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RS 65 CR LOAN DEFAULT:

LOOKOUT NOTICES FOR UNION MINISTER NARAYAN RANE'S WIFE, SON

Mumbai: In another embarrassment for Union MSME Minister Narayan Rane, the Pune police's Crime Branch has issued a 'Lookout Circular' against his wife and legislator son in alleged loan default cases of over Rs 65 croreConfirming to IANS that the lookout notices have been taken out on September 3, Deputy Commissioner of Police Shrinivas Ghadge, however, flatly declined further comment in the matter.The lookout notices mention Rane's wife Nilam Narayan Rane as a co-borrower of a loan account of Rs 25 crore in the name of Artline Properties Pvt Ltd and son Nitesh Narayan Rane as a co-borrower in a loan account of Rs 40 crore in the name of Neelam Hotels Pvt Ltd.Both these loans accounts with the Dewan Housing Finance Ltd DHFL) Mumbai, were subsequently classified as 'non performing assets' (NPAs), as per the norms of the National Housing Bank and the Reserve Bank of India, say the police notices.

43,263 NEW INFECTIONS, 338 DEATHS REPORTED IN 24 HOURS

INDIA REGISTERS 14 PER CENT SPIKE IN DAILY COVID CASES

On the other hand, India has so far administered over 71 crore (71,65,97,428) doses of Covid vaccines, out of which 86,51,701 doses were administered in the last 24 hours.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India witnessed a spike of 14 per cent in the daily new cases on Thursday as the country recorded 43,263 new infections in the last 24 hours.

This is the second consecutive day that the rise had been reported. On Wednesday, the daily Covid tally was 37,875 new infections.

With 338 Covid related deaths in the last 24 hours, the death toll rose to 4,41,749, Health and Family Welfare Ministry's data said on Thursday.

India had reported 369 deaths on Wednesday. The fatality rate was reported at 1.33 per cent.

At the same time, in the last 24 hours, a total of 40,567 Covid-infected patients had recovered, pushing the country's total recovery numbers to 3,23,04,618. As per the data, the Covid recovery rate stood at 97.48 per cent.

The total active cases rose to 3,93,614, which is 1.19 per cent of the total Covid cases reported in the country.

While the weekly positivity rate was recorded at 2.43 per cent, which remained below the 3 per cent mark for the last 76 days, the daily positivity rate was recorded at 2.38 per cent for the last 10 days.

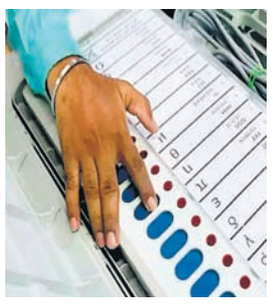
Out of the total new cases reported on Thursday, 30,196 cases were reported in Kerala, 4,174 in Maharashtra, while 1,587 cases were reported in Tamil Nadu, according to the health ministry's report.

The report also said that a total of 53,68,17,243 samples for Covid-19 have been tested in the country, of which 18,17,639 were tested in the last 24 hours.

On the other hand, India has so far administered over 71 crore (71,65,97,428) doses of Covid vaccines, out of which 86,51,701 doses were administered in the last 24 hours.

EC to conduct polls for vacant Rajya Sabha seats on October 4

Team Absolute | New Delhi



The Election Commission on Thursday announced dates for by-polls for Rajya Sabha for various states There are six casual vacancies in the Council of States while one seat from Puducherry is going for regular poll. A by-poll for the lone seat of legislative council in Bihar is also scheduled.

In West Bengal Manas Ranjan Bhunia, Assam's Biswajit Daimary, Tamil Nadu' KP Munusamy and Thiru. R. Vaithilingam resigned. BJP MP Thaawarchand Gehlot also resigned and has been appointed as Governor. While in Maharashtra the seat fell vacant after the demise of Congress MP Rajeev Satav and in Puducherry N. Gokulakrishna is retiring in October. "The Commission has decided to hold six bye-elections to the Council of States Tamil Nadu, Assam, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Puducherry and Madhya Pradesh -- to fill up the vacancies," said a statement from the EC.

The EC schedule says: Issue of notification September 15 (Wednesday),

Last date of making nominations September 22

Scrutiny of nominations September 23

Last date for withdrawal of candidature September 27

Date of Poll October 4

The Counting of votes is on the same day, that is October 4.

There is a casual vacancy in the Bihar Legislative Council to be filled up by the members of Legislative Assembly due to the demise of Tanveer Akhtar.

The ECI said broad guidelines of Covid-19 as already issued by it as well as the recent guidelines set by it will have to be followed by all.

The Chief Secretaries of States concerned are being directed to depute a senior officer from the State to ensure that the extant instructions regarding Covid-19 containment measures are complied with while making arrangements for conducting the election.

VCK, Cong welcome TN Assembly resolution against CAA

Team Absolute | Chennai

The Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) has welcomed the resolution adopted by the Tamil Nadu legislative Assembly against the Citizen Amendment Act (CAA).

Thol Thirumavalavan, MP and VCK president in a statement on Wednesday said, "The Union government has been stating that it will implement a National Register of Citizens based on CAA. It is arguing that every citizen in India should prove that they are indeed citizens by showing the documents of their forefathers."Several crores of Indians do not have any land or property in India and could end up losing their citizenship. The state government should hence urge the Union government to stop the NRC exercise."

The VCK leader said that the CAA would lead to major uncertainty among the people of the country.Speaking to IANS, Thol Thirumavalavan said, "The DMK government by moving a Bill against the CAA has given great justice to the people of Tamil Nadu. Political parties in this country must stand up against the draconian laws being brought forward by the Government of India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee also welcomed the resolution against the Citizen Amendment Act (CAA).

The state president of TNCC, K.S.Alagiri in a statement on Thursday said, "The CAA is against the Constitution of India and the Narendra Modi government is trying to subvert the basic rights of the citizens of India. The Constitution gives the right to propagate and follow any religion in this country and the CAA snatches away this right and is clearly unconstitutional." The Tamil Nadu Congress president also said that the party has always been in the forefront against the CAA and said that the Tamil Nadu unit of the party has conducted several programmes opposing the CAA which was against the constitution of the country. Alagiri told IANS, "The Tamil Nadu government under Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has passed a resolution against the CAA which is anti-constitutional and we welcome this.

RAHUL EMBARKS ON 10TH PILGRIMAGE IN 11 YEARS, VISITS VAISHNO DEVI

New Delhi: As Congress leader Rahul Gandhi walked to the Vaishno Devi shrine on Thursday, it was his 11th pilgrimage in 10 years, from Vindhyachal to Vaishno Devi. But the Congress' political fortunes are not reviving since the election debacle of 2014.

Rahul Gandhi told reporters, "I have come here to offer prayers to Mata and I don't want to make any political comments."

He had travelled to Vindhyachal, Kashi Vishwanath in 2015, Kedarnath in 2016, to Hanuman Garhi in Ayodhya in 2017, Somnath and Jagannath Mandir during the Gujarat Assembly polls, Mahakal in 2018, Tirupati Balaji in 2019, Kamakhya Temple in 2021 and now to Vaishno Devi.

He had also gone to Kailash Mansarovar in 2018 after completing the election tour in Karnataka and claimed to be a Shiv Bhakt.

While the Bharatiya Janata Party has attacked Gandhi and said that it's token Hindutva, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala asked why the BJP gets upset when Rahul Gandhi walks to the shrine... if the Prime Minister wants to go, Rahul Gandhi will give a helping hand.

The Congress leader has often been on pilgrimages but his critics say that the Congress' fortunes are not reviving politically ever since the party's electoral defeat in 2014. The party has lost two consecutive general elections and polls in states where it was in power.

Centre inks ceasefire agreement with another Naga group

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid ongoing Naga peace process, the Centre and the Niki Sumi-led group of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K) on Wednesday signed a ceasefire agreement for one year, till September 7, 2022.

The agreement was signed between the representatives of the NSCN-K Niki group and the Additional Secretary, Home Affairs.

With this agreement, more than 200 cadres of this group joined the peace process."The ceasefire will be applicable for the period of one year with effect from September 8, 2021,to September 7, 2022. The ceasefire will be subject to adherence to the Ceasefire Ground Rules to be mutually agreed and signed by the two sides. The Ceasefire Ground Rules will be subject to to mutual review and amendment with the involvement of the both parties," the agreement reads.

The Home Ministry has already signed a 'Framework Agreement' with the NSCN-IM and ceasefire agreements with other Naga groups, namely, NSCN-NK, NSCN-R, and NSCN-K-Khango are already in place.It had also signed an agreement with Tripura's National Liberation Front of Twipra-SD in August 2019, by which its 88 cadres along with 44 weapons joined the mainstream in Tripura.The Ministry had signed a Bodo Agreement in January 2020, under which more than 2,250 cadres of insurgent groups, including all factions of the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB), along with 423 weapons and huge quantity of ammunition, surrendered in Assam and joined the mainstream.The NDFB was an armed separatist outfit which sought to obtain a sovereign Boroland for the Bodo people, and was designated as a terrorist organisation by the government.

Similarly on February 23 this year, the Union Home Ministry also signed a peace agreement with Karbi groups and a total of 1,040 leaders and cadres of various underground Karbi groups of Assam surrendered along with 338 weapons.On September 4, it signed a tripartite 'Karbi Peace Accord' here in presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and representatives of the six Karbi outfits, bringing an end to the decade-long agitation and unrest in Assam.

NCR-based university emerging as bastion of China experts: Report

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A new report on Chinese influence in India states that a prominent university located in the National Capital Region is emerging as the bastion of so-called China "experts".

It runs a flagship fellowship programme that allows for exchange of visiting scholars between India and China, says the report titled "Mapping Chinese Footprints and Influence Operations in India" by the Law and Society Alliance.

Under the fellowship, academics, policy experts and professionals are made to work on China-based topics. They also get access to Chinese diplomats and frequently visit China.

The university has been granting this fellowship to numerous individuals, including academicians, research scholars and journalists.

The topics allocated to the researchers clearly raise suspicions over the objectivity and the objectives of the research conducted on China-related subjects, the report said.

A new organisation, which calls itself a "Foundation", based out of Delhi, is working on mission mode to create sentiments favourable to China among Indians and is discharging duties similar to that of the Chinese Embassy.

Though it claims to work as "a mission to increase mutual understanding between the people of India and China", its functions resemble that of the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in India, which is obvious through an analysis of its statements and events, the report added.

Advisors to the organisation include a journalist, an academician and a former diplomat. This organisation is aggressively running a China Study Centre to promote pro-China sentiments in India through which it helps setting up of these centres in top Indian universities.

The organisation, which was working in full swing, reportedly suspended its website to save itself from scrutiny of the government agencies and public backlash amid the 2020 India-China standoff in Eastern Ladakh.

The organisation's website is now redirected to what is called the Asian Century Foundation, created in 2020.

The founder of the above organisation has also helped establish a visiting scholars fellowship at the said NCR-based university, where he happens to be the Chairman.

He also runs EdTech and policy start-ups whose investments may possibly need to be examined by the government agencies for reported Chinese funding.

China has been constantly rewarding him, the report said.

Schools can reopen without vaccinating children: NITI Aayog

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Children need not be vaccinated for schools to reopen, NITI Aayog's Member, Health, Dr V.K. Paul announced on Thursday.

"Nowhere in the world has vaccination of children been set up as a criteria or condition to reopen schools. All we need is to curb the spread of infection which can only be ensured through complete vaccination of parents, teachers and other staff members of the school," said Paul while answering a question at a press conference on the actions taken, preparedness and updates on Covid-19.

"However, we need to ensure that classes are taken in an open surrounding with a good ventilation and children, along with the entire teaching and non-teaching staff, strictly adhering to the Covid-19 guidelines."

On the number of vaccines being tested for children, he said: "Firstly, this topic is still an evolving scientific and public health discourse. Only a few nations have introduced vaccination for children and there is no WHO recommendation to move ahead in this direction because of low mortality rate and high incidents of asymptomatic infection."

"Despite that India is working actively in the direction of scientific validation of our vaccine for potential use in children.

"As of now we have Zydus (Cadila) which is already licensed for children. We have details of the stockpile and our scientific bodies are doing research on the ways it could be administered," Paul added."Covaxin's trial in children is almost on the verge of completion. Once we have the results, it would be readily available to be potentially given to our younger generation. In this way, we will have yet another option."

Similarly, some other vaccines are also in line, he added.

While children were left untouched by the SARS-COV-2 virus during the first wave in 2020, a significant number of those below 18 years of age tested positive in April and May this year - a time when India witnessed a devastating second wave due to a new Delta variant. Since then, the discussion around vaccination of children and adolescents has picked up pace.

CHANGING GLOBAL SCENARIO QUICKLY CHANGED EQUATIONS BETWEEN NATIONS: RAJNATH

Team Absolute | Jaisalmer

The changing global scenario, including the developments in Afghanistan, has changed equations between nations quickly as per their interests, said Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday.

The minister said that uncertainty has spread everywhere in the world.

Speaking at the induction of medium range surface-to-air missile MRSAM into the Indian Air Force, the minister said, "Whether it is South China Sea, Indian Ocean region, Indo-Pacific region or Central Asia, we can see uncertainty everywhere. The current developments in Afghanistan is one such example."

He added that the global scenario is changing very quickly and in an unexpected way and the changing geopolitics is affecting trade, economy, as well as the current security scenario.

Singh stressed, "In such a situation, the strength of our security and our self-reliance is not an achievement, but a necessity."

Talking about the self reliant India campaign, the minister said that from being tagged as the number one defence importer in the world, India today is supplying defence systems and sub-systems to foreign countries and this is something to be proud of.

"We are taking all such measures that will help our defence sector to stand on its legs," he said.

Speaking about the induction of the missile, Singh said that the missile system will prove to be a game changer in air defence. "The induction of this missile by the Air Force is also a great example of the steps towards self-reliance in the defence sector," Singh added.

The missile was developed in collaboration between the Defence Research and Development Organisation and an Israeli company. Singh said, "This project has played an important role in strengthening the defence industrial base of both the countries of India and Israel. It is a win-win situation for both the countries. Also, I was told that during this period many new test facilities and infrastructure have been created in the country," he said.

FARMERS UNIONS TO MEET ON SEP 11 TO DECIDE FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION

Team Absolute | Karnal

With the ongoing farmers agitation at the mini-Secretariat in Haryana's Karnal entering its third day on Thursday, the farmers unions have decided to meet again on Saturday to finalise the future course of action on their demands.

Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Wednesday announced that they will continue the peaceful protest here and will not obstruct any official day to day activities. He said that farmers across the state will continue the agitation on the lines of ongoing protests at the Delhi borders.

However, farmers are not in a mood to stretch the protest here and have decided to meet on Saturday where all unions' leadership will participate and decide their actions ahead.

Jagdeep Singh Aulakh, Karnal district President of the Bharatiya Kisan Union-Chadhuni and member of the core committee, said: "Samyukta Kisan Morcha and the other farmers' organisations of Haryana will meet at the protest site of Karnal where we will announce the actions ahead".

"The farmers' organisations have already given three days to the Haryana government, but not even a single demand has been accepted yet. We will make some big announcement on September 11 that will make (Manohar Lal) Khattar government bow down at any cost."

The farmers unions have categorically said that they will now talk with the government only when a case is registered against then SDM Ayush Sinha who is being seen in the viral video giving controversial statements while ordering a baton charge at Bastara toll plaza in Karnal on August 28.

According to the United Kisan Morcha, Sinha had directly ordered the police to "break the heads of the farmers". The farmers have alleged that the government has promoted him instead of sacking.The agitating farmers' demands include immediate sacking of Sinha and a case against him. Apart from this, they are also seeking Rs 25 lakh compensation and a government job for kin of the farmer who died in the incident and Rs 2 lakh compensation each for injured farmers.

Two per cent MSP hike of wheat is a cruel joke, says Congress

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day after the central government hiked MSP of wheat and other agricultural produce, the Congress has said it is nothing but a cruel joke.

Congress spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill said on Thursday, "Nation has witnessed highest fuel (lifeline of Agri sector) price hike in 75 yrs & lowest MSP hike for wheat in 12 years -- BJP only believes in 'snatching away' & not supporting the farmers -- Current MSP hike is a cruel joke on farmers already paying the price of anti-farmer BJP Govt."

Congress Chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala too hit out at the government and said the hike is nothing compared to the increase in input cost of the produce.He said there is only 1.75 per cent hike in the MSP of sugarcane while that of wheat has been increased by only 2 per cent and other items are less than 10 per cent. The price of diesel, pesticides and fertilizers and other items

have increased by several times, he said.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Wednesday approved the increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all mandated Rabi crops for Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2022-23 with an aim to realigning the MSPs in favour of oilseeds, pulses, and coarse cereals over wheat.This has been done to encourage farmers to shift to a larger area for these crops and adopt best technologies and farm practices, to correct demand-supply imbalance, a Cabinet communique said.The government has increased the MSP of Rabi crops for RMS 2022-23, to ensure remunerative prices to the growers for their produce. The highest absolute increase in MSP over the previous year has been recommended for lentil (masur) and rapeseeds and mustard (Rs 400 per quintal each) followed by gram (Rs 130 per quintal).The differential remuneration is aimed at encouraging crop diversification.For wheat, there has been an increase of Rs 40 per quintal while for barley, it is Rs 35 per quintal, over the last year.The MSP for RMS 2022-23 for wheat has been announced as Rs 2,015 per quintal considering the cost of production for 2022-23 as Rs 1,008, for barley, it is Rs 1,635 against Rs 1,019, MSP for gram has been announced as Rs 5,230 against the cost of production of Rs 3,004, for lentil, it is Rs 5,500 against Rs 3,079, for rapeseed and mustard at Rs 5,050 against Rs 2,523 and the MSP for safflower has been announced as Rs 5,441 against the cost of production of Rs 3,627.

'First couple' in CPI under fire from Kerala unit

Thiruvananthapuram: The 'first couple' in the Communist Party of India -- D. Raja, national general secretary and his wife Annie Raja, general secretary of the National Federation of Indian Women and also a member of the national executive of the CPI -- on Thursday came under fire at the state executive meeting of the party held here.

The Kerala unit of the CPI is upset over the recent remarks made by Annie that a section of the Kerala Police is working against the accepted policy of the state government towards women and this is being done purposely as there is a RSS coterie in the police.

At its meeting, top state party leaders expressed their ire against Raja as the national executive meeting had chided Annie over her remarks, but outside while speaking to the media Raja defended Annie, which irked the state leadership.The CPI in Kerala is the second biggest ally of the Left government led by Pinarayi Vijayan, who also holds the home portfolio and hence her remarks left the Kerala unit of the CPI fuming. This remark had rubbed Vijayan the wrong way and later it became the butt of jokes in the very active social media here. The CPI-M Kerala leadership had then told the CPI leaders here that her comment was in bad taste.

My statement on Taliban deliberately distorted: Mehbooba

Srinagar | New Delhi

A day after former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti said the Taliban could become an example for the world if it followed 'real Islamic Sharia', she clarified on Thursday saying that her statement had been 'deliberately' distorted. Taking to Twitter she wrote: "Not surprised that my statement on Sharia has been deliberately distorted. Cant point fingers since most countries that claim to uphold Sharia have failed to imbibe its true values. They are only fixated with restricting women through do's & dont's, dress codes etc.

"The real Medina Charter stipulates equal rights for men, women & minorities. In fact women have been granted property, social, legal & marriage rights. Non muslims have the same rights inc religious freedom & equality of law which is the essence of secularism."

She further added: "Hazrat Khadija Tul Kubra, Prophet SWA first wife was an independent & successful business woman. Hazrat Ayesha Siddique led the Battle of Camel & headed a force of 13000 soldiers. Islamic history is full of such examples of emancipated & empowered women.

"But at a time when India has become so polarised, there is increasing Islamphobia & Afghanistan crisis has only worsened it. Muslims are always expected to prove that they don't stand for violence. I can see why my statement is being used as click bait to further this impression."

On Wednesday, Mehbooba told reporters in Srinagar that the image of Taliban in its first term was against humanity and human rights, 'this time if they want to rule Afghanistan then they should follow the real Islamic Sharia given in the holy Quran which specifies rights of women, children and the elderly and govern as per the model of Madina given by the prophet'.

RACE HOTS UP IN CONGRESS FOR TWO RAJYA SABHA SEATS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With the announcement of Rajya Sabha polls on 7 seats on Thursday, the intense lobbying has begun in the Congress party for tickets.

The grand old party is likely to contest two seats -- one in Tamil Nadu and the other in Maharashtra. In the alliance arrangement during the state polls, one seat was promised to the Congress by the DMK and the other seat is from Maharashtra which has fallen vacant after the demise of Rajiv Satav.

Many leaders are said to be in the fray including former Leader of the opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mukul Wasnik, Milind Deora, Sanjay Nirupam and Pramod Tiwari, while from Tamil Nadu, sources said that the former Congress President Rahul Gandhi is in favour of Praveen Chakravarty who is the chairman of the data analytics department of the Congress party.

But sources say that the DMK is averse to the idea of sending a non political person to the upper house while Ghulam Nabi Azad shares a good rapport with the DMK leadership. Pramod Tiwari is a surprise name but he is banking on his proximity to Priyanka Gandhi and is keen to be nominated for the upper house elections.

From Maharashtra the Congress has lone seat with three leaders in the fray -- Mukul Wasnik who is from the scheduled caste has thrown his hat while Milind Deora who was once close to Rahul Gandhi is also being considered and former Mumbai Congress President Sanjay Nirupam's name is in the fray as he met Rahul Gandhi last week.

While many leaders including Azad, Wasnik, Veerappa Moily are from the G-23 group, Moily and Wasnik have mended fence with Rahul Gandhi, sources said.

However, in the entire elections, the BJP is also likely to get two seats, one in MP and the other in Assam where Sarbanda Sonowal is likely to be sent from the state and the seat in Puducherry will go to the NDA. It remains to be seen if the Puducherry seat goes to the BJP or not. From West Bengal, Congress turncoat Sushmita Dev is likely to be nominated by the Trinamool, but for the polls in Tamil Nadu both the seats will go to the DMK and its allies as it's working on to take PMK on board.The Election Commission on Thursday announced dates for bypolls for Rajya Sabha for various states. There are six casual vacancies in the Council of States while one seat from Puducherry is going for regular poll. A bypoll for the lone seat of legislative council in Bihar is also scheduled.

'Talk! If not on laws, then at least on report': SC panel member to farmer groups

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A key member of the Supreme Court-appointed panel on contentious three agricultural laws said the panel's report is in favour of farmers and the report should be brought in public domain for a discussion.

Speaking to IANS, Shetkari Sanghatana President and panel member Anil J. Ghanwat, who had written to Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana on September 1, urging him to make the report public, said: "The report was prepared after holding detailed discussion with various stakeholders... I am pained to see the ongoing farmer protests."

Asked to comment on the farmer groups agitating against the three farm laws, he said: "Farmers should talk. If not on the three laws, then at least on the report prepared by the panel... (it is) important to break the stalemate." He emphasised that the panel's report on the three farm laws is in favour of farmers.

"Therefore, it is important to release the report in the public domain and the top court should take up the matter without any delay," he added.

Ghanwat emphasised that repeal of three farm laws is not the solution, and instead, there should be talks, as the protest against the laws has been ongoing for a long time. On the aspect of repealing the three farm laws, which is the main demand of protesting farmer groups, he reiterated there should be discussion on the defects in the farm laws, and they should be addressed too.

Ghanwat, in a letter to the CJI, said the report addressed all apprehensions of the farmers. The committee was confident that the recommendations "will pave the way to resolve the on-going farmers' agitation that started on November 26, 2020"."I feel that the report has not been given any attention by the Supreme Court. I am humbly pleading the Supreme Court to kindly release the report for implementation of its recommendations for peaceful resolution of the stalemate to the farmers satisfaction at the earliest," said Ghanwat in the letter.

The top court had suspended the implementation of the three farm laws and constituted a committee to report on these laws on January 12 this year.

Ghanwat was nominated as one of the members of the committee to represent the farming community.

The committee was given two months to submit its report on the three laws. The committee, after consulting a large number of farmers and several stakeholders submitted its report before the March 19 deadline.The committee initially comprised of four members: Bhartiya Kisan Union and All India Kisan Coordination Committee President Bhupinder Singh Mann, agricultural economist and International Food Policy Research Institute's Director for South Asia, Dr. Parmod Kumar Joshi, agricultural economist and the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices' former Chairman Ashok Gulati, and Ghanwat. Mann resigned later.

The Supreme Court had stayed the implementation of three farm laws - the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020, and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020.

Mayawati to launch BSP campaign on Kanshi Ram's death anniversary

Lucknow | Agencies

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) will formally launch its election campaign in Uttar Pradesh from October 9 which happens to be the death anniversary of the late Kanshi Ram, the party's founder.

Mayawati has asked party workers to pay homage to late Kanshi Ram on the occasion by paying homage to the party founder and resolving to bring BSP back in power.

Party sources said that an estimated 1 lakh cadre turnout is expected at the memorial built in memory of Kanshi Ram, and Mayawati will address them.

The former chief minister has already started reviewing preparations for the elections and even shortlisting the candidates.

Mayawati has told the party cadres to observe Kanshi Ram's death anniversary in a big way this year.

A party functionary said, "Behenji (Mayawati) has asked people from all 75 districts to come to Lucknow on October 9. We are expecting a crowd of approximately 1 lakh, if not more, to visit the memorial. This will be the largest gathering of party workers in the state capital in two years since we could not organize any programme due to the pandemic."

MUMBAI POLICE IMPOSE SECTION 144 TILL 19 SEPT, NO GANPATI PROCESSIONS THIS YEAR

- NOT MORE THAN FIVE PEOPLE WILL BE ALLOWED TO GATHER AT A PLACE IN MUMBAI FOR GANESH CHATURTHI
- MUMBAI CIVIC BODY HAS BANNED PHYSICAL DARSHAN FOR DEVOTEES AT PUBLIC PANDALS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In view of the Covid-19 situation in Mumbai, the city police have prohibited large-scale celebrations of the upcoming Ganesh Chaturthi festival. As per an order issued on Thursday, section 144 of the CrPC will be in place in India's financial capital from 10 to 19 September. In addition to this, the police have also prohibited any Ganpati processions, which used to be central to the festival. Not more than five people will be allowed to gather at a place. There is also a ban on devotees taking darshan of Ganapati idols in pandals. All darshans have been shifted online. The Mumbai civic body has issued fresh guidelines for the Ganpati festival beginning from Friday.According to the new order, physical darshan at public pandals has been banned and restrictions have been imposed on the number of participants in processions during the celebrations.

For bringing home the idols of the deity and during their immersion, there will not be more than 10 people in the processions of public mandals and not more than five for the household Ganpatis, said the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in the guidelines issued on Tuesday."All devotees should wear masks and observe social distancing. Also, the 10 participants should have taken both the doses of Covid-19 vaccine and completed 15 days after taking the second dose," the guidelines said.In the wake of a rise in the number of new coronavirus infections and fear of a third wave, the BMC has appealed to citizens to celebrate the festival with simplicity.The mandals falling in Covid-19 containment zones will have to make arrangements for the immersion of the Ganpati idols in the pandal premises or postpone it.Similarly, in sealed buildings, devotees will have to make arrangements for the immersion of idols at home.Amidst the restrictions imposed on celebrations, people in Mumbai were seen making last-minute preparations as they visited markets to take home Lord Ganesha idol and decorative materials for the festival.While expressing disappointment for not being able to celebrate Ganeshotsav with full fervour in the wake of the pandemic, the people were also relieved to be able to at least celebrate the festival at home, unlike last year."Last year we could not celebrate Ganeshotsav. This year, though with restrictions, we are going to celebrate the festival and welcome Bappa (Lord Ganesha) at home," Jaya who was shopping in the Lalbaug market of Mumbai, said.Sunil, another person visiting the market, said that the celebrations will not be the same as earlier because of Covid-19 but following the guidelines is also necessary in view of the possible third wave.

MAHA SADAN SCAM:

Chhagan Bhujbal, kin discharged due to 'lack of evidence'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Spelling a huge relief for embattled Maharashtra Food and Civil Supplies Minister Chhagan Bhujbal, he, his son Pankaj and nephew Sameer, and five others were on Thursday discharged by a special court for "lack of evidence" in the alleged corruption cases pertaining to the Maharashtra Sadan in New Delhi and other projects.Special Judge HS Satbhai, in his July order, has also discharged former PWD engineer Arun Devdhar, construction firm KS Chamankar Ent officials Prasanna Chamankar, Krishna Chamankar, Praveena Chamankar and Praneeta Chamankar, in the case filed by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB).

The ACB case related to the 2005 deal entered with the firm KS Chamankar Ent, without calling for tenders when Chhagan Bhujbal was the PWD Minister in the then Congress-Nationalist Congress Party alliance Democratic Front government in the state.Contending that there was "no evidence" to prosecute them, the Bhujbals had sought discharge, terming all the allegations levelled against them in the ACB case as "fake, based on wrong calculations and assumptions."The court order said that undue haste was made in lodging the FIR against the accused, and the ACB's calculations of the alleged profits made by the contractor or the implied losses accrued to the state government without taking the help of an expert was illegal and improper.

It further noted that from the documents submitted, it seemed that most of the calculations were made by the informant and Assistant Commissioner of Police, ACB, Narendra Talegaonkar, who was neither an engineer, an architect, or an expert.

The special judge said that there is no evidence that the contractor had paid the bribe of Rs 13.50 crore to the Bhujbals, their staffers or their family members named as accused in the case.The contractor was granted the redevelopment rights on a slum pocket at the prime location of RTO in Andheri west on the condition that the company would construct the Maharashtra Sadan in New Delhi, the RTO Building in Mumbai, and a government guesthouse in south Mumbai.The Bhujbals' lawyers Prasad Dhakephalkar, Sajal Yadava and Sudarshan Khawase argued that despite the voluminous chargesheet running into over 11,000 pages filed against them by the ACB in 2019, there is not sufficient evidence to continue with the trial against them.

Opposing their plea in the court, the ACB contended that the Bhujbals and others had received kickbacks from the firm in the project to build the Maharashtra Sadan state guesthouse in New Delhi.

Against the government circular of giving 20 percent to contractors, the ACB said the company had allegedly earned 80 percent profits in the New Delhi construction project.

1.98 lakh hectares of crop may be damaged by rain, farmers seek relief

Over the last few days, the monsoon has revived in almost all parts of the state. Heavy rain has been reported from Nanded, Parbhani, Raigad, Palghar, Akola, Dhule, Hingoli, Pune, Sangli, Kolhapur, Buldhana, Jalgaon Solapur, Nashik Osmanabad, Latur and Beed.

Team Absolute | Pune

Crops across 1.98 lakh hectares may have been damaged by the incessant heavy rain in parts of Maharashtra in the last few days, according to initial estimates. Several district administrations have declared mid-season adversity notifications due to the rain. Farmers have now asked the state government to take steps to help farmers in areas where heavy crop loss has been reported.

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Now, preliminary surveys by the state Agriculture Commissioner's office has estimated that crops over 1.98 lakh hectares including soyabean, cotton, tur, vegetables, onion have been damaged.

Even the cane crop in parts of Pune, Sangli and Kolhapur have been submerged in water for days. Growers in Jalgaon, Parbhani and Nanded have reported more extensive damage. Many parts of Nanded and Parbhani are still under floodwater, with farmers reporting 100 per cent crop loss.

MAHARASHTRA RAINS

Water reaches 'alert' mark in Godavari river amid heavy rains in Marathwada region

Team Absolute | Nanded

The water level in Godavari river has reached the "alert" mark amid heavy rainfall in the Marathwada region, and the phenomenon has occurred after nearly 15 years, PWD Minister Ashok Chavan said on Thursday.

Chavan, who is also the guardian minister of the district, took stock of the situation arising out of heavy rainfall in the region.

Heavy rains have lashed Marathwada region over the last few days, with 31 people dying in rain-related accidents in a week, out of which seven deaths occurred in Nanded.

Speaking to reporters, Chavan said, "Water has reached the 'alert' mark in Godavari river. This phenomenon is being seen after 15 years. Over the years, several buildings have come up along the river, and I have also seen that some structures have been built in nullahs in Nanded city."

The minister held meetings with officials from the local administration and visited Godavari river.

People whose homes were flooded due to heavy rains will get aid, Chavan said, adding that he also took stock of the losses in agriculture and infrastructure sectors in the district.

According to officials, Nanded has received 962.7 mm rain so far this monsoon, which is 118 per cent of its average annual rainfall.

OVER 200 BUILDINGS, 600 KM ROADS DAMAGED IN RURAL AURANGABAD

Team Absolute | Aurangabad

At least 600 km of roads and over 200 buildings under the jurisdiction of the in 's have been damaged due to heavy rainfall that battered the district for the last two days, an official said on Thursday.

As per a statement issued by Zilla Parishad CEO Nilesh Gatne, the heavy rainfall on September 7 and 8 have damaged several roads, lakes, buildings and water supply schemes.

At least 242 structures, including 144 gram Panchayat buildings, were damaged, which is a loss of Rs 29.04 crore, while water supply schemes in , Saigavhan, Debhegaon and Karanjkhed villages in taluka have witnessed losses worth Rs 17.50 lakh, it was stated.An assessment of losses has revealed that 643 km of roads were damaged due to rains and flooding, and over Rs 9 crore will be needed for immediate repairs, the release said.

The total losses incurred due to heavy rains in the rural part of Aurangabad have been estimated at Rs 245 crore, it was stated.

As per the NDRF guidelines, Rs 8.60 crore will be considered as compensation for losses, an official said.

According to officials, Aurangabad has received 702 mm rain so far this monsoon, which is 120 per cent of its average rainfall.

Mumbai parents worry about their kids amid talk of Covid third wave

Team Absolute | Mumbai

An 11-year-old boy in a Mumbai suburb died this month, days after complaining of breathlessness and uneasiness.

Doctors at a city hospital had informed the parents after initial tests that the child had Covid-19 in the past that had damaged his lungs. This surprised the parents. They told the doctors that their child was treated for cold and cough a month back and had regained health after medication. The doctors tried hard to save the child but could not.

While the parents were caught unawares, many others are worried about their children, with experts warning against a possible third wave of Covid-19 that could affect children more.Mumbai resident Sameer said that he is extra cautious when his child goes out to play. "He's 10. He was mostly confined indoors all these months. A couple of months ago, he started going out to play with his friends. But I ensure he wears two masks. Plus, I am around him all the time to see that he doesn't touch anything. If I see an older adult coughing or sneezing, I take my child away from that place. If I see his friends lowering masks, I tell them to put them on. It's, after all, about health and safety, so I can't compromise." he said.Matunga resident Prerna said she is scared these days. "This news of the third wave is unnerving. You get all sorts of thoughts. Kids get fever and cold all the time, and then we get worried. Now you can't control kids. We make them put on the mask, and the next moment you realise it's not there. While playing, they find it suffocating. For how long can you ask them to stay inside? For kids and parents, these have been the hardest times," she said.

Dr Vinit Samdani, Pediatrician at Bhatia Hospital in Mumbai, said that the SMS (sanitising, masking, social distance) method was the only way out for the safety of kids.

"The third wave is on its way, and with functions, gatherings and ceremonies going on, we will have a spike. There are more dengue and influenza cases than Covid cases among kids. If we don't restrict ourselves, Covid will surpass other diseases in a few days." he said.

Doctor Samdani said, "Parents should continue taking all precautions and avoid unnecessary meetings and gatherings in crowded places. Children will get Covid from adults or while playing in the neighbourhood. Now that the festive season has started, perform all religious practices at home."

The doctor added that parents should teach their children how to wear masks correctly and educate them about proper hand sanitisation methods.

"Another important thing is to keep children healthy during this time by feeding them healthy food with good nutrition and making sure that they remain physically active. Ensure routine vaccinations to protect against other diseases," he said.

Dr Gurudutt Bhat, Consultant Paediatrics, Fortis Hospital, warned parents against doing extreme things in extreme in the name of increasing their kids' immunity.

"Do not overdo anything. Excess vitamin supplements are not recommended for children. Many anxious guardians have started giving their children vitamin C, D, and Zinc tablets to boost immunity. It may cause mouth ulcers, growth disturbance, muscle pain."

On World EV day, Maharashtra govt holds key meeting to implement EV policy

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On World EV Day, the Maharashtra government held a key meeting of concerned departments to review the implementation of its electric vehicle policy. The EV policy, unveiled earlier this year, aims to bring in as many as three lakh electric vehicles on road by March 2025.Led by Aditya Thackeray, Maharashtra's Minister of Tourism and Environment, the meeting was held to take a stock of how the EV policy is being implemented.

Thackeray took to social media platform Twitter to say, "We reaffirm our commitment to making Maharashtra, the hub for EV manufacturing and use."Maharashtra government has announced incentives to boost the adoption of electric vehicles besides aiming to be India's top EV hub. The government has invested ?930 crore towards its EV policy aiming 10 per cent of all new vehicle registrations by March 2025. The policy will also exempt all the EVs sold in the state from road tax, and all eligible EVs from registration charges.

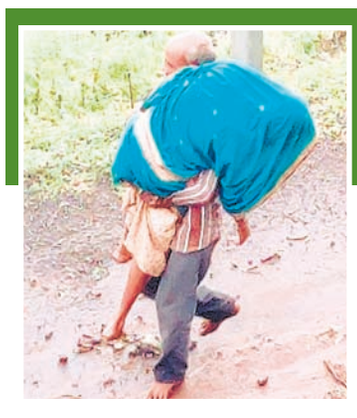
The government also plans to develop 2,375 public and semi-public charging stations across seven major cities in the state and four national highways. Earlier in August, Thackeray inaugurated an EV enabled parking lot at the Koninoor building in Mumbai.

The review meeting of all relevant departments of the state government was held to ensure that the Maharashtra EV Policy 2021 will be implemented to the fullest. The state government will hold another meeting next week which will have an online workshop for OEMs, vehicle supply chains and citizens for better understanding of the policy.

Thackeray also said, "The Govt of Maharashtra is keen to push electric mobility on a large scale, seeing it as an opportunity to help our urban agglomerates and districts Race to Zero in carbon emissions from the transport sector." The state government aims to put at least 25 per cent of the urban fleet operated by the fleet aggregators like e-commerce companies, deliveries, logistics players as electric vehicles by 2025. It also aims 15 per cent of Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation's (MSRTC) existing bus fleet to switch to electric.

The Maharashtra EV policy proposes a base incentive of ?5,000 per kWh of battery capacity for electric vehicles, which is similar to that of two-wheelers. The maximum incentive for electric vehicles (four-wheelers) is capped at ?1.5 lakh, and the minimum incentive (for two-wheelers) is capped at ?10,000.

The EV policy also proposes that customers can avail early bird discount of up to one lakh on the purchase of an electric car or SUV before the end of this year. The government has also announced charging infrastructure incentives. A slow public charging station can avail an incentive of ?10,000 while a fast public charging station can get incentives of up to ?5 lakh.



Tribal woman dies on husband's shoulder enroute hospital

Team Absolute | Nandurbar

In a tragic incident, a 60-year-old sick tribal woman succumbed on the shoulders of her 65-year-old husband on a hilly path as he was rushing her on foot to a rural hospital around 22 km away, officials and activists said here on Wednesday.

On Wednesday morning, Sidhalibai Padvi had complained of certain health issues at their small dwelling in Chandsaili village, up in the forested hills of Nandurbar. Since the local sub-health centre is reportedly shut for over a year now, the undeterred husband, Aadlya Padvi, lunged her on his shoulders and started a tortuous downhill trek along the sludgy and slippery path to go to the Taloda rural hospital, some 22 km away from the village.The shocking incident came to light when a tribal youth named Yogesh D Patil, who was in the vicinity, shot some pictures of the helpless elderly man weeping over his wife's body, said a Lok Sangharsh Morcha (LSM) President Pratibha Shinde.

"From the information we got, barely a kilometre on the way to Taloda, he was stopped in his tracks by some huge boulders and stones that had fallen off in an hillslide earlier due to torrential rains in this region," Shinde told IANS.Somehow, he kept Sidhalibai down to find an alternative path, and returned to again pick her on his shoulders to resume the long journey which he would have completed only by Wednesday evening given the weather conditions and the non-existent roads there.

Barely had he crossed the hillside area, he was shocked to discover that Sidhalibai had breathed her last on his shoulders, Shinde said.

"This is a monumental tragedy, the kind that we have so far heard only happening in some backward states, not in Maharashtra. An LSM team comprising Katha Vasave, Ramesh Naik, Dilwar Padvi, Jilabai Vasave and others shall visit Chandsaili village on Thursday and prepare a report," Shinde said.

Meanwhile, the LSM and other local activists have shot off messages to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Health Minister Rajesh Tope and other concerned officials to order an inquiry into the tragic incident.

"We have repeatedly raised the demand to restart the Chandsaili health sub-centre that caters to around 10,000 tribals in this remote corner, rebuild the roads left dug up after a mobile company laid cables and installed its towers, and set up other necessary facilities for this 100 per cent tribal region," Shinde said.

She also warned that unless the authorities immediately take remedial measures on a war-footing, the LSM will move the Bombay High Court for directions to the government.

EDITOR'S SPECS

Vegetables restricts Covid

People whose diets were based on healthy plant-based foods such as fruits and vegetables had lower risks of getting Covid-19 and of having severe disease after infection, finds a study. Although metabolic conditions such as obesity and Type 2 diabetes have been linked to an increased risk of Covid-19, as well as an increased risk of experiencing serious symptoms once infected, the impact of diet on these risks is unknown. The study led by researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and published in the journal Gut, suggests that public health strategies that improve access to healthy foods and address social determinants of health may help to reduce the burden of the Covid-19 pandemic. The beneficial effects of diet on Covid-19 risk seemed especially relevant in individuals living in areas of high socioeconomic deprivation. During follow-up, 31,831 participants developed Covid-19. Compared with individuals in the lowest quartile of the diet score, those in the highest quartile had a 9 per cent lower risk of developing Covid-19 and a 41 per cent lower risk of developing severe Covid-19. "These findings were consistent across a range of sensitivity analysis accounting for other healthy behaviors, social determinants of health and community virus transmission rates," said lead author Jordi Merino, a research associate at the Diabetes Unit and Center for Genomic Medicine at MGH. Although we cannot emphasise enough the importance of getting vaccinated and wearing a mask in crowded indoor settings, our study suggests that individuals can also potentially reduce their risk of getting Covid-19 or having poor outcomes by paying attention to their diet. The researchers also found a synergistic relationship between poor diet and increased socioeconomic deprivation with Covid-19 risk that was higher than the sum of the risk associated with each factor alone.

Why is Communist China suddenly so inclusive?

Beijing wants everyone to believe that Tibet has been part of China since antiquity - but Tibetans cannot accept this because 'China did not even exist then, contrary to what the new Emperors would like us to believe.What is China is a question which has some relevance today, and the answer is important not only for the Communist Party of China (CPC), but the world at large too.

Claude Arpi

On September 1, Xinhua reported that a series large exhibitions centered on the theme 'Ethnic Unity - Casting a Firm Consciousness of the Chinese National Community' sponsored by the National Culture Palace, had officially been launched in Beijing.

It included several displays centred on a multi-ethnic China; the exhibitions were entitled: 'Treasures of Nationalities'; 'People of All Ethnic Groups - Hearts to the Party'; 'National Ethnic Minorities' Gifts to the Party', and 'Cultural Relics in the Collection of the Palace of Nationalities'.

Why suddenly this emphasis on China's 'ethic unity' and this after 100 years of the CPC's existence? As always in China, the propaganda's stress is put on something which is missing ('unity').

Already in August, President Xi Jinping addressed a Central Ethnic Work Conference pleading for solid ethnic work and 'casting a firm sense of Chinese ethnic community'.

He mentioned 50,000 precious cultural relics, more than 200,000 ancient books, some 400,000 other books and more than 3,000 paintings and works of art, kept in the National Culture Palace "fully reflecting the connotation of national unity and progress, and letting history speak and letting culture speak."Whether these 'relics' were forceful taken away from minorities' areas, is of course not mentioned.

Has it not been the habit of colonisers to loot their new colonies? Remember the Kohinoor?

Xi spoke of "the beautiful interaction and exchanges among the various ethnic groups in China."

According to the party's General Secretary, the intermingling of the different 'nationalities' focused on "showing the sons and daughters of all ethnic groups to listen to the Party, feel the Party's grace, follow the Party, hand in hand, to build a great revival of the Chinese dream of the glorious course."

Why wait 100 years to remember that the 'nationalities' exist?

It further raises another issue, is China a nation or only an amalgam of different nationalities recently assembled together, in which case why have the nationalities not been given their due place during the last century?

To give a concrete example, why are so few members of the 'nationalities' members of the CPC's Central Committee and not a single one is in the Politburo or the Central Military Commission? Examples could be multiplied. Many see this as Han Chauvinism.

Today, Beijing would like us to believe that China a unified entity which since immemorial times included the Periphery of the Middle Kingdom; it is simply not true.

Already in 2015, in a 'White Paper on Tibet', Beijing argued that "the only sensible alternative is for the Dalai Lama and his supporters to accept that Tibet has been part of China since antiquity".

Why should the Tibetans accept a lie?

The Chinese publication mentioned: "The wheels of history roll forward and the tides of the times are irresistible. Tibet's path of development is one imposed by history and chosen by the people. Experience proves to us that only by upholding unity and opposing separatism, only by upholding progress and opposing retrogression, only by upholding stability and opposing turmoil, can the future of Tibet be assured. Any person or force that attempts to resist the tide will simply be cast aside by history and by

the people."

Any serious student of history is aware that tides come and go; where is the mighty British Empire today?But for the sake of argument, let us accept the Chinese contention, then one should ask: what is China?

A few years ago, Professor Ge Jianxiong, Director of the Institute of Chinese Historical Geography at Fudan University in Shanghai stated in an article in The China Review: "It would be a defiance of history to claim that Tibet has always been a part of China since the Tang Dynasty (7th to 10th century)."

Jianxiong went further and questioned the notion of China: "When discussing the peaceful rise of China and the history of the great powers of the world, it is natural to think of ancient China. Can ancient China be considered a Great Power? If so, how big was it? This is a prerequisite for knowing the history and comparing development."

For the professor, there was no such thing as China, but dynasties who ruled over small or larger areas: "First of all, China ('Zhongguo') only officially became the name of our country with the founding of the Republic of China in 1912. Before this, the idea of China ('Zhongguo') was not clearly conceptualised."

Jianxiong said: "The concept of China has continued to expand. From referring specifically to the central plains of China, the concept has since grown to now refer generally to a whole nation. Even during the late Qing, China would sometimes be used as a name to refer to the Qing State, including all the territory within the boundaries of the Qing Empire, but other times it would only refer to the '18 Interior Provinces' and not include Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang. Therefore, if we want to understand the extent of ancient China's territory, we can only speak of how large was the actual territory controlled by a particular dynasty at a particular moment."

Jianxiong gave Tibet as an example: "If we ask: How big was 8th century China and if we speak about the borders of the Tang Dynasty, we cannot include the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. This was ruled by Tubo/Tufan [dynasty] and so does not count. Tubo/Tufan was sovereign, independent of the Tang Dynasty. At least it was not administered by the Tang Dynasty; there would have been no need to erect the Tang-Tubo/Tufan alliance tablet [Tibet-Tang Treaty of 821 [AD]. It would be a defiance of history if we claim that since the Tang Dynasty, Tibet has always been a part of China - the fact that the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau subsequently became a part of the Chinese dynasties does not substantiate such a claim."

Jianxiong continued: "Moreover, we must differentiate between territory that was actually under administrative control of a dynasty, that which was a vassal state, and that which was within the reaches of our prestige."

Tibet has been part of China since antiquity- Tibetans cannot accept this contention, simply because China did not even exist then, contrary to what the new Emperors would like us to believe.

The present leadership in Beijing should do their homework and start studying the history of their 'empire', before asking the Tibetans, the Uighurs or the Mongols to sign on a dotted line.

And sooner or later, the Communist Dynasty will also collapse, like all other dynasties before; then, the Middle Kingdom will probably shrink again behind the Great Wall.

So why all this noise about 'ethnic unity' in the Middle Kingdom in the Chinese media?

(The writer is an author, journalist, historian, Tibetologist, and China expert. The views expressed are personal)

international

TALIBAN ALLOW 200 AMERICANS, OTHER FOREIGNERS TO LEAVE AFGHANISTAN

Hamza Ameer | Kabul

The Taliban have allowed at least 200 American civilians along with other foreigners to depart Afghanistan after negotiations with the US administration.

As per reports, the foreign nationals will leave Kabul on charter flights on Thursday.

A Qatar Airways flight landed in Kabul on Thursday morning, which would carry the American civilians and other foreign nationals, becoming the first international flight to take off from the Kabul airport since the Taliban takeover of the capital in August.Speaking to the media at the Kabul airport, Qatari officials confirmed that the Qatar Airways flight will be taking foreigners departing Afghanistan.

"The Kabul airport is fully operational now. And today Qatar landed its first international flight from Doha to Kabul. And now the same charter

fight will be leaving with the foreigners," said an Qatari official.

Zabiullah Mujahid, the Taliban spokesperson who accompanied the Qatari officials, said that they are thankful to the Qatar officials for making the Kabul airport operational and bringing in humanitarian supplies.

"The Kabul airport will be fully operational. Our Qatari brothers have confirmed that all technical issues have been resolved. We hope to see more international flights coming here in the coming days," he said.

Asked about the foreign nationals departing Afghanistan, the Qatari officials termed it as a "free passage", and not an evacuation.

"I would not term it as evacuation, I would stay it is a safe passage. There is a significant number of Americans and Westerners in the flight. All have been given boarding passes," he said.

The Qatari officials also revealed that Qatar Airways will be sending in another flight with humanitarian aid on Friday, adding that more people will be taken out through what he referred as the safe passage to foreigners to leave Afghanistan.

It was also revealed that in the coming days, the two main routes of flights will be made operational and planes landing at the Kabul airport with humanitarian aid would be from Qatar and Pakistan.

KENYA DECLARES DROUGHT NATIONAL DISASTER

Nairobi: Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta has the ongoing declared drought, which is ravaging several parts of the country, a national disaster. Kenyatta on Wednesday directed relevant agencies to spearhead government efforts to assist affected households, including water and relief food distribution, reports Xinhua news agency."The decision follows today's meeting between the Head of State and 85 leaders from Kenya's Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL)," the presidency said in a statement issued in Nairobi.It said more details of the government's comprehensive drought mitigation measures will be released in due course. Relief agencies say more than 2.1 million people in the ASAL of Kenya are severely food insecure, following two consecutive poor rainy seasons that have hampered crop production.

Floods wreak havoc in Indonesia, thousands affected

Jakarta | Agencies

Floods have submerged 15,439 houses and affected 25,443 people in 13 sub-districts of Katingan district in Indonesia's Central Kalimantan province, the country's National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) said."The rains that have fallen since the last few days have caused the Katingan and Samba rivers to overflow," Xinhua news agency quoted BNPB spokesperson Abdul Muhari as saying on Wednesday.

The floods that hit an area of 794,100 hectares also submerged 78 schools, 36 medical facilities, 40 office buildings and 67 houses of worship.

The authorities have set up evacuation posts that currently accommodate 112 evacuees, and distributed foods, mats and blankets, but deliveries of the relief aids are hampered by flooded roads.

GLOBAL COVID-19 CASE LOAD TOPS 222.4 MN

Washington | Agencies

The global coronavirus caseload has topped 222.4 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 4.59 million and vaccinations soared to over 5.56 billion, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Thursday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload, death toll and vaccination tally stood at 222,476,971, 4,594,805 and 5,563,333,291, respectively.

The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 40,451,429 and 652,647 respectively, according to the CSSE.

In terms of infections, India

follows in the second place with 33,096,718 cases.

The other worst countries with over 3 million cases are Brazil (20,928,008), the UK (7,127,593), Russia (6,964,595), France (6,944,797), Turkey (6,566,538), Argentina (5,215,332), Iran (5,210,978), Colombia (4,923,256), Spain (4,898,258), Italy (4,585,423), Indonesia (4,147,365), Germany (4,039,667) and Mexico (3,449,295), the CSSE figures showed.

In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 584,421 fatalities.

Nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are India (441,411), Mexico (264,541), Peru (198,568), Russia (186,224), Indonesia (137,782), the UK (133,999), Italy (129,707), Colombia (125,431), France (115,846), Argentina (112,962) and Iran (112,430).

100 Palestinian protesters injured in West Bank clashes

Ramallah | Agencies

At least 100 Palestinian protesters were injured in clashes with Israeli soldiers near the northern West Bank city of Nablus, medics and witnesses said on Thursday. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said in a statement that clashes took place in the villages of Beita and Huwara near Nablus, reports Xinhua news agency.

The statement added that 10 people were shot, including nine with rubber-coated metal bullets, and 90 others suffered suffocation after inhaling teargas fired by the soldiers to disperse the protesters.

Witnesses in the two villages told Xinhua that dozens of Palestinian protesters took to the streets, burned tires and threw stones at Israeli soldiers who fired teargas and gunshots to disperse them.They added that

the protests broke out in Beita, Huwara and other areas in the West Bank against the tightened measures that had been taken against thousands of Palestinians imprisoned in Israeli jails.Palestinian and Israeli media reported that Israeli police and security forces tightened security measures against Palestinian prisoners in several Israeli jails following the escape of six prisoners from a prison on Monday.Storming Palestinian prisoners in several Israeli jails outraged the Palestinian factions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, who called for intensive protests and demonstrations against Israel.The Israeli prisons service "committed a heinous attack on Palestinian prisoners in several Israeli jails", the Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs in Palestine Liberation Organization said in a press statement.

It added that Israeli prisons guards and special units' soldiers armed with weapons, clubs, teargas and police dogs stormed the Kitzeot jail in southern Israel and had brutally attacked the prisoners.

"Continuing the escalation in this way means a real war inside the prisons," the statement said.

In Gaza, the Islamic Resistance Movement and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad warned Israel that attacking Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails will lead to a serious repercussion against Israel all over the Palestinian territories.

ALL UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES OF THE STATE WILL START FROM SEPTEMBER 15

- Staff attendance to be 100 pc and students 50 pc
- Submission of vaccination certificate will be mandatory

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav informed that the academic activities of all the universities and colleges of the state will start from September 15, 2021 along with physical presence of students. He said that there would be 100 percent attendance of academic and non-teaching staff in all colleges and universities. Classes will be conducted with 50 percent attendance of students. Yadav told that it will be mandatory for the academic and non-educational staff and students of the college to submit the certificate of first dose of Covid-19 vaccination.

Yadav has given instructions to carry out practical and academic work by forming separate groups on the basis of safety standards of Covid-19 at each level in case the number of students is more. He said that the concerned institutions would be bound to take major decisions in this regard in the context of the availability of infrastructure and the local conditions. He said that online classes will also continue to be conducted by the educational institutions. Yadav has issued instructions to ensure that the educational institutions make separate time-tables for offline and online classes.

Yadav informed that libraries will also be opened in all educational institutions for students. Only registered students will be given admission. Before entering the library, the employees/students have been instructed to ensure physical temperature, mandatory use of masks, sanitizing hands and following social distancing in the library as per the Covid protocol. There will be 50 percent attendance in the library study room.

Hostels and mess will also be started in universities and colleges. Hostels will be started in a phased manner. In the first phase, hostels will be opened for the students of final year of graduation and third semester of post-graduation. Social distancing, sanitization and thermal screening of all students will be ensured in the hostel premises. Cleanliness of dining hall, kitchen, bathroom and toilet will be continuously monitored. Entry of unwanted people other than the staff of the university/college will be prohibited in the hostels. If any student or staff shows symptoms of Covid-19, medical facility and immediate isolation will be ensured. State helpline numbers in hostels and numbers of local hospitals etc. will be displayed on the notice board. The hostel facility will be available to the student only on the basis of the declaration form of the students and the written consent of the parents/guardians.

Food will be provided to students in the dining room of the hostels, in small batches. Instructions have been given to extend the time period by making time table of the mess. The use of face cover, mask and hand sanitization will be mandatory by the staff preparing and serving food.

Yadav said that educational institutions should make their staff and students aware about health and problems related to Covid-19. It will be necessary to ensure their regular health check-up and medical facilities if symptoms are found to prevent the infection of Covid-19. He said that arrangements for isolation and quarantine facility for the infected person should be made separately in the hostel or arrangements should be made in the government hospital. Yadav said that in any case the students and staff belonging to the containment zone will be barred from entering the institution. Students and staff should download the Arogya Setu app. It will be mandatory for the students and all the staff of universities and colleges to get vaccination done. Class wise information of academic, non-academic staff and students regarding vaccination will be collected by the head of the institution and made available to the leading college. The Registrar will continuously monitor at the university level and the Regional Additional Director concerned at the college level and its report will be sent every Monday.

EC declares by-polls to RS seat in Madhya Pradesh

THE POLLS TO SEVEN SEATS WILL TAKE PLACE ON OCTOBER 4, THE EC SAID

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Election Commission (EC) on Thursday announced dates for by-polls to seven Rajya Sabha seats that have fallen vacant due to various reasons like resignations, death and end of tenure of members.

According to a notification issued by the EC, there are two such seats in Tamil Nadu and one each in West Bengal, Assam, Maharashtra, Puducherry and Madhya Pradesh.The Madhya Pradesh Rajya Sabha (RS) seat got vacant after BJP leader and former Union cabinet minister Thaawarchand Gehlot was elevated as the Karnataka Governor in July.

The polls to all these seven seats will take place on October 4, the EC said.

The two seats in Tamil Nadu fell vacant due to the resignation of AIADMK leaders KP Munusamy and R Vaithilingam who are now members of the Tamil Nadu legislative assembly.The West Bengal Rajya Sabha seat fell vacant after resignation of TMC leader and cabinet minister in West Bengal government Manas Ranjan Bhunia.

In Assam, the seat held by assembly speaker Biswajit Daimary fell vacant after he resigned from the membership of the upper house of Parliament and his earlier party, the Bodoland People's Front, and joined the BJP before the recent polls in the state.

The BJP may field Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal from the Assam seat as he is yet to become a member of either house of Parliament.

The Maharashtra seat got vacant due to the death of Congress leader Rajeev Satav in May this year due to COVID-19 infection.

In Puducherry, the RS seat will fall vacant soon as the term of incumbent member N Gokulakrishnan ends on October 6.

The EC said in its order that all "broad guidelines of COVID-19" have to be followed during the election process, that is from the time of issue of notification to the counting of votes."The chief secretaries of states concerned are being directed to depute a senior officer from the state to ensure that the extant instructions regarding COVID-19 containment measures are complied with while making arrangements for conducting the election," the poll panel said.

COLLEGE STUDENTS WILL GET TRAINING IN NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Principal Secretary, Higher Education Anupam Rajan said that the National Education Policy 2020 has been implemented in the state. A training workshop is being organised from 15 to 25 September 2021 to make the students of colleges aware of the education policy. He said that in this regard directions have been issued to the registrars of all the universities, principals of government and self-governing, grant-aided non-government and private colleges.

Rajan informed that in the context of National Education Policy, online training programme of principals and professors was organised earlier. He said that the trained professors would be the nodal officers of the colleges. Training will be given to the students by these nodal officers. Rajan said that in the training programme of the students, they would be informed about the education policy and their questions and queries would be resolved. During the training, students will be given information about field projects, internships, community engagement and service.

Rajan informed that a workshop would be organised from September 27 to 30 to give information about the National Education Policy to those interested in the educational world, experts, intellectuals, educationists and local industrialists etc.

Innovations to be encouraged along-with execution of new schemes in agriculture sector

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh with an agriculture oriented economy is determined to make farmers capable and prosperous. The state government has constantly promoted agricultural welfare schemes and innovations. Historic decisions have also been taken in the interest of farmers.

The State Cooperative Marketing Federation has been authorized to procure summer moong and urad from registered farmers for the summer year 2020-21 and marketing year 2021-22. The procurement of these crops will be done by next September 15. Till now, 3 lakh 29 thousand metric tonne summer moong has been procured on support price.

Madhya Pradesh is now the leading state in wheat procurement. Provision of e-trading was made by amending the Agricultural Produce Market Act and the farmers were provided the facility to sell the crop from the procurement center as well as the authorized private procurement center and deal-sheet system of the mandi in the interest of the farmers.

Madhya Pradesh is also among the six states that have been selected as a trial under the Pradhan Mantri Swamitva Yojana. The state government is working with coordination and administrative firmness to ensure that the farmers of the state get maximum benefit from this scheme. The first beneficiary of the scheme, Shri Rambharos Vishwakarma, is a resident of Harda district of the state.

The state has received an allocation of Rs 7500 crore in 2020-21 for Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, in which the state ranks first in the country. In order to achieve the goal of doubling the income of farmers, setting up of modern mandis, food parks, chain of cold storages as well as construction of silos and warehouses are being encouraged in mission mode through this fund. With this, farmers can sell their produce on MRP in place of MSP.

The National Agriculture Infra Financing Facility (AIF) portal has received 2,352 applications in a short span of time. These are being verified continuously and the payment of Rs 618 crores has also been done by the banks. The objective of this portal is to strengthen the infrastructure in the agriculture sector, so that the farmers can get access to the big markets of the country.

Farmers of the state are currenty getting Rs 6 thousand each per year under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi. In addition to this, Rs.4 thousand per year is now being given to farmers by the Madhya Pradesh government in two equal installments under the Mukhya Mantri Kisan Kalyan Samman Nidhi Yojana. In this way, farmers are now getting a total of Rs 10 thousand per year as Samman Nidhi.

In order to increase the income of the farmers, work is being done on priority for better management and irrigation projects. The target is to provide irrigation facility in 65 lakh hectare area in the state in the next 5 years.Continuous work is being done under Digital Agriculture in Madhya Pradesh. Digital agriculture is the use of information technology (IT) to make agriculture socially, economically and environmentally beneficial and sustainable.

This way, it is the result of the efforts of the state government to ensure better plans, strategies, training, dialogue and participation in the agriculture sector that the farmers of the state are becoming self-reliant and leading partners in achieving the goal of Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh.

MP State Load Dispatch Centre becomes First power utility of the country to implement Cyber Security

THE SYSTEM DEVELOPED BY MPPTCL WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE WHOLE COUNTRY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh has become the first state of the country to implement cyber crisis management plan developed by M.P. state load dispatch centre Jabalpur. Sunil Tiwari, Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Power Transmission Company (MPPTCL) said that on the instructions of the Central Government, the engineers of State Load Dispatch Centre of the Transmission Company prepared this Cyber Crisis Management Plan in-house without taking the help of expert consultants and implemented after approval by Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-India).

This is a system of international standard to prevent cyber-attacks. It deals with cyber security of all computer systems installed in Load Despatch Centre. Apart from this, Madhya Pradesh is the first state in the country whose load dispatch Centre has also been certified by ISO 27001, which is awarded for compliance with cyber security.Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar has congratulated the engineers of Power Transmission Company on this achievement. He said that The advantage of implementing this system is that the entire system of Madhya Pradesh Power Transmission Company will be safe from external cyber-attacks and no one will be able to tamper the power system of the state through hacking or virus. In last year, Mumbai's electricity system was a victim of this cyber-attack, due to which there was power outage in Mumbai for hours. It was only after this incident that instructions were given by the Central Government to prepare such cyber security to the power sectors of the entire country. It is a matter of pride for Madhya Pradesh that Power System Operation Corporation Ltd, India, the organization that gives various guidelines to the power sector in India and the National Nodal Agency for Information Security, NCIIPC (National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre) has approved MP Transco system. By approving this management plan prepared by the company in the first test itself, it has accepted all the proposals related to the power system of this plan.

In preparing this system, the Chief Engineer of State Load Despatch Centre Jabalpur, Eng. KK Prabhakar and Superintending Engineer Eng. Rajesh Gupta's effort was remarkable. Without their extraordinary commitment it was not possible to develop such an international level system in-house & without hiring any expert's consultant.

Prior to this, Madhya Pradesh Power Transmission Company's Load Dispatch Centre Jabalpur has also got the status of first power utility in the country to implement ABT metering system (Availability Based Tariff System) and SCADA system.

CM THANKS PM MODI FOR HIKE IN MSP OF CROPS

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for increasing the Minimum Support Price. The Chief Minister said that Modi is a farmer-friendly Prime Minister. He is constantly taking decisions in the interest of the farmers. The Prime Minister has taken another important step in the direction of increasing the income of farmers by increasing the minimum support price for wheat, barley, Chana, lentil,

CM PLANTS ASHOKA SAPLINGA

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Ashoka sapling in Smart City Park today in fulfilment of his resolve to plant saplings every day. Ashoka trees not only purify the environment, but are also capable of making our body healthy. Ashoka tree is also important in enhancing the beauty of the gardens.

Will give final shape to ethanol policy soon: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The proposed ethanol policy was discussed under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan today.

Chouhan said that this policy should be decided after comparative study of other states. Establishment of units for manufacturing ethanol from maize, paddy and sugarcane etc. will be considered in Madhya Pradesh. Incentive provisions will also be made to realize the investment potential in this sector.Chouhan said that the interest of the state should be at the centre of the policy. After necessary deliberations on all points, necessary cooperation will be obtained by contacting the Central Government. Chief Minister Chouhan said that he will also discuss with the concerned Ministries of the Central Government and Union Ministers.

Rural youths will get skill development training

About 50 thousand people will get employment opportunities at the local level

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, work is being done to prepare tap water supply schemes for piped water supply in every village of the state. The operation and maintenance of these tap water schemes will be done by the Village Water and Sanitation Committee constituted under the village/village panchayat with the participation of the community at the village level. Skill development training will also be given to local rural youth for maintenance works. In the concept of Atma-nirbhar Madhya Pradesh, adequate and better employment opportunities will be available to the skilled human resource prepared after training in technical skills. Such activities will help in developing responsible and accountable leadership among the communities while ensuring the long term sustainability of water supply systems.

The Public Health Engineering Department has executed a proposal to provide offline training through Madhya Pradesh State Skills and Employment Generation Board (MPSSDEGB) to about 50 thousand suitable persons in motor pump-repairing, plumber, pump-operator, mason (Raj Mistri), fitter and electrician trades selected from each village for technical skill training. Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, the training expenditure will be charged in the "Support Activity Head", in which the ratio of Central share and State share will be 60:40. The cost of this scheme is Rs 17.12 crore. The duration of each training session will be three days. On the fourth day after the training session, the trainees will be evaluated and certificates will be distributed to them.Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, work is being done to provide water from tap to every household in every village of the state, which is to be completed by 2023. It is necessary to have facilities for the construction of drinking water based infrastructure in every village and its maintenance and repair work after the completion of the tap scheme. For this purpose, provision has been made to train local human resource under Jal Jeevan Mission to ensure availability of trained human resource/technician at the local level.

MORGAN FREEMAN, HELEN MIRREN, AL PACINO TO STAR IN 'SNIFF'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Oscar winners Morgan Freeman, Al Pacino, Helen Mirren and Oscar nominee Danny DeVito will star in "Sniff", a stylish reinvention of the film noir genre that will be directed by Taylor Hackford.

Hackford is the Oscar-winning director behind "Ray". "Sniff" follows detective Joe Mulwray played by Freeman and partner William Keys essayed by DeVito as they investigate a high-end luxury retirement community after the mysterious deaths of two of its residents.

What starts out as a normal case quickly turns strange, as the detective duo uncover a hidden underworld of sex, drugs and murder controlled by senior living community kingpin Harvey Stride played by Pacino and his femme fatale enforcer The Spider essayed by Mirren.

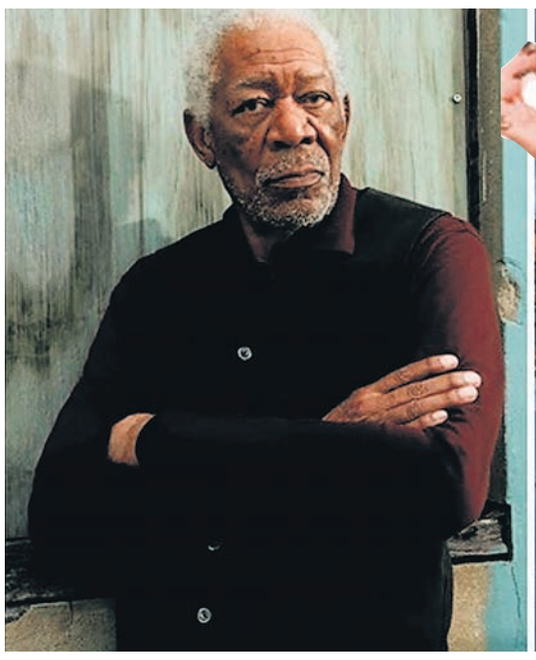
Endeavor Content will launch worldwide sales at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), with CAA Media Finance co-representing the US, reports variety.com.

Adam Goodman and Matt Skiena will produce through their Dichotomy Creative Group alongside Hackford through his production company Anvil Films.

"I have always been a big fan of film noir but haven't really made one," Hackford told Deadline."The whole concept of setting a film noir in an upscale retirement community... these are proliferating all over the United States as the baby boomer generation gets to retirement. There's a lot of money, and people want to live in a beautiful setting. Those are on the brochures, but what Tom Grey did was show what was lurking below the surface."

Hackford added: "I thought it was a brilliant idea and he understood the nature of good noir -- the dark story, the incredibly twisted characters -- and I thought he had a great handle.

"Adam and Matt said, "It's yours if you want to run with it.' I met the writer, Tom Grey, we clicked and worked on it together, him writing and me putting ideas in."



Iggy wants to live in 'complete darkness 24/7'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rapper Iggy Azalea has said that she wants to live in total darkness.

She's been renovating her mansion in California, and she's taken to Twitter to share her home-improvement plans, said that she'd love to fill her bedroom with plants and live in "complete darkness", reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Azalea wrote on the micro-blogging platform: "I want a bedroom full of plants but I also want complete darkness 24/7 (smiling and frowning emojis (sic)"The 'Work' hitmaker, who was born in Australia but relocated to the US during her teenage, previously shared that she's excited to have some of her son's artwork dotted throughout their house.Iggy, who has a 16-month-old son called Onyx with her former-boyfriend Playboi Carti, said: "I can't wait until my son can draw me pictures so I can frame them and put them all over my crib (sic)"The rapper also revealed that she's enjoying her life as a single woman. She wrote: "1 year later and 100 times happier, I love that for me."

JENNIFER ANISTON LAUNCHES VEGAN HAIR CARE LINE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Jennifer Aniston has launched her new vegan beauty business after teasing the line earlier this month.The former 'Friends' star previously shared a photo of her luscious locks from behind, captioning it "something's coming", the "excited" businesswoman shared the first item from the line, named 'Lolavie', which will be available for purchase, reports aceshowbiz.com. "Hi world! Meet @Lolavie," she wrote on Instagram.Aniston added: "This project has been in the works for a long time and I'm so excited to finally be able to introduce it to you," she added, alongside a clip of herself chatting to models and team members. "So much hard work from our incredible team went into making this line - and we're really proud to say it's been made WITHOUT all the bad stuff...we're paraben-free, silicone-free, sulfate-free, phthalates-free, gluten-free, vegan....and of course CRUELTY-FREE, because we love our animals." The 52-year-old concluded by stating: "Our very first product releases today, but there's so much more to come. In the meantime... Enjoy!!"

TIFFANY HADDISH WANTS AN 'EIGHT-PLEX', NOT ENGAGEMENT RING

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Tiffany Haddish is happy in her two-year relationship with rapper Common and isn't looking for anything "extra", but if her beau does want to propose, she would prefer to be given an apartment than an engagement ring.

Haddish told Extra: "I'm happy where I am right now, I'm enjoying it. I'm not going to put nothing extra on it. If he wants to marry me, he can get me an apartment building."

She jokingly added: "Give me a duplex, an eight-plex, or something! Homegirl will be, 'What?! I thought you were engaged, where are your carats?' Carats? Girl, please, I got units...This is going to be appreciated over time."

"The ring might lose its value, but land, now that right there... I want a deed... that's hot!"

The 41-year-old actress... also said that she doesn't consider Common to be her "soul mate", reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Asked if they are soul mates, Haddish said: "I wouldn't say all that... I don't even know if that's a real thing... I've been married and divorced.

The actress, who split from William Stewart in 2011 after three years of marriage, added: "I believe people are there at the right time they are there for you... Maybe there's multiple soul mates."

JLaw expecting 1st baby with husband Maroney

Los Angeles | Agencies

Oscar winning-actress Jennifer Lawrence is expecting her first child with her husband and art gallery director Cooke Maroney.

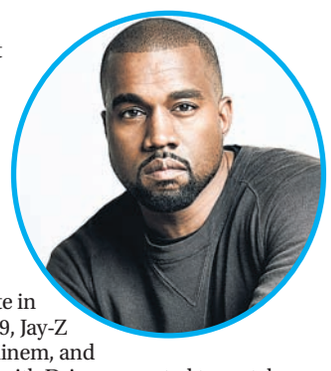
The actress' representative confirmed the happy news to people.com.

Lawrence and Maroney were first linked in June 2018 and the couple got engaged the following February.

The couple tied the knot in October 2019, in Rhode Island.

Maroney and the 'Hunger Games' star held a wedding reception for 150 guests, including celebrity friends Adele, Amy Schumer, Kris Jenner and Emma Stone among many others.The ceremony took place at the luxurious Belcourt of Newport estate, a mansion in Newport that was designed in 1894 by American architect Richard Morris Hunt.

KANYE WEST'S 'DONDA' DEBUTS AT NO. 1 WITH 2021'S BEST FIRST-WEEK NUMBERS



New York: Kanye West's 'Donda' has become his 10th No. 1 album on the Billboard 200.The massive 27-track effort topped the chart with the biggest sales week of any album this year, earning 309,000 equivalent album units for the week ending September 2, according to Billboard.

These numbers include 357.4 million on-demand streams and 37,000 in pure sales. Olivia Rodrigo's 'Sour' previously held the record for the charting week ending June 5 with 295,000 equivalent album units. Kanye's latest offering also earned the largest streaming week of the year for an album, surpassing J. Cole's 'The Off-Season', which earned 325.05 million on-demand streams during its May debut week.

Kanye's 10th No. 1 album makes him the first artiste who debuted this century to score, well, 10 No. 1 albums.It also makes him the seventh artiste in history to have 10 chart-topping albums. The Beatles have the most with 19, Jay-Z isn't too far behind with 14, and Bruce Springsteen, Barbara Streisand, Eminem, and Elvis Presley also have 10 or more. Drake and Taylor Swift both have nine, with Drizzy expected to match Kanye's accomplishment with 'Certified Lover Boy', as its projected to chart next week with 575,000-625,000 album-equivalent units as mentioned in Complex.com.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Lori Harvey

FIFTH TEST:

INDIA ON VERGE OF HISTORY IN FINAL TEST VS ENGLAND

Manchester | Agencies

The Indian team is on the cusp of history as it takes on England in the fifth and final Test here at the Old Trafford from Friday. Leading 2-1 after four Tests, India have a chance to win their third Test in a series in England for the first time in history and their first ever at Old Trafford.

India have played nine Test matches at Old Trafford and have lost four of them. Five have been drawn games.

India had previously won two Tests in England back in 1986 when they returned with a 2-0 series victory.

This could be only the third time that India could win a Test series in England after their triumph in 1971 - when they won 1-0 -- and 1986.

India will be mulling a few changes, including resting Jasprit Bumrah who has played four Test matches in a row and has a busy season ahead in the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the T20 World Cup.

However, the importance of the final Test could force them to play the Gujarat right-armer, who was

the one to trigger English batting's collapse on the fifth and final day of the fourth Test with two quick wickets through reverse swing that unsettled the Englishmen.

India may also consider resting out-of-form Ajinkya Rahane and bring in a middle-order batsman like Mayank Agarwal or Suryakumar Yadav in his place.

Once again, the onus will be on the opening batting pair to lay a strong platform.

Both openers Rohit Sharma and K.L. Rahul had added 83 for the first wicket in the second innings of the fourth Test to help India overturn a 99-run first innings deficit and lay the base for 466-run second innings total and 367-run lead under which the England batting crumbled.

It will be interesting to see if India give a chance to off-spinner R Ashwin in the last Test and pair him up with Ravindra Jadeja.

For England, vice-captain and wicketkeeper-batsman Jos Buttler returns to the playing XI.

England may make a change or two to the bowling combination. They may drop Craig Overton and bring in Mark Wood. Left-arm spinner Jack Leach, who has been added to the squad and if he plays, may challenge Cheteshwar Pujara. The India No. 3 batsman has struggled against left-arm spin in recent Tests.

SQUADS:

England: Joe Root (captain), Moeen Ali, James Anderson, Jonathan Bairstow, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran, Haseeb Hameed, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Dawid Malan, Craig Overton, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood.

India: Rohit Sharma, K.L. Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli (captain), Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wicket-keeper), R. Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Wriddhiman Saha (wicket-keeper), Abhimanyu Easwaran, Prithvi Shaw, Suryakumar Yadav, Prasidh Krishna.

WORLD CUP 2022:

RASPADORI MAIDEN GOAL HELPS ITALY BEAT LITHUANIA

Rome | Agencies

Italy continued their unbeaten run as they smashed Lithuania 5-0 in the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifiers on Wednesday night, with starlet Giacomo Raspadori scoring his maiden goal at the senior national level.

The Azzurri entered Mapei Stadium with back-to-back draws against Bulgaria and Switzerland and are unbeaten for 36 consecutive games. Roberto Mancini made sweeping changes in the starting lineup, as Gianluigi Donnarumma stood between the sticks, Alessandro Bastoni partnered Francesco Acerbi at centre-back, Bryan Cristante and Matteo Pessina started in the middle of the park, while Moise Kean, Raspadori, and Federico Bernardeschi formed the trident up front, reports Xinhua.

The home side broke the deadlock in the 10th minute when Arvydas Novikovas's poor back pass turned into an assist for Kean to drill home.

Italy doubled the lead four minutes later with a stroke of luck, as Raspadori's attempt took a deflection off a defender to go beyond the goalkeeper, which was credited as an own goal.

But Raspadori did get his goal in the 24th minute as Giovanni Di Lorenzo's square pass was blocked, the Sassuolo striker was alert to tap in the rebound.Kean bagged his brace in the 29th minute when Bernardeschi's stunning lobbed pass found his Juve teammate who cushioned a volley into the net.

Di Lorenzo sealed the game 5-0 with a cross-shot looping into the net.

Italy lead Group C with 14 points, six ahead of second-placed Switzerland who were held by Northern Ireland on Wednesday.

In other matches on Wednesday night, World Cup champions France beat Finland 2-0, Denmark outplayed Israel 5-0, the Republic of Ireland held Serbia 1-1, Bosnia and Herzegovina drew 2-2 with Kazakhstan, Norway outplayed Gibraltar 5-1, Scotland prevailed over Austria1-0 while the Faroe Islands beat Moldova 2-1.

Zimbabwe beat Ireland, lead ODI series 1-0

Belfast | Agencies

Craig Ervine (64), and Sikandar Raza (59 not out) struck half-centuries as Zimbabwe came up with a superb all-round performance to beat Ireland by 38 runs in the first One-dayer.

Boosted by fine innings by Ervine and Raza, Zimbabwe posted a competitive total of 266 for seven in their 50 overs and then with Blessings Muzarabani claiming 4/29, successfully defended the total. Despite William Porterfield (75) and Harry Tector's (50) resistance, Ireland were bundled out for 228 runs in the 49th over.

Zimbabwe not only took lead in the three-match ODI series but also snatched a vital ten points in their Cricket World Cup Super League campaign.

Ireland opted to field in the first ODI against Zimbabwe. Brendan Taylor alongside Regis Chakabva opened the innings but the partnership couldn't sustain for long. Chakabva was the first to perish for 2 runs with Craig Young providing the breakthrough.

In the final 10 overs, Ireland needed 75 runs with six wickets in hand but an implosion in the batting meant the hosts crumbled from 187/3 to 228/10 in the 49th over.

Brief scores

Zimbabwe 266/7 in 50 overs (Brendon Taylor 49, Craig Evans 64, Sean Williams 33, Sikandar Raza 59*; Simi Singh 1-22, McBrine 1-26) beat Ireland 228 all out in 48.4 overs (William Potterfield 75, Paul Stirling 32, Harry Tector 50; Blessing Muzarabani 4/29, Wellington Masakadza 2/40, Sean Williams 2/42).

US OPEN

Djokovic sets up semis clash with Zverev

New York | Agencies

World No. 1 Novak Djokovic inched closer to a Calendar Grand Slam as he reached the semi-finals at the US Open, beating Italian Matteo Berrettini in four sets on Wednesday night.

The 34-year-old defeated Berrettini 5-7, 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 in three hours and 26 minutes at the Flushing Meadows. Djokovic has already won the Australian Open, French Open d Wimbledon this season is now just two matches away from winning his fourth Grand Slam title of the season and needs to win the US Open to become the first player since Rod Lever to complete a Calendar Slam.

The top seed had hailed Berrettini as "he "hammer of te"nis" for his thunderous serve and forehand ahead of their third straight major championship showdown. But the Serbian drew on his superior movement and returns to nullify the 25-year'old's chief weapons in their quarter-final clash at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

SAKKARI TO MEET RADUCANO IN SEMIS

New York: Greece's world No.18 Maria Sakkari advanced to her second major semi-final of the season and first in the US Open, defeating No.4 seed Karolina Pliskova, 6-4, 6-4 in the quarter-finals.The 26-year-old is the first Greek woman to reach the US Open singles semi-finals. She will take on Britain's Emma Raducanu for a spot in her first major final.Maria's win over Pliskova is her third straight win over a Top 10 seed, after defeating No.6 seed Bianca Andreescu in a record-setting Round of 16 win, and No.10 seed Petra Kvitova in the Round of 16.Earlier, British teenager Emma Raducanu continued her sensational run as she became the first qualifier to make the semi-finals at the US Open, stunning Tokyo Olympics gold medallist Belinda Bencic of Switzerland in straight sets. Emma, 18, defeated No. 11 seed Blenda 6-3, 6-4 in one hour and 22 minutes at the Arthur Ashe Stadium

MUDIT GEARS UP FOR EUROPEAN CHALLENGE, TO PLAY TOP DANISH LEAGUE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Young Indian paddler Mudit Dani is all set to participate in the top division European League after he signed up to play for B75 Table Tennis Club in the Danish Super League.

Currently the sixth ranked Indian in the men's single world rankings, Mudit has earlier played in the leagues in Germany and France and, now has signed a season-long contract with B75 Table Tennis Club.

"I'm very excited as this is my first time playing in the top league in a European country. For this I'd like to thank B75 for believing in me. Experience of playing in the leagues always helps players to perform better at the international level," Mudit said.

Ace Indian paddler Achanta Sharath Kamal has also played in the Danish League in the past. The upcoming season of the league will see participation of some of the top international paddlers from across the world including the Olympic Games medallist and the former World No. 8 Michael Maze of Denmark.

Australia set to cancel Afghanistan Test over Taliban ban on women's cricket

Sydney | Agencies

The first Test match between the men's teams of Australia and Afghanistan looks set to be called off after Afghanistan's newly-installed Taliban government announced its opposition to women from the Islamic nation playing cricket.

In a statement released on Thursday, Cricket Australia confirmed it would be unable to proceed with the planned Test at Hobart from November 27 if news reports of Taliban views on the women's game were true.

"Driving the growth of women's cricket globally is incredibly important to Cricket Australia," the statement said. "Our vision for cricket is that it is a sport for all and we support the game unequivocally for women at every level."If recent media reports that women's cricket will not be supported in Afghanistan are substantiated, Cricket Australia would have no alternative but to not host Afghanistan for the proposed Test Match due to be played in Hobart.

A spokesman for the Taliban government's cultural commission, Ahmadullah Wasiq, had told Australian broadcaster SBS News that cricket was not permitted for women under Islamic law.

"Islam and the Islamic Emirate do not allow women to play cricket or play the kind of sports where they get exposed," Wasiq said.

"In cricket, they might face a situation where their face and body will not be covered. Islam does not allow women to be seen like this. It is the media era, and there will be photos and videos, and then people watch it."

In the wake of those comments, Australia's Federal Sports Minister Senator Richard Colbeck urged the International Cricket Council to take a stand against the Taliban's position and take a decision on Afghanistan's full membership.

The Afghanistan women's team is yet to compete in an ICC-sanctioned match despite an initial squad being formed in 2010 before being disbanded several years later due to safety concerns.

When Afghanistan was granted men's Test status in 2017 the ICC granted them dispensation in regards to fielding a women's team provided they committed to growing the game for women and girls.In November 2020, twenty-five female cricketers were awarded central contracts by the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB). It also held a 21-day training camp for 40 female cricketers in Kabul.

The women's team had been preparing for their first formal match, against Oman, in the coming months but Afghanistan Cricket Board Chief Executive Hamid Shinwari recently acknowledged the outlook for women's cricket in his country was grim.

ICC T20 WORLD CUP

Dhoni's appointment good news, just hope there won't be clashes with Shastri: Gavaskar

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar has expressed his delight over the appointment of MS Dhoni as Indian team's mentor for the ICC T20 World Cup later this year. However, the legendary cricketer cautioned that there should not be clashes between Dhoni and head coach Ravi Shastri with regards to "tactics and team selection".

India announced their squad for the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup. There were a few surprising picks but none bigger than the addition of former legendary captain, Dhoni as a mentor.

"Under his (Dhoni) leadership, India won the 2011 World Cup and four years before that, India won the 2007 T20 World Cup. It's definitely going to benefit Team India," Gavaskar told Aaj Tak. He further took an example of when he was appointed a consultant for India in 2004.

"At the time, (then-head coach) John Wright was a bit nervous, he probably thought I was going to take his place. But Ravi Shastri knows that MS Dhoni has very little interest in coaching. Ravi Shastri and MS Dhoni, if the partnership goes well, India will benefit a great deal from it," said Gavaskar.

"But if there are disagreements over tactics and team selection, then there might be a bit of an effect on the team. But MS Dhoni's appointment itself will be a big boost for Team India. He has so much experience, he knows everything. There was no bigger, destructive player than MS Dhoni when he was active in international cricket," he said.

"MS Dhoni's appointment is good news for India but I am just praying there is no clash. But if Ravi Shastri and MS Dhoni can get on the same wavelength, then it's big news for India."

Gavaskar also said he doubts if senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin will be included in the playing XI. Ashwin, who has not played a T20 International since July 2017, was included in the squad ahead of the likes of Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav.

IOC bans North Korea for missing Tokyo Olympics

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has suspended North Korea for unilaterally withdrawing from the recently-concluded Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and has helped nearly 100 members of the Olympic community from Afghanistan to leave the Taliban-controlled country on humanitarian visas.The IOC is closely monitoring the situation regarding the participation of women and girls from Afghanistan in sports and will decide on this issue as per the Olympic Charter. The decision to suspend North Korea's National Olympic Committee (NOC) from the Olympic movement till the end of 2022 was taken in IOC's first executive board meeting after the Tokyo Olympic Games.As per the decision, the country will not receive any monetary assistance, accrued towards it from the past that was held back because of international sanctions. The IOC will decide on the fate of sportspersons from North Korea but said that the athletes will not suffer because of this decision, IOC president Thomas Bach said at a virtual press conference after the EB meeting.

Sukhwinder : Writing, singing Ganesh Chaturthi song was 'pure delight'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Celebrated singer Sukhwinder Singh is excited about his new song 'Ganapati Raja' adding to the mood of festivity of Ganesh Chaturthi. Talking about the song, Sukhwinder said, "Writing and singing a song for 'Bappa' was a pure delight for me. Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations have become sweeter for me with this song. The song is an offering to listeners as a celebration."'Ganapati Raja' is the first produced song of the recently launched music label Panoroma Music - and it features Sukhwinder Singh, Meera Chopra, and Ambresh Shroff.While the song is written and sung by Sukhwinder, Ambresh composed the song.

The music video has been choreographed by Piyush Panchal, directed by Kedar Gaekwad and created by Filmferry Productions.

BHUMI: I'M A LITTLE SHY ABOUT CALLING MYSELF A STAR

Durga Chakravarty | New Delhi

On her debut in 2015, Bhumi Pednekar took critics by surprise, and won awards, by playing an overweight bride who speaks up for her rights in the romantic comedy 'Dum Laga Ke Haisha'. Since then, Bhumi Pednekar has given a string of hits with meaningful cinema.She has been seen in 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha', 'Shubh Mangal Savdhaan', 'Saand Ki Aankh', 'Bala', 'Pati Patni Aur Woh' and 'Dolly Kitty Aur Woh Chamakte Sitare', and many more such critically acclaimed films.But is Bhumi comfortable with the 'star tag? In an interview with correspondent, the actress, who started out as an assistant to Shanoo Sharma, the casting director of Yash Raj Films, made the confession: "I am a little shy to call myself a star."She insists she is an actor "who has received a lot of love".

Bhumi said: "I think the definition of stardom has changed across different generations. But yes, I am grateful that my films are appreciated and people love me and I am going to continue doing whatever I do on and off screen."

Hindi cinema is known for its bigger-than-life films, but Bhumi has stood her ground on featuring only in 'message-driven' films and calls herself fortunate."I have always been keen that my films should have a positive message along with entertainment, as that's what cinema is primarily meant to do," Bhumi said.She added: "I feel that's how films in the future would also be. If someone is spending two hours watching a film, or my piece of content, it must lead to some kind of a positive change in their mindset."As a public figure, Bhumi is doing her bit for the world too. In 2019, she launched the 'Climate Warrior' campaign- to raise awareness on environmental protection and global warming.

Sai Tamhankar's 'Medium Spicy' to premiere at Bollywood Festival Norway

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The much awaited Marathi language film 'Medium Spicy' starring Sai Tamhankar and Lalit Prabhakar is all set to have its world premiere at the Bollywood Festival Norway.The festival will be hosting its 19th annual event in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture in Scandinavia from September 10 to September 16.Directed by Mohit Takalkar, 'Medium Spicy' is touted to be a potpourri of relationships, love and marriage in urban lives.

Talking about the film, Takalkar said, "As a director, it is extremely satisfying to know that your film is going places and as we start this journey, we would want the film to travel to as many places for its audiences. With my amazing cast, crew and my producer by my side, I am happy with the way the film has shaped up and hope 'Medium Spicy' leaves a good aftertaste!"

The film is produced by Vidhi Kasliwal who said, "We have been patiently waiting to bring our labour of love to the audiences and we couldn't be happier than to have the first screening of 'Medium Spicy' all the way in Norway. As they say, art has no boundaries, film festivals give us the opportunity to take our stories through movies to audiences across the globe."Bollywood Festival Norway in recent times has opened its arms for films other than Bollywood, opening the festival for all languages.

KUBBRA SAIT HINTS AT SHOOTING FOR WEB SHOW WITH SHAHID KAPOOR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Kubbra Sait, in a banter-filled comment on social media, hinted at working with Bollywood star Shahid Kapoor in a forthcoming web series.

She commented on a post by filmmaker duo Raj and DK on Thursday.

Without divulging much details on the project, Raj and DK took to their social media to tag Shahid and state that they were watching something exciting.

Kubbra and the 'Kabir Singh' star then commented on the same, to which Raj and DK replied "As soon as you come on the set."

The response of the director duo created curiosity on whether Kubbra is joining the cast of the upcoming untitled web series that will mark Shahid's digital debut.According to reports, the show also features Vijay Sethupathi and Raashii Khanna.Kubbra is known for her work in web series such as 'Sacred Games', 'RejctX', 'The Verdict - State vs Nanavati'.

She also acted in films including 'Jawaani Jaaneman' and 'Dolly Kitty Aur Woh Chamakte Sitare'.

AR Rahman, Gulzar come together for Subrata Roy biopic

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Oscar-winning composer A.R. Rahman and legendary writer-poet and filmmaker Gulzar are coming together for an upcoming project, a biopic on business tycoon Subrata Roy.

Rahman said: "Gulzar Saab's soulful lyrics are extremely inspiring for a musician and I hope I can do justice to the lyrics and the story. I am looking forward to this collaboration."

Gulzar added: "It will be wonderful to collaborate with Rahman again. Subrata Roy's life is enigmatic and inspiring. Rahman is a wonderful artist and musician and I look forward to this collaboration."

Subrata Roy is the Chairman of Sahara India Pariwar. He and his two companies were barred by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in 2010.

According to reports, the regulatory body made accusations against the group that they had raised several crores through optionally fully convertible debentures (OFCDs) that SEBI considered wrong. Roy was then jailed for over two years. Roy has been out on parole since 2016.

News of the Subrata Roy biopic came out last month when it was announced that Sandeep Ssingh had acquired the rights of the film. The film, which is being produced by Sandeep Singh, is reported to be one that will span several continents and traverse the tycoon's journey over the decades. The title and cast of the biopic is expected to be announced shortly.

'Mumbai Diaries 26/11': Heavy on atmosphere and mood, but opens old wounds

FILM REVIEW

BY TROY RIBEIRO

(Streaming on Amazon Prime)

Direction: Nikkhil Advani and Nikhil Gonsalves.

Cast: Konkona Sen Sharma, Mohit Raina, Shreya Dhanwanthary, Natasha Bharadwaj, Mrunmayee Deshpande, Satyajeet Dubey, Prakash Belawadi and Tina Desai

Direction: Eight episodes, each lasting for roughly 40 minutes.

Ratings: ***1/2

This fictionalised series depicting the Mumbai terrorist attacks of November 26, 2008, will definitely generate a polarised opinion. Not because of how it is made, but for the subject itself.

From the onset, melodramatic to the core, the scenes packed with chaos and showing up human frailties, follies and idiosyncrasies, there's something deeply unsettling about the series. It just brings back the pain and if you revel in watching others in pain, then this series is for you.

For those who may not be fully aware about the Mumbai terrorist attacks, this series gives you an insight into how the entire event unfolded, but it can't be taken seriously as a history lesson.

The series made up of eight episodes gives you an account of how the terrorists, on a killing spree, shooting random people at sight, created mayhem in the city. It focuses on events that took place at Leopold Cafe, Bombay General Hospital and Palace Hotel. These venues are conveniently and by default connected by the act of the terrorists and by characters helming rescue operations in the respective places.The characters are fictional for most part and come with plenty of dramatic embellishments that supplement the basic story. Along the way, phones run out of battery, colleagues get separated or killed, and egotism and religious profiling create tension.

The performance of the entire cast is natural and simply brilliant. The look of sincerity that Mohit Raina offers as Dr Kaushik Oberoi, the maverick and sought-after head of the Emergency Ward of BG Hospital working under pressure despite having martial issues, cannot be missed.He is aptly supported by three new junior doctors -- Dr Ahaan Mirza (Satyajeet Dubey), Dr Sujata (Mrunmayee Deshpande) and Dr Diya Parekh (Natasha Bharadwaj) -- who join him on that fateful day. How they carry on with their duties with evident hesitation, is palpable.

Prakash Belawadi, as the CEO and Dean of BGH, Konkona Sen Sharma as the head of Social Service, Tina Desai as Dr Kaushik's wife Ananya, Pushkaraj Chirputkar as the male nurse and the rest of the supporting cast are simply the characters themselves.Technically, with ace production values, the series is heavy on atmosphere and mood.

The directors' filmmaking talent and unflinching command of camera and action, manage to mentally and physically place the viewers among the countless victims and survivors of the horrific attack.DOP Kaushal Shah's camera work is smooth and fluid, capturing the events close and up-front. The editing too is seamless. Overall, it is a well-mounted series. But...As mentioned earlier, this series will definitely generate a debate in the mind of the viewers. And you'd be mentally juggling questions on the ethics of the subject.Does this series help inspire and glorify humanity, or is it entertaining? Nah... it just opens up old wounds. This quote from one of the characters in the series -- "It's important to mourn, but it is equally important to move ahead in life" -- rightly applies to the series itself.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Urfi

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