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Arnab goswami news reporter

New Delhi, India (CNN)One of India's best-known and controversial news anchors has been arrested for allegedly committing the suicide of an architect, local police said, in a case that reflects the country's increasingly fraught and politicized media environment. Arnab Goswami, the face and founder of the right-wing broadcaster Republic TV, was arrested at his home in Mumbai in the western Indian state of Maharashtra on Wednesday for his alleged role in the death of Anvay Naik, who died by suicide in 2018, according to a statement Wednesday from the broadcaster. Ashok Dudhe, superintendent of police in the Raigad district of the western state of Maharashtra, confirmed that Goswami was arrested for allegedly committing a suicide, a crime that under the Indian penal code carries a possible 10-year prison sentence in India. Goswami and two others were remanded in custody late Wednesday night, according to a court order. In a video posted online in May and shared by Indian social media users, Naak's wife Akshata Naik claimed that Goswami helped Naik's suicide by failing to pay Naik to design his TV studio. Naik's suicide note - which CNN has independently confirmed with Naik's daughter - claimed that Goswami and two other people owed him \$726,000. But Goswami and Republic TV deny these allegations, saying in a statement Wednesday that 90% of the money was paid to Naik's company over two years ago. The official court document on the case does not specify whether the money was paid before or after his death. According to Goswami's statement, police have previously investigated him for his alleged role in the suicide, but the case was closed in April last year after police found no evidence of illegality. Instead, Republic TV said the pro-government anchor's arrest was made as part of a larger vindictive exercise against an independent journalist and an independent news organization and claims it was an attack on the fourth pillar of democracy. That perception has been reinforced by members of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), but state politicians deny that the arrest is political. According to a court order, the investigation was resumed after a new complaint from Naik's wife. After that, more evidence emerged in the case against Goswami. CNN has contacted Mumbai crime branch but has not received any comment. Raigad police confirmed Goswami's arrest but have not shared further details of the investigation. When Naik died in 2018, Maharashtra was ruled by the BJP. But in last year's legislative elections, Maharashtra voted against the BJP, instead of installing a more liberal coalition government of Shiv Sena, the Indian Congress and the nationalist Congress Party. In the following months, Goswami and Republic TV have become outspoken critics of the state's more left-wing leaders, while increasing support for the BJP. In its statement Wednesday, the channel claimed that the arrest was revenge for his coverage. But Maharashtra officials have denied that accusation. When asked if Goswami had been arrested because of his negative comments about the Maharashtra government, state Interior Minister Anil Deshmukh - who is a member of the nationalist Congress Party - told reporters that the investigation was in line with law and order. No one is above the law, he told reporters Wednesday. Sanjay Raut, a Maharashtra lawmaker from the Shiv Sena Party, one of the parties that controls the state, told local media: Police can take action if they have evidence against someone ... Since the formation of (last year's state government), no action has been taken against anyone for revenge. In their statement Wednesday, Goswami and Republic TV said: It is shocking that a case that was decisively closed has been reopened with the sole purpose of abusing power, concluding facts and forcing Arnab Goswami into a prima facie act of revenge and revenge for his news coverage that questioned those in power in the state of Maharashtra. Goswami's arrest has also led to an outpouring of anger from senior figures in the BJP, who are furious over the arrest. Indian Interior Minister Amit Shah called the arrest an attack on the free press. Congress and its allies have shamed democracy again, he said. Blatant abuse of state power against Republic TV & Arnab Goswami is an attack on individual freedom and the fourth pillar of democracy ... This attack on the free press must be and will be countered. CNN has contacted Raut and Deshmukh for comment. What's the reason for the case? For months, Goswami had been using his platform to beat the Maharashtra authorities for not doing more to investigate another high-profile death described by police as suicide. In June, Sushant Singh Rajput was found dead in his apartment in Mumbai. The case transfixed the Indian public and dominated headlines for months, although India's coronavirus cases soared to make the country one of the worst affected in the world. After his death, Rajput's father KK Singh filed a police complaint in Bihar, the Indian state he lives in, accusing Rajput's actor girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty of stealing money from his girlfriend's bank account and betting on his suspected suicide. That investigation led to a broader probe into drug use in Bollywood and to the arrest of Chakraborty on drug charges, although Chakraborty was released on bail last month. Goswami is among a number of political leaders and media commentators who have pushed the narrative that Rajput's death was actually a murder, despite the authorities finding out it was a suicide. Republic TV slammed Mumbai Police's handling of Rajput's death, claiming Bollywood covered up crimes including murder and drug abuse. Last month, four Bollywood industry associations and 34 leading Bollywood producers filed a civil suit against two media companies - including Goswami's Republic TV - and asked them to refrain from conducting the media of Bollywood personalities and from making irresponsible and defamatory remarks, according to DMK Legal, the firm that represents the production companies. BJP politicians used Rajput's death to campaign in Bihar, where Rajput's family comes from. Rajput's face and the hashtag #JusticeForSushant were used on campaign posters for the state legislature elections, which are currently ongoing. Candidates have been accused of using Rajput's death to score political points against his opponents and distract attention from the BJP's handling of the pandemic. CNN's Vedika Sud contributed reporting from New Delhi and Meenketan Jha contributed reporting from Hong Kong. How to help: In the United States, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. The International Association for Suicide Prevention and Befrienders Worldwide also provides contact information for shelters around the world. Police in Mumbai announced Wednesday that they had arrested and charged popular television news anchor Arnab Goswami in connection with the suicide of 53-year-old interior designer Anvay Naik and his mother in 2018. Policemen arrested Goswami at his Mumbai residence, senior police official Sachin Vaze said. Goswami is charged with allegedly committing Naik and his mother's suicide in 2018. Naik's family claims the designer took his own life after Goswami and two others refused to pay back a large sum of money owed to him. The TV host has denied the accusation. Goswami was first arrested in 2018 in connection with the deaths, but was released and the case was closed. The government of Maharashtra state - of which Mumbai is the capital - recently reopened the case after a push by Naik's family for a thorough investigation. Black Day in India's Democracy In a statement Wednesday, Republic TV described the founder's arrest as a black day (in) India's democracy. The channel also alleged that Goswami and his family members were physically attacked by police, and the arrest was a vindictive attempt to punish the Republic Media Network for speaking truth to power. Goswami is known aggressively as supporting India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (pictured) Goswami has previously used the channel to frequently criticise the Maharashtra government and Mumbai police. The station later sent footage showing Goswami allegedly being forced into a police car by officers outside his Mumbai residence. Editors 'shocked' The Editors Guild of India said it was shocked to learn of the anchor's sudden arrest and urged the Maharashtra state government to ensure Goswami is treated fairly. The state power must not be used against critical media reporting, the organization added in a statement. Top leaders of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also condemned Goswami's arrest. Blatant abuse of state power against Republic TV & Arnab Goswami is an attack on individual freedom and the fourth pillar of democracy, India's home Amit Shah tweeted. This attack on the free press must be and will be against, he added. Not new to controversy Goswami is not new to controversy. The anchor also is also currently facing charges of inciting common tensions and promoting hatred between religious groups after he criticized opposition leader Sonia Gandhi during a show broadcast in April. Goswami denied the accusations. Last month, Mumbai police accused Republic TV of manipulating the TV rating system, a major factor in determining what a channel can charge advertisers. Goswami and Republic TV have denied the charges. In response, the company has frequently run cover against the state police force, accusing them of mishandling an investigation into the June death of popular 34-year-old actor Sushant Singh Rajput who was found dead in his Mumbai apartment. If you suffer from severe emotional strain or suicidal thoughts, do not hesitate to seek professional help. You can find information about where to find such help, no matter where you live in the world, on this website: ipj/jlw (Reuters, AP, dpa, AFP) AFP)

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