINDU SHARE NO.1 ALL-ROUNDER SPOT IN ICC T20I RANKINGS



Dubai | Agencies

Bangladesh veteran Shakib Al Hasan and Sri Lanka T20I WC skipper Wanindu Hasaranga with 228 ratings share the top spot in the latest ICC T20I all-rounder in the latest rankings update released on Wednesday.

Shakib dropped three rating points to 228 following two appearances at the backend of Bangladesh's recent five-match T20I series against Zimbabwe with Hasaranga joining the

veteran in a share of the top spot, followed by Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi on the second place, who is just 10 rating points adrift.

After some impressive performances against Bangladesh, Sikandar Raza of Zimbabwe moved up two spots to take fourth place, while Aiden Markram of South Africa dropped one spot to fifth ahead of the T20 World Cup.

After scoring 128 runs in three games against Pakistan, Ireland's opener Andrew Balbirnie climbed six spots to 53rd in the batters rankings, while teammate Harry Tector advanced 12 spots to 69th place on the same list after scoring 98 runs in the same series.

Pakistani left-hander Fakhar Zaman rose four spots to 57th on the updated rankings for T20I batters.

Meanwhile, Zaman's countryman Imad Wasim moved up 24 spots to equal 52nd on the list for T20I bowlers and jumped five places to equal 16th for T20I all-rounders.

Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed jumped three places to 23rd and teammate Mustafizur Rahman moved up five spots to 25th in the latest bowlers rankings after some good performances against Zimbabwe.

ANJUM, AISHWARY TOP QUALIFICATIONS OF THIRD 50M RIFLE 3P OLYMPIC SELECTION TRIAL

Bhopal | Agencies

Olympians Anjum Moudgil and Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, came out on top of the women's and men's 50m Rifle 3 Positions (3P) Olympic Selection Trial (OST) T3 qualification round, respectively, here at the M P State Shooting Academy (MPSSA) ranges on Wednesday.

After the customary 20-shots successively in the Kneeling, Prone and Standing positions, Anjum shot a score of 592/600, her highest of the OSTs so far, while Aishwary shot yet another quality score of 590 to top the five-man field.

The duo came back along with their four other competitors on Thursday morning for the finals of the event, where crucial podium points are up for grabs in what is building up to be a fight to the finish.

India number one and finals world record holder Sift Kaur Samra came in second with a score of 589 in the women's 3P, while three others, Ashi Chouksey, Nishchal and Shriyanka Sadangi, logged identical totals of 585.



In the men's 3P, Swapnil Kusale extended a good trials run with a score of 587 to come in second behind Aishwary, while Akhil Sheoran's 584 for a third place finish, his worst of the three trials so far. Chain Singh and Niraj Kumar were fourth and fifth with scores of 583 each.

Besides the 3P OST T3 finals, Thursday also has on schedule the qualification rounds of the men's and women's 10m Air Pistol OST T3 matches.

Ishant Sharma reveals special bond with Ricky Ponting, says 'he's a kind of elder brother to me'

New Delhi | Agencies

Following the Delhi Capitals' (DC) final league game of the IPL 2024, which they won by 19 runs against the Lucknow Super Giants (LSG), India pacer Ishant Sharma revealed the special bond with DC head coach Ricky Ponting, saying the Australian is like his elder brother.

Ishant was the star for Delhi on Tuesday night where anything less than a loss would have confirmed their elimination from playoff contention. He was adjudged the player of the match for his bowling figures of 3/34 in four overs which included three crucial scalps of Quinton de Kock, KL Rahul and Deepak Hooda, giving his side an excellent start while defending 209 target.

"We're not coach and player anymore, he's a kind of elder brother to me. He's always there whenever I need him, I can call



him anytime. I think it's very great to have him as a coach. If you have someone like him who really pushes you to keep on trying new things and don't be afraid if you don't do well," said Ishant in a video shared by the IPL on X.

Ponting added: "We were fierce competitors on the field as you would expect a young Indian fast bowler early on in his Test career trying to prove a point. He gave me bit of a working one day at the WACA before he eventually got me out. It's been a pleasure to coach and work with him."

"He's a great guy, we've actually become very close. We've got great respect for one another. He's been a terrific leader of this bowling attack for the last four five years."

With 14 points in as many matches, Delhi are placed fifth in the points table and awaits result of remaining matches to decide their fate in the tournament.

Seven Indian golfers including Diksha and Pranavi to tee up in Germany

Brandenburg, Berlin | Agencies

Diksha Dagar and Pranavi Urs, the two in-form golfers will be in the group of seven Indians at the Euros 300,000 Amundi German Masters.

Apart from Diksha and Pranavi, the other Indians are Tvesa Malik, Vani Kapoor, Amandeep Drall and Sneha Singh, who has received an invitation, as has amateur Avani Prashanth, who also played the event last year.

There are 132 players in the 72-hole event at the Seddiner See course, just outside Berlin. The cut will be applied after 36 holes and the top-60 and ties will play the final two rounds.

Diksha Dagar will also represent India at the Olympic Games in Paris, where she will be joined by Aditi Ashok, who is playing on the LPGA Tour in the US. Last year Diksha was leading the event at one stage, before she finished third.

It was one of the three Top-3 finishes she had in 2023, when she also finished third in the LET Order of Merit. She won the Czech Ladies Open and was third at the Amundi German Masters and the Hero Women's Indian Open.

Pranavi Urs was T-7 last week in Aramco Series Korea, while Vani Kapoor, Tvesa Malik and Amandeep Drall are trying to get back they Tours



cards for LET. Sneha Singh, winner of the Hero Order of Merit on the domestic Tour in 2023, will be hoping to make it big and amateur Avani Prashanth expected to turn pro at the end of the year is keen on making a mark among professionals, too.

The defending champion is Czech Republic's Kristyna Napoleaova who beat England's Cara Gainer in a playoff last year. The field also includes two former Order of Merit winners with reigning

Race to Costa del Sol champion Trichat Cheenglab and South Africa's Lee-Anne Pace.

Four winners from the 2024 LET season will be vying to add another title with England's Bronte Law (Lalla Meryem Cup), Alexandra Forsterling (Aramco Team Series Presented by PIF - Tampa), Mariajo Uribe (Women's NSW Open) and Manon De Roey (Investec SA Women's Open) all in town.

Manipur beat Haryana 2-0 to win record-extending 22nd NFC Rajmata Jijabai Trophy

Kolkata | Agencies

Manipur defeated Haryana 2-0 in a hard-fought battle in the final to win the record-extending 22nd NFC Rajmata Jijabai Trophy.

The resilient Haryana defense kept their composure despite repeated attempts by the pacy Manipur attack in the first half. Haryana were dealt a major blow in the second half when wing-back Samiksha was shown a red card for a foul on Dagmei Grace in the 65th minute of the game reducing the team to ten players and giving a penalty to Manipur in the process. Haryana captain Shreya Hooda saved Devi's penalty attempt and also the following rebound to keep her team in the game.

It did not take Manipur long to open the scoring after that as a ball cleared by the Manipur defense in the 68th minute made its way into the box which was met by a brilliant half-turn and goal by Bala Devi who was also named the player of the tournament as she was tied for most goals scored.



The Haryana defense broke down from there on out as a through ball in the 83rd minute saw Sibani Devi through on goal which she buried back in the net without any difficulty. This was Manipur's revenge on their opponents who they had lost 1-0 to in their final group encounter. The loss against Haryana saw Manipur drop to second place in Group B and set up an exciting semi-final encounter against heavy favorites and defending champions, Tamil Nadu in the semi-final whom they defeated 2-0.

Haryana on the other hand will hold their heads up high and look to improve on this impressive run which saw them reach the finals of the competition for the first time.

La Liga: Real Betis inch ahead of Real Sociedad in the race for the Europa League

New Delhi | Agencies

There are now just three match days remaining in La Liga EA Sports this season and there is so much still to play for. Several clubs are currently taking part in the race to qualify for the 2024/25 UEFA competitions and the battle is ever so tight.

While it seems Atletico de Madrid will finish fourth and Athletic Club will come fifth, it's anyone's guess as to who'll take sixth place, which is a Europa League berth, and who'll claim seventh place, which is a Conference League ticket. Below is the summary of how each of the clubs in this contest are performing, from sixth-placed Real Betis down to ninth-placed Villarreal CF.

Real Betis (6th, 55 points)

Under Manuel Pellegrini, Real Betis have qualified for Europe in each of the past three seasons. Never before had the club made it to UEFA competition for three seasons in a row

and now they're aiming to extend that record to four consecutive seasons. Having won four and drawn one of their past five games, Los Verdiblanos aren't just in the European positions as things stands, but they've overtaken Real Sociedad to move into sixth place, which means Europa League football rather than Conference League.

Remaining fixtures: UD Las Palmas (A), Real Sociedad (H), Real Madrid (A)

Real Sociedad (7th, 54 points)

As things stand, Real Sociedad would qualify for the Conference League as the seventh-placed team in La Liga EA Sports. But, they were on course for the Europa League for most of the season, so that could be viewed as a disappointment. Just one point behind Real Betis, and with a direct duel against the Andalusians to come, La Real will aim to move back up the table.

Remaining fixtures: Valencia CF (H), Real Betis (A), Atlético de Madrid (H)



Valencia CF (8th, 48 points)

Valencia CF haven't won since Matchday 31 and have slipped out of the European spots in recent weeks. Rubén Baraja's charges have some difficult fixtures ahead too, so will have to produce something exceptional to qualify for Europe. The one positive for Los Che is they can take points off direct rival Real Sociedad, if they win their next match.

Remaining fixtures: Real Sociedad (A), Girona FC (H), RC Celta (A) Villarreal CF (9th, 48 points)

Just a few weeks ago, it seemed like Villarreal CF were too far behind to stand a chance of qualifying for Europe for a fifth consecutive season. However, they have been in good form of late, as they have seven wins from their past 10 games. Norwegian striker Alexander Sorloth is banging in the goals and the defense of El Submarino Amarillo has improved, so don't rule out Villarreal CF when it comes to this enthralling European race.



Janhvi Kapoor opens up on what she looks for in a partner

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Janhvi Kapoor, who has a busy year before her, spoke about the qualities that her partner should have. The actress attended the song launch of 'Dekhha Tenu' from her upcoming film 'Mr & Mrs Mahi' on Wednesday, at a multiplex in Mumbai's Juhu. During the event she was asked about the qualities of a "perfect partner." Responding to the same, the actress said: "The person should consider my dreams as his own, and be my solid support system through thick and thin." As the actress listed the qualities of her partner, the media took her rumoured boyfriend Shikhar Pahariya's name as they collectively said: "Shikhu Shikhu." Janhvi had earlier had a Freudian slip as she dropped Shikhar's name saying "Shikhu" during the last season of the chat show 'Koffee With Karan'. Looking at the reaction from the media, Janhvi couldn't help but blush as she helplessly looked at her co-star Rajkumar Rao and her film's director Sharan Sharma, and smiled at the media.

Cricket isn't just a sport, it's a lifelong passion : Kartik Aaryan

Team Absolute | Chennai

Bollywood's chocolate boy Kartik Aaryan is an ardent fan of cricket. He said that it is not just a sport for him but a lifelong passion. Kartik said: "Cricket isn't just a sport for me; it's a lifelong passion. I lived and breathed every moment of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 and look forward to watching Team India excel in the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024." The actor has become the face for the campaign 'Free For All, Har Match Har Ball'. The recently released ad film for the campaign emphasises on Disney+ Hotstar's 'Free on mobile' offering for the tournament enabling all the cricket fans across the country to never miss any cricketing action. "Through this campaign, we aim to extend the reach of the sport to every corner of the nation, ensuring that our users can experience every thrilling moment of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup for free on their mobile devices," said a spokesperson for the streaming portal.



Richa Chadha's early pregnancy cravings were all about 'tomatoes & kombucha'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Richa Chadha, who is all set to welcome her first bundle of joy with her husband Ali Fazal, spoke about her pregnancy cravings. The actress said that it varies from person to person as every pregnancy is unique. Richa told: "A lot is said about pregnancy craving in women. I think they vary from person to person because every pregnancy is unique." For Richa, the first trimester was all about healthy food. "In the first trimester I had a lot of cravings for healthy food items such as raw tomatoes, salty foods and olives," she said. The actress then craved "cooler things." "After that, it changed to cooler things such as coconut water, 'nimbu paani', and sometimes a lot of Kombucha," she added. However, the cravings have subsided and the actress now only has "home-cooked meals." "As I am nearing the third trimester, I feel that the cravings have settled down because the size of the stomach seems to have decreased due to the fact that the baby takes up a lot of space. I like to eat mostly home-cooked, clean food... Lots of fruits, salads and nuts and dal chawal," she said. The actress added: "At times when I have a sweet craving, I might indulge in some ice cream or yogurt or the seasonal fruits, which are mangoes currently." It was in February when Richa and Ali announced on social media that they are expecting their first child. The couple got married in 2022 after dating for a long time.



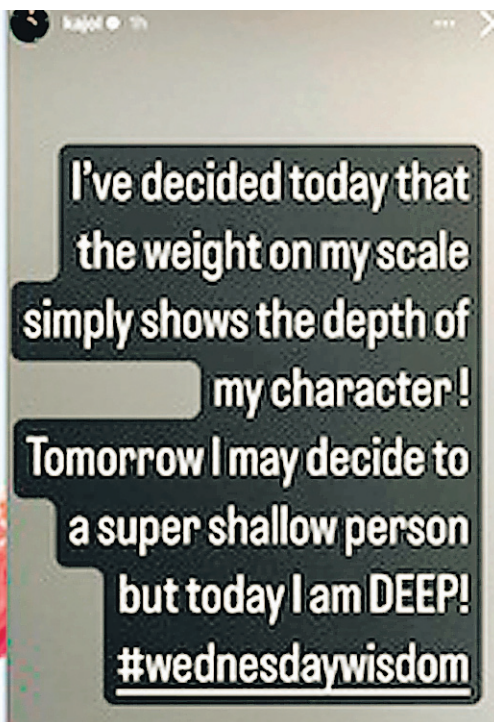
Priyanka shares throwback picture with Katrina when they were 'babies'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Indian actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas took a walk down memory lane as she shared a throwback picture with actress Katrina Kaif and said she cannot recall when the photograph was taken.

Priyanka took to Instagram stories, where she shared the photograph. In the image, the two are wearing corsets with jeans. To complete the look, they wore a maang teeka and jhumkas. It is a picture from their younger days. For the caption, Priyanka wrote:

"Woah... dunno who took it and when this picture was taken... but babies Katrina Kaif!" Priyanka and Katrina were supposed to star together in Farhan Khan's film 'Jee Le Zara', which, according to reports, has been shelved. The 'Quantico' star has just wrapped up shooting for her next film 'Head Of State', an action comedy, which also stars Idris Elba and John Cena. The film is directed by Ilya Naishuller. Katrina was last seen in 'Merry Christmas', a neo-noir mystery thriller film directed by Sriram Raghavan and starring Vijay Sethupathi.



Kajol shares 'Wednesday wisdom', shows 'depth' of her character

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Kajol, on Wednesday, shared a wisdom quote "about being 'deep'", saying she has decided that the weight on her scale simply shows the depth of her character.

An avid social media user, Kajol, who has 16.9 million followers on Instagram, took to the

Stories section and shared a 'Wednesday Wisdom' quote: "I've decided today that the weight on my scale simply shows the depth of my character! Tomorrow I may decide to be a super shallow person but today I am DEEP! #wednesdaywisdom."

In another Story, the 'Baazigar' fame actress re-shared a quote which is an ode to a fearless

woman.

The post read: "An Ode to a fearless woman: Defined by no man, you are your own story. Blazing through the world, turning history into herstory. And when they dare to tell you about all the things you cannot be, you smile and tell them 'I am both war and woman and you cannot stop me' - Nikita Gill."



Avneet Kaur