

absolute india

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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM MUMBAI, BHOPAL AND NEW DELHI

NATION**>02**

From 58% to 63%, India pumped more groundwater between...

**HOLLYWOOD****> 06**

Leonardo jumped into frozen lake to save his dogs while filming 'Don't...

**SPORTS****> 07**

India Junior's star Deepika top-scorer at U21 Khelo India...



Indian Rupee is Asia's worst-performing currency

THE BAD SHOW

Beyond the temporary spike in dollar/rupee expected in the next four-to-six weeks, "we see the one-off flows and supportive 1Q current-account seasonality to come at play," said Rohit Arora, emerging market Asia strategist at UBS. "As long as oil remains tamed, rupee should end the fiscal year below current levels possibly in 74-75 range."

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The Indian rupee has become Asia's worst-performing currency, as the rapid depreciation has resulted in foreign investors exiting the Indian stock market. The INR is already down by 2.2 percent against the USD just in this quarter, which has triggered foreign investors to pull out \$4 billion from India's capital market, reported Bloomberg. This is the highest among countries where data is available.

Issues like higher than reasonable valuations, a widening trade deficit, and the Reserve Bank of India's divergence with the Federal Reserve over interest rates also gave an impetus for



foreign investors to exit Indian equities. While a weaker rupee means that exports from India are much more attractive, the rise in the cost of imported goods can quickly contribute to imported inflation. For India, which is still a net importer of energy, this can quickly cause a spiralling rise in prices.

However, on December 21, the rupee surged by 31 paise to close at 75.59 (provisional) against the US dollar, as positive domestic equities and a weak American currency in the overseas markets boosted investor sentiment.

Stocks on The Edge

Foreign exodus from stocks have led to the benchmark S&P BSE Sensex Index falling by about 10% below an all-time high touched in October. Despite that, the one-year forward price-to-earnings ratio for the Sensex is near 21, compared to 12 for MSCI's Emerging Markets Index, meaning there's room for the equities to fall even further. Bonds have seen \$587 million of outflows this quarter. Bearish rupee calls are rising as India's trade deficit widened to an all-time high of about \$23 billion in November amid higher imports. The ample liquidity in the banking system, partly created by the RBI's dollar purchases, may make it difficult for the central bank to intervene to the same extent in 2022 to curb rupee's losses, according to Goldman Sachs. Still, not all are pessimistic. A likely reversal in foreign inflows in the coming quarter on account of share sales in companies including Life Insurance Corp. of India, billed as India's biggest initial public offer, may cushion the rupee, according to UBS AG. The rupee gained 0.2% on Monday to 75.9163 per dollar amid speculation that the central bank intervened to curb the rupee's losses.

5G rollout will negatively impact aircraft safety, warns Boeing, Airbus



New Delhi: Bosses from the world's two biggest plane makers have called on the US government to delay the rollout of new 5G phone services, BBC reported.

In a letter, top executives at Boeing and Airbus warned that the technology could have "an enormous negative impact on the aviation industry".

Concerns have previously been raised that C-Band spectrum 5G wireless could interfere with aircraft electronics, the report said.

US telecoms giants AT&T and Verizon are due to deploy 5G services on January 5.

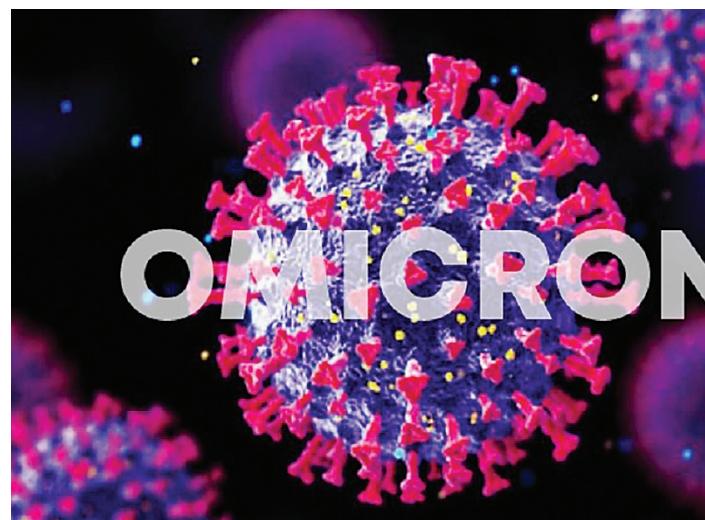
"5G interference could adversely affect the ability of aircraft to safely operate," said the bosses of Boeing and Airbus Americas, Dave Calhoun and Jeffrey Knittel, in a joint letter to US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.

The letter cited research by trade group Airlines for America which found that if the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) 5G rules had been in effect in 2019, about 345,000 passenger flights and 5,400 cargo flights would have faced delays, diversions or cancellations.

The aviation industry and the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have raised concerns about potential interference of 5G with sensitive aircraft equipment like radio altitude meters, the report added.

Omicron 3 times more transmissible than Delta, gear up: Centre

"Based on current scientific evidence, the Variant of Concern Omicron is at least 3 times more transmissible than the Delta Variant. Besides, the Delta VOC is still present in different parts of the country. Hence, even greater foresight, data analysis, dynamic decision making and strict & prompt containment action is required at the local and district level," the ministry said in a letter to the states and UTs.



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egy that can ensure infection is contained at the local level itself before it spreads to other parts of the state.

The states have been advised that the main elements of the framework to be used should be based on the test positivity rate of 10 per cent or more in the last one week and on bed occupancy of 40 per cent or more on oxygen supported or ICU beds. The states have been asked to focus on containment, test, track, surveillance, clinical management, vaccination and Covid Appropriate Behaviour as strategic areas of intervention.

"The monetary policy divergence and widening current account gap have set depreciation in the rupee in the near term."

B. Prasanna, Head of Global Markets, Sales, T&R at ICICI Bank

'Anti-national' not defined in statutes: Govt

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The term "anti-national" was not defined in the statutes or the Constitution but it was inserted in the latter during the Emergency by the then Congress regime in 1976 through a Constitutional amendment, but was omitted next year, the Parliament was told on Tuesday.

The word "anti-national" was not mentioned in statutes, however, there are criminal legislations and various judicial pronouncements to sternly deal with unlawful and subversive activities which are detrimental to the unity and integrity of the country," Minister of State for Home Nitin Gadkari told the Lok Sabha in a written reply to the question by AIMIM member Asaduddin Owaisi.



The word "anti-national" was inserted in the Constitution through the Forty-Second Amendment, 1976 as Article 31D to define "anti-national activity".

BILL LINKING AADHAAR CARDS WITH VOTER ID PASSED IN RS

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New Delhi: Amid vociferous protests, the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021 approximately within an hour of being introduced by Law Minister Kiren Rijiju. The Bill seeks to link electoral rolls to the Aadhaar number, allowing electoral registration officers to ask for Aadhaar numbers of applicants wanting to register as voters to establish their identity.

Replies to the debate, the Law Minister said: "It will delete the multiple votes of single person and cleanse the system of the fake voters. The government has deliberated the matter in detail with the Election Commission."

Rijiju said that the Bill will bring important electoral reforms in the country. "We wanted the entire House to participate in the debate but they have been protesting and sloganising."

20 YouTube Channels, 2 websites blocked for spreading 'anti-India' propaganda

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Information and Broadcasting ministry has ordered blocking of 20 channels on YouTube and two websites over spreading "anti-India" propaganda and fake news on the internet.

"In a closely coordinated effort between intelligence agencies and the Information and Broadcasting ministry, the ministry has ordered the blocking of 20 channels on YouTube and two websites spreading anti-India propaganda and fake news on the internet," the ministry said in a statement on Monday. The channels and websites belong to a coordinated disinformation network operating from Pakistan and spreading fake news about various sensitive subjects related



to India. The channels were used to post divisive content in a coordinated manner on topics like Kashmir, Indian Army, minority communities in India, Ram Mandir, General Bipin Rawat etc, it added. Two separate orders - one for 20 YouTube channels directing YouTube, and the other for two news websites, requesting the Department of Telecom to direct the internet service providers for blocking of the

news channels and portals.

The Ministry has acted to secure the information space in India, and utilised emergency powers under the Rule 16 of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. The modus operandi of the anti-India disinformation campaign involved the Naya Pakistan Group (NPG), operating from Pakistan, having a network of YouTube channels, and some other standalone YouTube channels not related to NPG. The channels had a combined subscriber base of over 35 lakh, and their videos had over 55 crore views. Some of the YouTube channels of the Naya Pakistan Group (NPG) were being operated by anchors of Pakistani news channels.

PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD WITH OBC RESERVATION: CHOUHAN

Bhopal:

Panchayat elections in Madhya Pradesh will have mandatory reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC), said Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday.

Chouhan's statement came while replying to an adjournment notice by Leader of the Opposition in Madhya Pradesh Assembly Kamal Nath on the second day of the winter session on Tuesday.

"Panchayat elections will be held following the reservation policy for OBC community in Madhya Pradesh. The state government will go to the court to oppose the Supreme Court's judgement to stay OBC quota for Panchayat polls in Madhya Pradesh," Chouhan said, adding that he has spoken to the Centre to seek its support on the issue.

Robert Vadra threatens legal action over 'hacking' of children's Insta accounts

Team Absolute | New Delhi

"We have the proof of what we are saying. We will definitely take recourse to the law. We believe in the justice system. The way this government is behaving, only legal remedy can stop it. Also, this should not happen to children. They had created hurdles before as well, which I tolerated for seven years. They made baseless allegations against me, but children should be spared from all this."

Robert Vadra



BILL TO RAISE WOMEN'S MARRIAGE AGE SENT TO STANDING COMMITTEE



New Delhi: As the Lok Sabha on Tuesday sent the proposed law raising the age of marriage for women to 21 to a Standing Committee, Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said it would ensure uniformity across all religions and communities. "The age of marriage should be uniformly applicable to all religions, caste, creed, over-riding any custom or law that seeks to discriminate against women," Irani said while introducing the Prohibition of Child Marriage Amendment Bill, 2021, in Lok Sabha. She said the Bill will also amend the Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1972, Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936, Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, Special Marriage Act, 1954, Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, and Foreign Marriage Act, 1956. Several MPs from demanded greater scrutiny and urged that the Bill be sent to the Standing Committee.

Himalayan glaciers melting at 'exceptional rate'

The Himalayan range is home to the world's third-largest amount of glacier ice, after Antarctica and the Arctic, and is often referred to as 'The Third Pole.'

"The researchers calculate that the glaciers have lost around 40 per cent of their area -- shrinking from a peak of 28,000 sq km to around 19,600 sq km today," said a release.

"During that period, they have also lost between 390 cubic km and 586 cubic km of ice -- the equivalent of all the ice contained today in the central European Alps, the Caucasus, and Scandinavia combined."

"The water released through that melting has raised sea levels across the world by between 0.92 mm and 1.38 mm, the team calculates," the release said.

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Reiterating that the accelerating melting of the Himalayan glaciers threatens the water supply of millions of people in Asia, a new study has said that the



Himalayan glaciers have lost ice 10 times more quickly over the last few decades than on average since the last major glacier expansion 400-700 years ago, a period known as the 'Little Ice Age'. The study, led by the University of Leeds, also reveals that Himalayan glaciers are shrinking far more rapidly than glaciers in other parts of the world, a rate of loss the researchers describe as 'exceptional' as they lost around 40 per cent of their area. The research is the latest confirmation that the changes in the Himalayan glaciers are accelerating. The acceleration of melting of Himalayan glaciers has significant implications for millions of people who depend on Asia's major river systems for food and energy. These rivers include the Brahmaputra, the Ganges and the Indus.

FROM 58% TO 63%, INDIA PUMPED MORE GROUNDWATER BETWEEN 2004 AND 2017

► WHAT IS MORE WORRYING IS THAT AS AGAINST AN AREA OF 24.8 LAKH SQ KM THAT WAS IDENTIFIED FOR AQUIFER MAPPING IN THE COUNTRY, THE CGWB COVERED ONLY AN AREA OF 13 LAKH SQ KM (52 PER CENT) AS OF SEPTEMBER 2020.

► IN ITS RECOMMENDATIONS, THE REPORT SUGGESTED THAT THE DEPARTMENT MAY DEVELOP A STRATEGY FOR EXPEDITIOUS COMPLETION OF AQUIFER MAPPING AND MODELING OF THE IDENTIFIED AREA WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME PERIOD.

► IT ALSO SUGGESTED THE CGWB MAY TAKE SUITABLE ACTION TO DEVELOP THE WEB-BASED SYSTEM FOR EASY DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION REGARDING AQUIFER MAPPING ON PRIORITY BASIS.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India on Tuesday pointed out that in the period between 2004 and 2017, the stage of extraction of ground water increased from 58 per cent to 63 per cent, and in 2017-18, the stage of extraction was higher than the national stage in 13 states/UTs with aquifer mapping completed barely for 52 per cent area. The percentage of utilisation of ground water with respect to recharge is known as the stage of extraction of ground water.

The report contains the observations of the performance audit of groundwater management and regulation for the period 2013-18. Matters relating to the period subsequent to 2017-18 have also been included, wherever necessary. "The groundwater scenario in India is beset by chal-

lenges due to the competing needs of agriculture, industrialisation and the pressures of increasing population in the context of uncertain rainfall. Contamination and depletion of groundwater also leads to vulnerability of livelihoods, besides posing a serious health risk," the CAG report said. During the period 2004 to 2017, the percentage of safe blocks decreased while the percentage of blocks categorised as semi-critical, critical and over-exploited steadily increased. As per the data for 2015 based on 15,165 locations in 32 states tested by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), groundwater had levels of contaminants higher than permissible limits of Arsenic (697 locations), Fluoride (637 locations), Nitrate (2,015 locations), Iron (1,389 locations) and Salinity (587 locations), it said. The central sector

scheme on Groundwater Management and Regulation was approved for implementation during the 12th plan period (2012-17) with an estimated cost of Rs 3,319 crore. Even when the scheme was continued during 2017-20 at an estimated cost of Rs 992 crore, against a budget estimate of Rs 2,349.48 crore for 2012-19, the actual expenditure under the scheme was just Rs 1,109.73 crore, the CAG report said.

Pointing out that four states -- Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan -- had a stage of extraction of more than 100 per cent, indicating that extraction of groundwater has surpassed the recharge of groundwater in these states, the 'Report of Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Groundwater Management and Regulation: Union Government, Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation' tabled in the Parliament also brought out the alarming fact that "at the district level, in 24 states/UTs, as many as 267 districts had stage of extraction more than 63 per cent, ranging from 64 per cent to 385 per cent".

RAISED MARRIAGE AGE TO ENABLE GIRLS TO STUDY FURTHER: MODI

Prayagraj: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that his government has decided to raise the age of marriage for girls to 21 years because girls wanted to study further. But everyone knows who are the people opposing the decision and trying to prevent girls from studying further, he said while addressing a rally of about 2.75 lakh women from all 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh. He said that before the BJP came to power in the state, there was "mafia raj" and "goonda raj" in the state. "Women bore the brunt of this and could not move about freely. Yogi Adityanath cracked down on such elements and today, women can move about freely and securely. UP now has safety and security and immense possibilities. It can no longer be pushed back," he said. The Prime Minister, who transferred money to Self Help groups, bank sakhis and beneficiaries of Kanya Sumangala Yojana and also laid the foundation stone of 202 take home ration plants, said that these schemes were designed to empower women.



Biggest lynching in Independent India happened in Rajiv Gandhi's era: BJP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, said on Tuesday that Congress has no right to raise the issue of mob lynching, as the biggest incident of lynching in the history of Independent India happened during Rajiv Gandhi's era. Shekhawat's response came hours after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "Before 2014, the word 'lynching' was practically unheard of. #ThankYouModiji."

Speaking to the media



after senior Punjab Congress leader Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi joined the BJP at the party headquarters here, Shekhawat said: "I feel that Congress has no right to raise questions over lynch-

ing. The biggest such incident in the history of Independent India under any government occurred during the era of Rajiv Gandhi, the father of current Congress leader Rahul

KMC poll results: Trinamool registers landslide victory

Kolkata | Agencies

After registering an unprecedented victory winning 133 of the 144 seats in the Kolkata Municipal Corporation election on Tuesday, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee congratulated the people saying that the city will only show way to the people of the country.

The Trinamool Congress registered a historic victory in the KMC election winning 134 of the 144 seats. In 2015, it had won 113 seats which was, so far, the highest in recent times and this year it has broken its previous records turning the Opposition into minnows. All the 16 boroughs have been under the control of Trinamool Congress.

BJP that - even before the Assembly polls - was aggressive enough to challenge the supremacy of Trinamool Congress has been successful in bagging only three seats followed by Congress and Left front that managed to get two seats each. The independent candidates got three seats. In 2015, the ruling Trinamool Congress had



won 113 seats - the highest margin then, while BJP had 7 seats and Congress and Left Front had 5 and 15 seats respectively. Three seats were won by the independent candidates. This year, the ruling party improved its tally further. Interacting with media after the victory, the chief minister said: "This is a victory of the people who have given their mandate

FIVE KILLED IN BIHAR ROAD ACCIDENTS



Patna: Four persons were killed and four others critically injured after a three-wheeler in which they were travelling was hit by a dumper in Bihar's Nalanda district on Tuesday. The accident took place at Hargawa village around 3 p.m. after the dumper collided with the three-wheeler coming from the opposite direction. All victims were on board the three-wheeler. Shibli Nomani, the SDPO of Nalanda (Sadar) said four persons died on the spot. Local residents and police rescued four others trapped inside. They were taken to Sadar hospital in Nalanda where the condition of the injured people are critical. Following the accident, the driver of the dumper fled the spot. The agitated villagers set the vehicle on fire and blocked the state highway. In another accident, a youth was killed after he was hit by a speeding bus on NH-139 at Naubatpur on Tuesday noon. The victim has been identified as Manish Kumar who got married a week ago. He died on the spot.

No evidence to suggest existing vaccines don't work on Omicron: Govt

Team Absolute | New Delhi

There is no evidence to suggest that existing Covid vaccines do not work on the Omicron variant, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Tuesday.

"While there is no evidence to suggest that existing vaccines do not work on Omicron, some of the mutations reported on spike gene may decrease the efficacy of existing vaccines," he told the Rajya Sabha in a written reply.

Responding to a question on whether the vaccines being administered in the country are effective to develop immunity against the Omicron variant, he informed the house that there is limited available data, and no peer-reviewed evidence, on vaccine efficacy or effec-



tiveness to date for Omicron.

However, vaccine protection is also

by antibodies as well as by cellular immunity, which is expected to be relatively better preserved.

"Hence, vaccines are expected to still offer protection against severe disease and, vaccination with the available vaccines remains crucial," he emphasised. The Union Health Ministry, in a statement on Tuesday morning, said that the number of cases of new Covid strain Omicron has crossed the 200-mark in India. However, out of them, 77 patients have recovered or migrated.

Meanwhile, it has asked all states and UTs to gear up against the Omicron variant as it is three times more transmissible than the Delta variant, and formulate a strategy that can ensure infection is contained at the local level itself before it spreads to other parts of the state.

Night temperatures rise as 'Chillai Kalan' starts in Kashmir

Srinagar | Agencies

The first of the 40-day long period of harsh winter cold, the 'Chillai Kalan' on Tuesday was marked by improvement in minimum temperature in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Sonam Lotus, director of Meteorological Department (MeT) said, "Significant Improvement in minimum temperature in both UTs due to an approaching feeble Western Disturbance (WD)

"Gradual rise in minimum temperature is likely in the coming days."

Srinagar had minus 2.8, Pahalgam minus 3.7 and Gulmarg minus 5.0 degrees Celsius as the minimum



temperature.

Drass town of Ladakh had minus 11.1, Leh minus 10.2 and Kargil minus 9.0 as the minimum. Jammu city had 5.6, Katra 6.0, Batote 4.3, Banjhal 2.4 and Bhaderwah 2.6 as the minimum temper-

ature.

The 40-day long period of harsh winter, known locally

as the 'Chillai Kalan', started on December 21. Frozen water pipes, hanging icicles and bone chilling cold cautioned Kashmiris to brace for colder weather ahead.

The 40-day long Chillai Kalan period ends on January 31 each year which brings a lot of hardships for the people.

13 MORE INDIAN FISHERMEN FROM TN ARRESTED BY SRI LANKAN NAVY

Chennai:

Thirteen more Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu - seven from Myladuthurai, and six from Pudukkottai were detained by Sri Lankan Navy for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

The fishermen were detained on Monday evening.

The fishermen according to state fisheries department had ventured into sea from Jagadapattinam fishing harbour in two mechanized trawlers.

The fishermen were taken to Sri Lanka for questioning after they were fishing in the periphery of the IMBL. This takes the total number of fishermen detained by the Sri Lankan authorities to 68 with 55 being arrested and remanded in judicial custody till December 31. On Saturday (December 18), 55 fishermen were detained by the Sri Lankan Navy allegedly for entering into Sri Lankan waters.



GURUGRAM DIST FULLY VACCINATES 100% POPULATION

Gurugram | Agencies



District Civil Surgeon Dr Virender Yadav told reporter Yadav said that 100 per cent vaccination is just a milestone. The vaccination process will continue for now. A total of 18,08,876

people have been given the second dose including, health workers, frontline workers, senior citizens, pregnant women and transgenders.

Faridabad ranks second in terms of vaccination, where more than 29 lakh doses of vaccine have been administered so far. Ambala is in third place in this list with over 17.27 lakh people being administered Covid-19 vaccine doses.

Karnal is in third place in this list, where a total of 17.25 lakh doses of vaccine have been administered so far. Charkhi Dadri district is at the bottom of this list, where more than 6 lakh doses of the anti-coronavirus vaccine have been administered so far.

Meanwhile, Gurugram district on Tuesday recorded 23 fresh coronavirus cases. No death, however, was reported in the city. The district's Covid toll stands at 927, officials said.

4 terrorist associates arrested in Kashmir

Srinagar | Agencies

Four terrorist associates linked with proscribed outfit JeM were arrested in Jammu and Kashmir's Awantipora and arms and ammunition recovered from their possession, officials said on Tuesday. Police said acting on specific input, Awantipora police, along with the army's 50 RR and the CRPF, apprehended the four terrorist associates, identified as Zubair Gul, Adil Fayaz Ganji, Basit Ali, all residents of Samboora, and Shahid Nabi Pandith, resident of Konbal Pamore.

Incriminating materials, arms and ammunition including a pistol, and hand grenade were recovered from their possession. "During the preliminary investigation, it was revealed that the arrested terrorist associates were in touch with JeM commanders and were involved in transportation of arms and ammunition," police said. "Besides, they were providing shelter and other logistic support to the active terrorists operating in Samboora and Pamore areas of Awantipora." case has been registered and further investigation has been taken up.



IN 72 HOURS, IDBI BANK RELEASES 3 FIGURES OF LOAN DEFAULTS BY DIAMANTAIRES GROUP

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

In a strange development, the government-backed private sector IDBI Bank Ltd. here has revealed three different figures of the alleged loans defaulted by a well-known diamantaire group, surprising banking and diamond industry circles.

Late on Monday, the IDBI Bank Ltd. in a regulatory filing, clarified an article by correspondent (December 20) that the diamantaire group had allegedly defaulted on loans worth around Rs 6,710 crore.

The IDBI Bank Ltd. further said that the company, Sanghavi Exports International Pvt. Ltd., an NPA with the bank, plus other group entities and its promoters/directors/guarantors, only has a current principal outstanding of Rs 16.72 crore and the "account is fully provided" with action taken to recover the dues.

On Tuesday (December 21), the IDBI Bank Ltd. issued a fresh public notice stating that the outstanding amount from the same Group is around Rs 67.13 crore. "The outstanding amount has been wrongly published on 19-12-2021. Notice of



default with correct outstanding is published," said the new public notice on Tuesday, confounding the banking fraternity.

The IDBI has revealed three contradictory figures of outstanding amounts in just 72 hours, "raising questions over which is the real figure," said banking expert and All India Bank Officers Association leader Vishwas Utagi. "This is outrageous... A big bank backed by the Centre and LIC cannot make such blunders, with the upcoming LIC IPO. They must clarify which of the three outstanding amounts' figure is genuine? If indeed any recoveries are made, they must publicly state

when, how much, and into which account," said the new public notice on Tuesday, confounding the banking fraternity.

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"For years, the LIC has been taking care of organised-unorganised labour. I urge the Centre not to put the common man's money, savings, and confidence into jeopardy till this issue of the IDBI Bank-diamantaire group is properly probed and resolved," said Dr. Kuchik, who is

the crucial Maharashtra Minimum Wages Board Chairman.

Interestingly, the public notices of December 19 and December 21 also clearly mention the outstanding foreign currency component -- US\$ 161088 -- which does not appear in the SEBI declaration made by the IDBI Bank Ltd. The bank's SEBI filing stated that "the account is fully provided", while the two public notices have warned the masses against any kind of dealings with the properties of the promoters/Directors/Guarantors as huge dues are to be recovered from them. Interestingly, the IDBI Bank Ltd's spokesperson and its official communication agency did not respond to a questionnaire sent on December 20. One of the Group members, Aagam Sanghavi -- who is named by the IDBI Bank Ltd. in its public notices -- also strongly denied the bank's figures of default (December 19 public notice), and a woman purportedly belonging to the family declined to reveal her fully identity, but contended that the amount in the public notice (December 19) was a "typo" and warned of legal consequences.

10-minute grocery delivery app Zepto raises \$100 mn

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Just five months after launching, 10-minute grocery delivery app Zepto on Tuesday announced it has raised \$100 million led by Y Combinator, taking its valuation to \$570 million. Besides the fundraise, Zepto has been growing incredibly quickly and is tripling its user-base every month. Over the past two months, Zepto has expanded beyond Mumbai by launching in Bengaluru, Delhi, Gurgaon, Chennai, Hyderabad and Pune (Kolkata to follow), the company said in a statement.

"Investors are consistently choosing to back Zepto because of our best-in-class execution. This is giving us incredible momentum - we're growing at a phenomenal rate, customers are loving the product experience, our core unit economics are strong, and we have one of the best startup teams in



India today," said Aadit Palicha, Co-Founder and CEO. The Series C funding round saw participation from new and existing investors, including Glade Brook, Nexus, Breyer Capital, Lachy Groom, Global Founders Capital, Contrary Capital, and more.

The round came 45 days after the company announced its \$60 million fundraise in November. Delivering groceries in 10 minutes is a game-changing experience for customers in the country, and several

players are now joining the race.

In five months, the startup has launched 100 micro-warehouses - each of which has the capacity to do 2,500+ orders a day.

"We are excited to double down and lead this round in Zepto. They originally launched with a different model, swiftly pivoted to quick commerce in August 2021 and are now adding

100,000 new customers every week, 60 per cent of them women," said Anu Hariharan from Y Combinator.

BJP evokes Shivaji for votes, remains silent when statue vandalised: Sena

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Shiv Sena accused the BJP of "double standards" for seeking votes in the name of Chhatrapati Shivaji and remaining silent when his statues were vandalised in Karnataka.

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut dared the BJP government in Karnataka to ban Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES) amid unrest over vandalism of statues of Chhatrapati Shivaji and freedom fighter Sangolli Rayanna.

"The Centre is practising double standards on this issue. To lure voters, Prime Minister Narendra Modi went to Varanasi and



Raut said, is not a political outfit but has been on the forefront for the past 70 years in raising issues of the Marathi-speaking people in the Belgaum region.

"They have made sacrifices and shed blood for the cause of Marathi-speaking persons in the Maharashtra-Karnataka border region," the MP said.

He claimed that the Karnataka government has illegally arrested over 200 MES activists and caned them.

"What are sensitive leaders of the BJP doing?" Sanjay Raut asked. "It is one thing to talk of banning MES, but I dare them to ban the MES," the Shiv Sena leader said.

BMC ISSUES NEW GUIDELINES AHEAD OF NEW YEAR, CHRISTMAS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mid rising Omicron cases in Mumbai, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) issued new guidelines on Tuesday for mass gatherings. As per the new orders, gatherings of 200 people will have to get written permission from authorities. The guidelines said that 50 per cent capacity will be allowed by "strictly maintaining 6x6 feet distance" in closed places, but only 25 per cent capacity with the same distancing norm will be permitted in open spaces.

It further said, "In case a total number of people present for any programme/ function/ gathering/ wedding/ party/ meeting, activity or happening whether, social, religious or political, exceeds 200 people, Assistant Commissioner or local ward shall send their representatives



to supervise, as observers, any such gathering and to ensure that there is strict adherence to the rules regarding Covid-19 Appropriate Behaviour and any other rules prescribed by

the State Government from time to time." The violators will be punished under sections of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and Disaster Management Act, 2005. Earlier, the

state government allowed gatherings of up to 1,000 people without requiring any permission. Organisers have take permission in cases of gatherings above 1,000.

GADCHIROLI SHIVERS AT 7.4 DEGREES CELSIUS, NAGPUR 7.6

Nagpur: The entire Vidarbha region of Maharashtra was reeling under severe cold with Gadchiroli seeing a dip in temperature to 7.4 degrees Celsius and Nagpur to 7.6 degrees on Tuesday.

Mineral rich Gadchiroli, also known as the Maoist-infested district, had recorded 11.2 degrees Celsius on Monday and Nagpur was at 7.8 degrees Celsius.

The Regional Meteorological Office said Amaravati in Western Vidarbha with 7.7 degrees and adjoining Wardha district with 8.2 degrees were also under cold wave conditions.

Gondia with 8.4 degrees was slightly better while Chandrapur was at 9.2 degrees Celsius.

Akola was at 11 degrees and Yavatmal, which had 12.5 degrees on Monday, recorded 9 degrees Celsius.

Though there was considerable drop in temperatures, as the day progressed bright sunshine brought the much needed relief to the people in the region.



NEED TO REBUILD TEMPLES DESTROYED BY PORTUGUESE: SAWANT

Panaji | Agencies

With the state Assembly polls months away, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Tuesday said that efforts need to be made to rebuild temples destroyed by the Portuguese during their colonial rule.

Speaking at a state government function in the precinct of the Mangueshi temple in South Goa, Sawant also said that Hindu culture and temple culture needed to be preserved.

"There are other temples which need to be re-established. In the 60th year of Liberation, we have to start rebuilding temples destroyed by the Portuguese. I do not ask for anything. I request you for the strength to preserve Hindu and temple culture and re-establish those temples and culture," the Chief Minister said.

"The Portuguese started destroying temples. In 1560, the deity Mangueshi was moved from Cortalim (South Goa village) to this place (Mangueshi village) by our ancestors. I thank them for it. God and religion are very important to us," Sawant said.

Several temples in the coastal state were relocated to escape religious persecution by the Portuguese rulers.



Portuguese colonial rule of Goa ended after 451 years in 1961.

"We are fortunate for our ancestors who decided to save our god, to pro-

vide security for him in another place and re-establish it in another place during the cruel Portuguese regime," he added.

ED SEARCHES PREMISES OF MUMBAI FIRM 'LINKED TO' NAWAB MALIK'S SON

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is investigating a Rs 150-crore money laundering case against a city-based company, Associate High Pressure Technologies Pvt Ltd, that has allegedly diverted bank loans to a company linked to NCP leader Nawab Malik son Faraz Malik.

The agency on Monday searched five premises in Mumbai and Gujarat linked to the promoters of Associate High Pressure for defaulting on loan repayment to the Union Bank of India. The ED has alleged that of the Rs 150 crore, Associate High Pressure has diverted about Rs 10 crore to Touchwood Real Estate Pvt Ltd, a company in which Faraz has a 20 per cent stake. The central agency has so far not searched the premises of Touchwood Real Estate or its directors. The ED case is based on a CBI FIR dated June 9 following a complaint from the bank against Associate High Pressure. The bank said the company's directors "hatched" a plan to allegedly cheat the bank of over Rs 130 crore.



SEVERAL TRAINS OF WESTERN RAILWAY AFFECTED DUE TO KISAN AGITATION

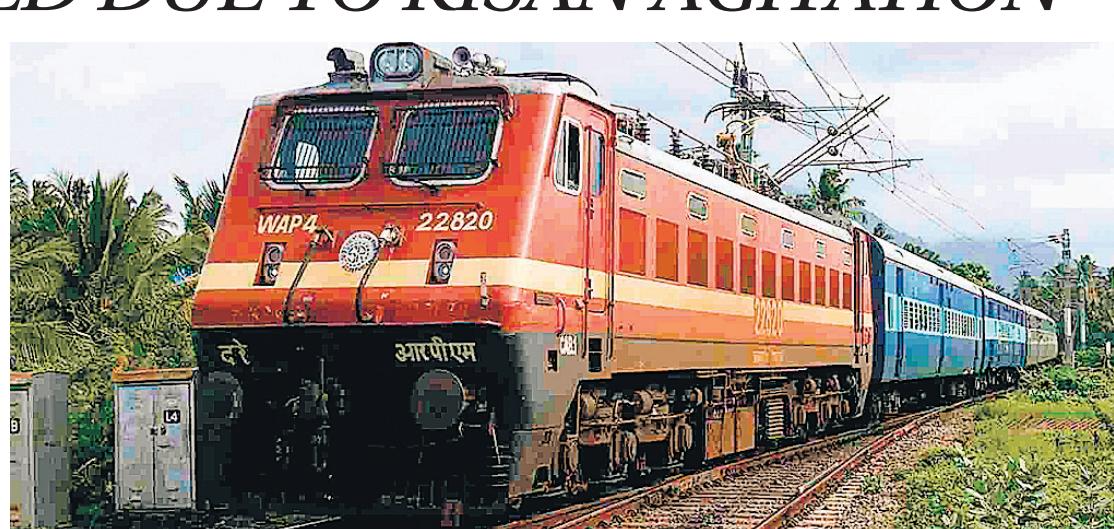
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Due to Kisan agitation in Firozpur Division of Northern Railway, few trains have been cancelled & certain trains have been short terminated and accordingly short originated.

According to a press release issued by Sumit Thakur - Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Railway, the details of the affected trains of WR are as under:

TRAIN CANCELED:

- 1) Train No. 12472 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Bandra Terminus Swaraj Express of 22.12.2021
- 2) Train No. 12477 Jamnagar - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Express of 22.12.2021
- 3) Train No. 12919 Dr. Ambedkar Nagar - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Malwa Express of 22.12.2021
- 4) Train No. 12471 Bandra Terminus - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra



Swaraj Express of 23.12.2021

SHORT - TERMINATION / SHORT - ORIGINATION OF TRAINS:

- 1) Train No. 12919 Dr. Ambedkar Nagar - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Malwa Express of 21.12.2021 short terminated at

- terminated at Jalandhar Cantt.
- 2) Train No. 12475 Hapa - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Express of 21.12.2021 short terminated at New Delhi.
- 3) Train No. 12925 Bandra Terminus - Amritsar Paschim Express of 21.12.2021 short terminated at Beas.)

- Train No. 12926 Amritsar - Bandra Terminus Paschim Express of 22.12.2021 & 23.12.2021 will short originate from Beas.)
- Train No. 12904 Amritsar - Mumbai Central Golden Temple Mail of 21.12.2021 will short originate from Beas.)

2002 people died in hydro-met events such as flood, cloudbursts in 2021

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As many as 2002 human lives were lost due to hydro-meteorological calamities during 2021 with maximum of them, 489, in Maharashtra, the Centre informed the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

Hydro-meteorological events mean natural hazards such as cyclonic storms/heavy rains/floods/landslides etc.

Among other states, Himachal Pradesh witnessed 298 deaths followed by Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh at 162 deaths each, Karnataka (144), Kerala (138), Madhya Pradesh (127), Uttarakhand (107) and West Bengal (65). Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Bisweswar Tudu, said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha while giving out state-wise details (provisional data) as on November 25. In a related question, Tudu informed that to strengthen the structural measures of flood management, the ministry has launched a Flood Management Programme (FMP) for providing Central assistance to states for works related to flood management, flood control, anti-erosion, drainage development, and sea-erosion, etc.

These have subsequently continued as a component of 'Flood Management and Border Areas Programme' (FMBAP) from 2017-18 and extended up to December 2021.

"So far, Central assistance amounting to Rs 6,447.76 crore has been released to Union Territories/state governments under this programme. The 415 projects completed under this programme have given protection to an area of around 4,994 million hectares and protected a population of about 52.21 million," the minister said.



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EDITOR'S SPECS

AIR POLLUTION IS GROWING IN NORTHEAST INDIA

Contrary to the impression of pristine blue skies and clean air that people usually have about the country's northeastern region, a new analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has shown that the problem of air pollution is growing steadily in the states of that region. According to CSE, In winter, air quality of cities like Guwahati can be almost as bad as what we see in the National Capital Region (NCR) and cities of Uttar Pradesh. Pollution is also high in smaller cities like Agartala and Kohima. This analysis is based on the real-time data available from currently functioning air quality monitoring stations in the northeast. A huge volume of data points have been cleaned and data gaps have been addressed based on the USEPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency) method, the CSE said in a statement. This analysis covers seven continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations spread across six cities in an equal number of states – two stations in Guwahati (Assam) and one station each in Shillong (Meghalaya), Agartala (Tripura), Kohima (Nagaland), Aizawl (Mizoram) and Naharlagun (Arunachal Pradesh). There is no real-time monitoring in Manipur and Sikkim, which is why the analysis is unable to cover these states. The urban air quality status in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh as part of the air quality tracker initiative of the Urban Data Analytics Lab of CSE. Guwahati has the most polluted air in northeastern India. Average PM2.5 levels in 2021 (up till November 30) has already surpassed the 2019 annual average in Guwahati. The city's 2020 annual average was also higher than its 2019 average, which indicates continuous worsening of air in the city. Shillong is the only other city in the region that has a station generating data for over two years, but due to poor data availability its annual averages cannot be considered credible. Nevertheless, the city's average is considerably below the annual standard.

DC Pathak

In a world of behind the scene happenings, not only in the area of defence and security, but in the socio-political sphere as well, right observation and a competent examination of available information have become particularly important for framing an effective response.

Since security demands perfection of the instrument of analysis, the standards set there can be the benchmark for this task anywhere. Analysis has the objective of producing an assessment or a 'finding'. It must adhere to certain norms of compliance and show awareness of certain avoidable pitfalls. The most significant of these can be easily enumerated.

The first is the requirement that facts believed to be reliable should alone be at the base of an authentic analysis – such as the information furnished by the Intelligence set up regarding a threat to national security.

Inputs from experts in special study areas are welcome, but the guideline here is that the analyst should borrow the facts of study, but not necessarily the inference drawn from them by the specialist. This would apply also to reliable reports of the media that are a mix of facts and opinions.

Internet has dimmed the line between facts and fake news ever since social media became such an obvious instrument of combat. Authenticity of assessment can be guaranteed only through a perfection of analysis using reliable information.

Secondly, freedom from personal bias, 'group think' – the desire to go along with the peers – or wishful thinking has to be ensured. These are the more common pitfalls of analysis. To these must be added the not so uncommon tendency of the analysts to say what their masters would like to hear.

A much-quoted example is the CIA's verdict on the alleged plan of former Iraq President late Saddam Hussain to secretly hold weapons of mass destruction that led to the US making Iraq the second theatre of the 'war on terror' after Afghanistan, in 2003. Saddam Hussain was captured but no such weapons were unearthed.

An add-on to the principle of enlisting only reliable facts in analysis, however, needs to be mentioned here. A 'definite' information on a threat should not be sacrificed for some inad-

equacies of immediate relevance and timeliness. Saddam Hussain did have a 'recent' history of using chemical weapons against Iran even though the matter of continuing possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) by him was at best a guess not authenticated by the intelligence.

This should have been reflected in the assessment so that a justifiable ground for action against him could still be found.

The third imperative of good analysis is the ability of the analyst to rise above the details and try to get at the bigger picture that they alluded to – in other words, reaching the 'macro' on the basis of all that existed at the 'micro' level.

Some can get drowned in the details and some others can go on with the work as if analysis is the end in itself – they could be justifying the dictum, 'analysis can lead to paralysis'. This could happen sometimes because of an excessive preoccupation with the historical perspectives. Analysis must lead to progress towards deciphering what lies ahead, which is the essence of assessment. An assessment is futuristic and a competent analyst understands that facts of the past are important only if they can help in evaluating what could happen in the coming times.

Fourthly, in the context of security, it has to be understood that the threat is ultimately rooted in the activities of a certain number of 'individuals' that constitute the 'enemy' group. Security threats are essentially man-made and that is why human intelligence is always put on a premium.

In addition to the human sources, however, a lot of information of Intelligence value now comes from technological channels – and this has to be interpreted in terms of human activity and read in conjunction with human intelligence.

Putting together information coming in from the two distinct channels is a new challenge of organisational coordination and analytical integration. Technical intelligence now combines with data analytics, which in turn is dependent on the creation of a united platform of concerned systems that cover the activities of a 'person of interest' for ready access. NATGRID has been established by India precisely for this purpose.

Last, but not the least, analysis today has gone beyond an examination of the collated information as recorded and evaluation of



what the available facts would mean to convey in the light of the existing scenario.

Complete intelligence about the plan and moves of the adversary is difficult to come by, particularly because covert communication and creation of an underground network of 'agents' have been made easier for the enemy, thanks to the availability of cyber space.

Analysts today have to be prepared to try to be more precise with less information. In this, Albert Einstein's famous postulation that 'imagination is more important than knowledge' is extremely relevant to the function of analysis.

With an awareness of the existing situation, the analyst could project the available information into the future and imagine the possible courses of action that the enemy could resort to – given its modus operandi of the past too – and help the policy makers formulate counter-measures even in a situation of limited intelligence.

Imagination is a gift of the human brain and considering that the 'threat' is also a product of the enemy's mind, it is a valuable aid to analysis. Einstein did not speak of wild imagination, but placed emphasis on the intellectual power of an analyst of having a peep into the future through the happenings of the present.

The function of analyses in the national security set up is being strengthened to meet the demands of the parallel flow of human and technical intelligence, pace of change of the security scenario that tend to reduce the life span of an assessment, and prompt scan of information in public domain that might be carrying undetected nuggets of precious intelligence.

Interestingly, analysts today not only compute and decipher what is generated by intelligence agencies on a threat, but they also give out projections that help set the framework of further tasks of the intelligence organisation itself in an ongoing fashion.

Intelligence production and analysis have thus become the two sides of the coin as far as national security is concerned. Analysis converts available intelligence into a security forecast, which in turn helps shape the character of intelligence production for the future. Intelligence is the anchor of security -- and analysis gives meaning to intelligence.

(The writer is a former Director of Intelligence Bureau. The views expressed are personal)

international**OMICRON BECOMES DOMINANT VARIANT IN US, ACCOUNTS FOR OVER 73% OF NEW**

Washington | Agencies

Omicon has become the dominant Covid-19 variant in the US, accounting for over 73 per cent of new weekly cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) latest estimates.

The infection cases caused by the Omicron variant jumped from 12.6 per cent of all infection cases in the week ending December 11 to 73.2 per cent in the week ending December 18, the CDC estimates published on Monday showed.

In the week ending December 4, Omicron only accounted for 0.7 per cent of all the cases.

The Omicron variant is spreading rapidly nationwide and has been found in at least 48 states till date, since the first case in the country was detected in California on December 1.

The unprecedented infectiousness of the Omicron variant and its possi-



ble ability to evade the immune system have stoked concerns across the nation. However, experts said preliminary data suggest the new variant appear to cause less severe symptoms and hospitalisations.

Covid-19 cases, deaths and hospitalisations have continued to surge in the US, leading to the cancellation of large events including sports

games and live concerts. Some colleges have shifted back to online classes and exams for the rest of the semester to make students go back home earlier.

The country is averaging about 130,000 new cases daily, a 10 per cent increase from the previous week, according to the CDC estimates. The seven-day average of

daily deaths is about 1,180, up 8.2 per cent from the prior week, it said.

Currently, the US is witnessing about 7,800 new hospital admissions each day, a 4.4 per cent increase from the previous week, the data showed.

However, the surge in new infection cases did not deter people from flying for holidays. The US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has screened over two million passengers for a fourth day in a row.

The TSA expected up to 21 million Americans will fly between Thursday and January 3, 2022. Experts warned the US is moving toward Christmas in dramatically different shape than it was before Thanksgiving.

As of Tuesday morning, the country's overall caseload and death toll stood at 51,097,528 and 807,945, respectively. The two tallies are the highest in the world, making the US the worst-hit country by the global health crisis.

Pak rupee being circulated in many Afghan provinces

Hamza Amer | Kabul

Amid the collapse of Afghanistan's banking sector, coupled with Taliban-imposed restrictions on money exchange systems, local traders are now opting to use of Pakistani rupee as mode of financial transactions for payment in many provinces of the country.

"Due to fluctuations in the US dollar and Afghan currency rates, everyone here is using the Pakistani rupee," said a local trader.

The circulation of Pakistani rupee among Afghan traders is being witnessed for the past one month. However, the Pakistani rupee is not being openly accepted for doing trade amid fears of restrictions imposed by the Taliban regime, who have allowed use of Afghani currency for all operations in the country.

"Small traders and locals in Afghanistan are using Pakistani rupees for daily transactions and purchases of food items. Provinces adjacent to Pakistan prefer the rupee instead of Afghani because they will face a 10 per cent loss in converting the rupee to Afghan currency," said another trader.

The use of Pakistani rupee saw a major decline as the past governments in



Afghanistan opposed to its use. However, under the Taliban rule and the deteriorating Afghan currency value, the Pakistani rupee is fast becoming the prime currency for trade, especially by traders who do business along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

CANADA'S JOB VACANCIES HIT RECORD HIGH

Ottawa | Agencies

The number of job vacancies in Canada reached has hit a record of 912,600 in the third quarter of 2021, according to official data. The record-high job vacancies coincided with growth in overall employment and falling unemployment due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, Xinhua news agency quoted Statistics Canada as saying on Monday. Statistics Canada's data shed light on some of the factors behind the monthly job vacancy data released previously, including sectoral and regional differences in unmet labour demand, changes in the occupation and skills profile of vacancies, and recent trends in the wages offered by employers.

Across all sectors, the total number of job vacancies was 349,700 more than



that in the corresponding period of 2019. Compared with the same period two years earlier, job vacancies were up in all provinces of Canada in the third quarter of 2021. Job vacancies increased between the third quarter of 2019 and the third quarter of 2021 in 18 of the 20 major industrial sectors. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and real estate and rental and leasing were the only sectors where vacancies were not up in the third quarter of 2021 compared with the

same period two years earlier. Five sectors - health care, construction, accommodation and food, retail trade and manufacturing - were driving the growth in job vacancies. Increases in job vacancies can signal a number of changes in labour market conditions existing in different sectors and regions. Vacancies increased more in low-wage occupations than in high-wage occupations between the third quarter of 2019 and the third quarter of 2021. In the third quarter of

6.2-magnitude quake hits California

San Francisco | Agencies

An earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale jolted California, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said.

The quake struck 38 km west of Petrolia at 12.10 p.m. on Monday, reports Xinhua news agency citing the USGS.

The epicentre, with a depth of 9.3 km, was determined to be at 40.315 degrees north latitude and 124.739 degrees west longitude.

"A tsunami is not expected," the US Tsunami Warning Centers said after the quake.

No tsunami warning, advisory, watch, or threat was issued and there is a low likelihood of casualties, according to the USGS.

"Some damage is possi-



ble and the impact should be relatively localised," it said.

The area last suffered an earthquake of a similar magnitude in 1993, when one person died, according to the USGS. The USGS added that recent earthquakes in the area have caused secondary hazards such as landslides and liquefaction that might have contributed to losses.

BJP, CONGRESS UNITE ON OBC QUOTA IN MP PANCHAYAT POLLS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Panchayat elections in Madhya Pradesh will have mandatory reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC), said Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday.

Chouhan's statement came while replying to an adjournment notice by Leader of the Opposition in Madhya Pradesh Assembly Kamal Nath on the second day of the winter session on Tuesday.

"Panchayat elections will be held following the reservation policy for OBC community in Madhya Pradesh. The state government will go to the court to oppose the Supreme Court's judgement to stay OBC quota for Panchayat polls in Madhya Pradesh," Chouhan said, adding that he has spoken to the Centre to seek its support on the issue. On Tuesday, soon after the second day of the winter session began, Kamal Nath moved an adjournment notice to Speaker Girish Gautam for seeking discussion on OBC reservation issue in the state. During the discussion, both BJP and the opposition Congress accused each other of being anti-OBC. The BJP held the Congress responsible for cancellation of OBC



gota in Panchayat elections. "The Supreme Court's judgment on this matter came on your (Congress) petition and hence you should be held responsible for it," said Medical Education Minister Viswah Sarang.

The BJP alleged that senior advocate and Rajya Sabha MP for Congress, Vivek Tankha had opposed OBC reservation in the court. In reply to that, Kamal Nath said that the Congress had approached the Supreme Court only for two reasons -- rotation and reser-

vation in Panchayat elections. Nath alleged that the ruling BJP issued an ordinance to conduct three-tier panchayat elections on the basis of rotation policy of 2014, which was totally against the Constitutional rules.

"Congress never opposed reservation for OBCs. We went to the court only because what you were doing was wrong. Did you speak to leader of opposition before issuing ordinance? Now, the Court gave its judgement clubbing it with the issue of OBC reservation in Maharashtra,

why didn't you oppose it?" Nath added. Nath further said, "It would be better if both ruling and the opposition unanimously decide to challenge SC's decision. The Congress is ready to extend its support to the government. But, will the state government do it?" Nath asked. Replying to that, the chief minister said, "MP Government will challenge SC's decision on OBC reservation issue and assured that panchayat elections will be held with OBC reservation."

1 lakh nominations filled in a day for the Panchayat elections

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The filing of nominations for the two phases of Panchayat elections in Madhya Pradesh has been completed. So far, a total of 1 lakh 53 thousand candidates have filed their nominations, out of which one lakh candidates have filed their nominations on the last day alone. The work of submitting nomination papers for the first and second phase of Panchayat elections 2021-22 in the state has been completed. On Monday, the last day of nomination, one lakh one thousand 917 candidates submitted nomination papers, out of which 50 thousand 893 are male and 50 thousand 963 female candidates. A total of 1 lakh 53 thousand 25 candidates have submitted their nomination papers for the first and second phase till the last date, out of which 77 thousand 677 are male and 75 thousand 285 female and 2 other candidates are included.

State Election Commission secretary B.S. Jamod has told that on December 20, 2410 candidates have submitted nomination papers for Zilla Panchayat member, 7353 for



Janpad Panchayat member, 21 thousand 802 for Sarpanch post and 70 thousand 352 candidates for Panch post. So far 3342 candidates have submitted nomination papers for District Panchayat member, 11 thousand 759 for Janpad Panchayat member, 49 thousand 137 for Sarpanch post and 88 thousand 787 candidates for Panch post. The last date for withdrawal of nominations and allotment of election symbols will be December 23. The first phase of polling will be held on January 6 and the second phase will be held on January 28, 2022 from 7 am to 3 pm.

CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO SANT HIRDARAM JI ON HIS DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Bhopal : Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has paid tribute to Sant Shiromani Swami Hirdaram Ji on his death anniversary. Chouhan tweeted, "I pay humble tributes at the feet of Sant Hirdaram ji, who dedicated his entire life for the well-being and welfare of humanity on his death anniversary. The mantra of Sant Hirdaram ji is "Besaharon ka sahara bano" (Be a support to the destitute) is benefiting the lives of countless helpless people.

Chief Minister Chouhan Plants Black Rosewood and Bija Saplings in Smart Garden

► REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LION CITY GROUP ALSO PARTICIPATED IN THE PLANTATION. CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN REMEMBERS SANT HIRDARAM ON HIS DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Black Rosewood and Bija saplings in Smart Garden. Along with the Chief Minister, representatives of The Lion City Group, Kamlesh Raichandani, Kailash Sadhwani, Vikas Gidwani and Jitesh Sadarangani also planted saplings. Chief Minister Chouhan is planting saplings every day as per his resolve. In order to make tree plantation a mass movement, Chief Minister Chouhan

plants trees every day with social organisations, voluntary organisations and people working in the field of environmental protection. The wood of black rosewood planted is purple in colour.



Finishing and shining are of high quality and the fibers look good. The Bija tree is rich in medicinal properties along with being environmentally important. Its wood is used for making furniture.

Chief Minister will inaugurate International Van Mela today

Team Absolute | Bhopal

International Van Mela is being organised from December 22 to 26 at Lal Parade Ground in Bhopal. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will inaugurate the Van Mela on Wednesday, December 22 at 6 pm. Forest Minister Dr. Kunwar Vijay Shah will preside. Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang, Cooperatives Minister Arvind Bhaduria and Minister of State for AYUSH (Independent Charge) Ramkishore Kavre will be prominently present along with Principal Secretary Forest Ashok

Varnwal.

The Managing Director of Madhya Pradesh State Minor Forest Produce Association Pushkar Singh informed that an exhibition focused on the schemes of the Forest Department would be organised in the international fair. The theme of the fair is 'Health Protection from Minor Forest Produce'. The theme-based workshop will be the centre of attraction during this period. In the fair, rare varieties of herbs and products prepared by forest committees and Van Dhan centres will be available to the common people.

MITHI GOBINDRAM PUBLIC SCHOOL OBSERVES 16th MAHA PARYAN DIWAS OF SANT HIRDARAM SAHIBJI

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On 21st December, 2021, Sant Hirdaram Sahibji's Mahaparyan Diwas was observed in Mithi Gobindram Public School.

The programme commenced with the lighting of lamp and floral tribute to the portrait of Santji in the pious presence of Shraddhey SiddhBhauji, President, SHKES, Hero Gyanchandani, Vice President, SHKES, A.C. Sadhwani, Secretary, SHKES, Shaheed HemuKalani Educational Society, Dr. Ajay Kant Sharma, Principal, Vice-Principal, Rita Gurbari, MGPS, Coordinators, Staff Member and Students, Shraddhey Siddh Bhauji, a staunch disciple of Santji and the inspiration of the institution, said in his message that the meaning of our human life is only when we,



keeping a sense of welfare towards the creatures, being full of human values, have kind-

ness & benevolence in our lives. This will be our true tribute to Sant Sahib. Hero bhauji shared his profound thoughts which expressed gratitude towards the immense blessing of the holy soul which is the true reason of positivity and optimism. He laid stress upon the learning from Santji's life and making individual's life fruitful by imbibing disciplined lifestyle and healthy food habits. A.C. Sadhwani, memorialized Santji, as the modulator of the society, who selflessly adopted Bairagarh and devoted his life in its upliftment. The event was organized online. Under the framework of the program, Guru Vandana singing in mother tongue Hindi and Sindhi, presentation of priceless words of Sant Shiromani Hirdaram Sahib ji and documentaries based on Santji and programs conducted by his inspiration were highlighted.

FEAR OF DAMAGE TO CROPS DUE TO COLD WAVE AND FROST

In Madhya Pradesh, the possibility of adverse effect on crops due to cold wave and frost has increased. Experts of the Agriculture Department have advised the farmers to take precautionary measures to avoid cold wave and frost.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Cold wave conditions have been prevailing in the state for the past few days. There is a cold wave in Satna, Rewa, Chhindwara, Jabalpur, Mandla, Seoni, Tikamgarh, Betul, Indore, Dhar, Khandwa, Khargone, Ratlam, Datia, Guna and Umaria, Khajuraho, Sagar, Bhopal, Raisen. Due to this the crops are getting damaged. In many places the frost has also fallen. This situation is increasing the problems of farmers.

Farmers Welfare and Agriculture Development Joint Director BL Bilaiya has advised the farmers to do light irrigation in the crops to avoid frost. Due to sufficient moisture, the chances of damage to the crops are less. In the event of frost, smoke on the bund of the field in the evening



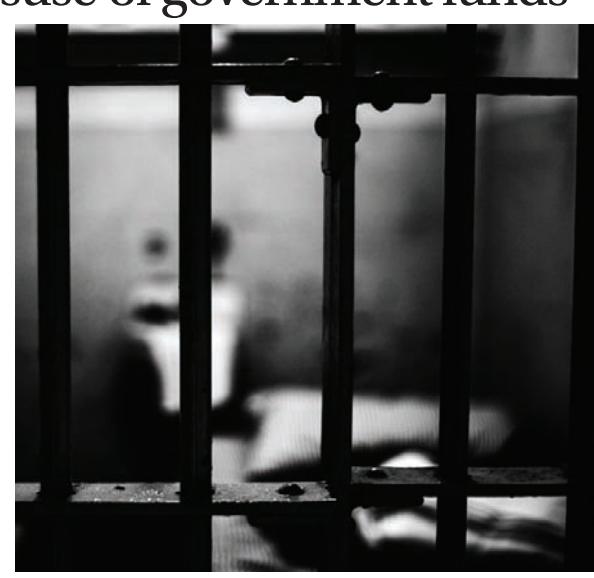
Irrigation should be done in the evening - night, apart from this two ml of Sulfur. Spray after mixing it with per liter of water or immediately after frost i.e. in the morning of next day, spray Glucon D @ 10 gm per liter of water.

Joint Director Bilaiya said that during the winter season water stagnates, due to which the cells burst and the leaves of the plant dry up, resulting in heavy damage to the crops. Effect of frost on plants and crops Due to the effect of frost, water circulation in the plant cells is affected. Most of the affected crop or plant dries up due to which disease and pest infestation increases. Fruits and flowers are destroyed by the effect of frost. Vegetables are affected more by the effect of frost and are completely destroyed.

9 former sarpanches of Gwalior will go to jail for misuse of government funds

Team Absolute | Gwalior

Nine former sarpanches will be sent to jail for misusing funds sanctioned for government construction works in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. According to the information received from the office of Ashish Tiwari, Chief Executive Officer of Zila Panchayat and prescribed authority of the court, the funds released by the former sarpanches of nine gram panchayats under various government schemes were continuously misused. Against all these former sarpanches, under section 92 of Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj and Gram Swaraj Act 1993, cases of recovery were registered and sufficient time was given to pay the tax amount, but they did not pay the amount. When these cases were investigated, the former sarpanches was also found guilty. It has been reported that after the former sarpanches were found guilty in the



investigation, the final order was passed and it was ordered to deposit the amount in the government fund within 15 days, but the amount was not deposited by these former sarpanches. Following this, the court of the prescribed authority and Chief Executive Officer of Zila Panchayat Gwalior has

issued separate warrants for submission to jail under subsection two of section 92 of Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj and Gram Swaraj Act 1993. It has been reported that out of the former sarpanches who have been ordered to be sent to jail, five are female former sarpanches.



NOT NO. 3

'SPIDER-MAN: NO WAY HOME' LANDS SECOND-BEST HOLLYWOOD DEBUT WEEKEND

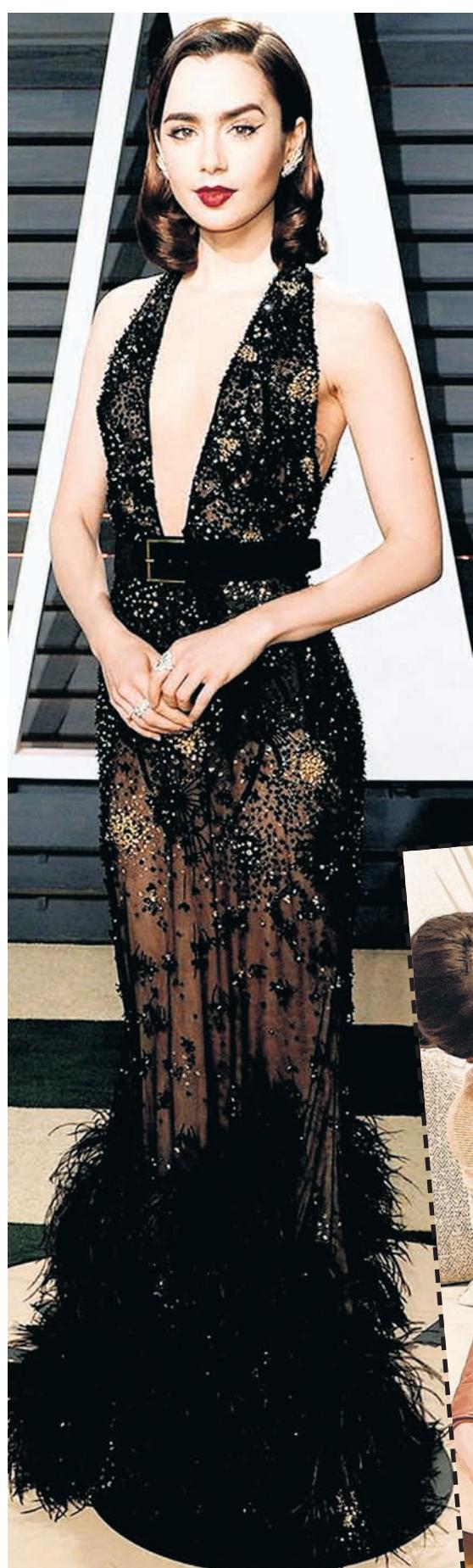


Los Angeles | Agencies

With 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' netting more money (\$260 million) than what was previously estimated, it has officially landed the second-biggest debut weekend in Hollywood history, behind only 'Avengers: Endgame' (\$357 million), reports 'Variety'. Sony's epic finale in the Tom Holland-led comic book trilogy collected \$260 million in theatres across North America on its debut weekend, above Sunday's estimates of \$253 million. It means 'No Way Home' has surpassed 'Avengers: Infinity War' (\$257 million), which was at No. 2.

The Marvel adventure, writes 'Variety', has obliterated all Covid-era box-office benchmarks. Prior to this weekend, no movie, including the much-anticipated 'No Time to Die', Daniel Craig's final outing as James Bond, had been able to cross even the \$100-million mark in a single weekend.

The best attempt had been another of Sony's comic book sequels, 'Venom: Let There Be Carnage', which generated \$90 million to start. "Given those constraints and the pandemic-related headwinds still facing the box office," reports 'Variety', 'industry watchers struggled to ballpark opening weekend figures for 'Spider-Man: No Way Home'.'



Lily Collins likens shooting 'Emily in Paris' to a 'mini vacation'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Lily Collins, who reprises the role of Emily Cooper for the second series of the Netflix show 'Emily In Paris', relished shooting in the spectacular surroundings of St. Tropez and called it a 'mini vacation'.

The actress told E! News' Daily Pop: "Going to St. Tropez at the very beginning of this season was magical. It was the greatest way to start off this season again with the cast and crew, gathering everyone together again. It felt like a mini vacation."

Actress Ashley Park, who plays Emily's friend, also relished the experience of shooting in the French town.

She said: "I think we were so in shock

that we were getting to film season two. It was the most gorgeous location and it felt like getting to go to work with your best friend in a vacation spot, which was crazy."

Earlier this month, Lily claimed that 'Emily in Paris' provided an "escapism" amid the coronavirus crisis, reports femalefirst.co.uk. The actress thinks season one of the show provided some much-needed relief during the pandemic.

She said: "Season one allowed us an escapism when it came out that it felt it was something that needed to continue - not addressing it because it brings a sense of escapism and joy and laughter in a time that we need it the most."

The pandemic doesn't exist in season one or two of the show.



Priyanka: Nick Jonas is my ultimate shopping buddy

American pop star husband Nick Jonas is the best person to hit the stores with. Speaking to the Evening Standard newspaper, Priyanka said: "I'm not much of a shopper, I don't have the patience to go to five different shops. I need it to be made easy for me which happens at Harrods because they have everything under one roof."

"My husband, Nick, he's the best shopper, the most efficient - and he actually likes it." Priyanka tied the knot with Nick back in December 2018 after a whirlwind romance. They had traditional Hindu and Christian ceremonies at the Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur, India, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Priyanka has not allowed her career to wane since tying the knot. After her transatlantic transition from Bollywood to Hollywood, she's gone on to star in a number of films including the 'Baywatch' reboot alongside Zac Efron and Dwayne Johnson, and is currently the lead in Amazon's spy drama 'Citadel' alongside Stanley Tucci.

Priyanka will be returning to the big screens in the third instalment of the eagerly anticipated 'The Matrix Resurrections' that will be out in cinemas this week.

Sarah Jessica Parker, Cynthia Nixon, Kristin Davis address allegations against Chris Noth

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Sex and the City' stars Sarah Jessica Parker, Cynthia Nixon and Kristin Davis have addressed sexual assault allegations leveled at their long-time co-star Chris Noth.

"We are deeply saddened to hear the allegations against Chris Noth. We support the women who have come forward and shared their painful experiences. We know it must be a very difficult thing to do and we commend them for it," the three actors, who also star in 'And Just Like That', said in a shared statement posted

on Nixon and Parker's Instagram accounts. Their response came hours after Noth was dropped from the crime drama series 'The Equalizer'. Two women, who spoke anonymously, separately approached The Hollywood Reporter months apart and shared their sexual assault allegations against Noth. 'Zoe', who works in the entertainment industry and is alleging rape, told The Hollywood Reporter that her assault occurred in 2004 in Los Angeles. 'Lily', a journalist, said she was assaulted by Noth in 2015 in New York City.

The two women have used



pseudonyms. Noth called the allegations "categorically false".

"The accusations against me made by individuals I met years,

even decades ago are categorically false," he said in a statement.

"These stories could've been from 30 years ago or 30 days ago, no always means no, that is a line I did not cross. The encounters were consensual. It's difficult not to question the timing of these stories coming out. I don't know for certain why they are surfacing now, but I do know this: I did not assault these women."

On December 17, the Daily Beast reported that a third woman had accused Noth of assault, in 2010. Noth's representative said: "Chris has no knowledge of who this individual is."



LEONARDO JUMPED INTO FROZEN LAKE TO SAVE HIS DOGS WHILE FILMING 'DON'T LOOK UP'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Oscar-winning actor Leonardo DiCaprio has recalled a moment

when he was forced to perform a scary stunt in real life. In a new interview, the actor revealed that he jumped into a frozen lake to rescue his dogs while filming his new movie 'Don't Look Up', reports aceshowbiz.com. During Entertainment Weekly's 'Around the Table' interview, the 'Titanic' star was encouraged by his castmates to recount the story.

"The funniest thing was, Leo has these two rescue huskies that are just absolute tornadoes. Jonah would send me pictures of your ripped-apart couch," director Adam McKay began explaining, which prompted Jennifer Lawrence to say: "Tell the frozen lake story."

"Basically they both fell in a frozen lake," Jonah Hill chimed in.

DiCaprio then shared: "And then I went in."

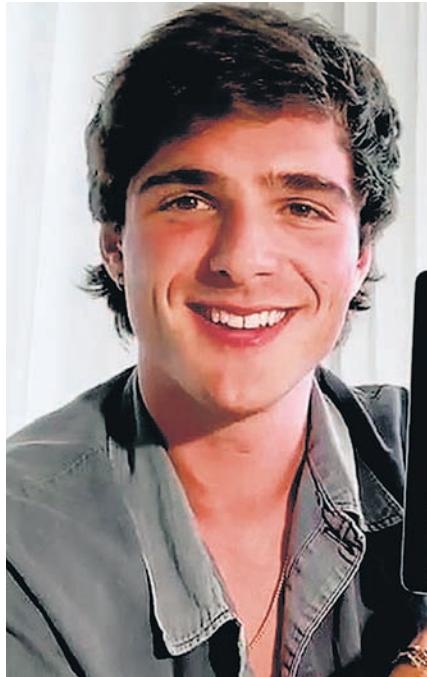
The actor portraying Jordan Belfort in 'The Wolf of Wall Street' continued, "(Living in California) I didn't understand what you do at a frozen lake."

Lawrence went on saying that "as soon as he pushed the one dog out of the pond the other one jumped in."

The actor further elaborated that eventually he and his huskies all ended up in the lake, with his dogs licking each other.

Jacob Elordi: I learned about fame from Kaia Gerber

Los Angeles | Agencies



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Tamara Francesconi


Asian Champions Trophy

INDIA SLUMP TO 3-5 DEFEAT TO JAPAN IN SEMIS

Dhaka | Agencies

Chief coach Graham Reid's worst nightmare came true as Olympic bronze medallists India put up a pathetic display to go down 3-5 in the semi-final of the Asian Champions Trophy, here on Tuesday. This was Japan's first win against India in a major tournament in the regular time.

In the pre-match virtual interaction with the media, Reid had talked about a situation a few years back when his team Australia had beaten their opponents with a huge margin in the preliminary stage but went on to lose the final to the same opponent in a tie-breaker.

Similarly, India had defeated Japan 6-0 in their last preliminary league match in the Asian Champions Trophy and were to take on the same opponents in the last-four stage clash. Reid had impressed on his players to be on their best in the semi-final clash lest they face the fate that befell Australia in the instance cited by



their coach. Reid had pointed out that the 6-0 result in the preliminary round did not present a true picture of the match as India had allowed Japan, the 2018 Asian Games gold

medallist, too many chances and were lucky to not concede 2-3 goals.

But the Indians did not learn any lessons from the example cited by their coach and played very poorly

against an opponent that was quite determined to win the match and avenge their humiliating defeat in the preliminary round. Shota Yamada (1st min), Raiki Fujishima (2nd min), Yoshiki Kirishita (29th min), Kosei Kawabe (35th min), and Ryoma Ooka (41st min) scored as Japan registered their first victory against India in regulation time. Dilpreet Singh (17th min), Harmanpreet Singh (53rd min), and Hardik Singh (59th min) scored for India -- the last two goals coming in the fourth and final quarter giving the score a semblance of respectability. Otherwise, it was a poor performance by the Indians as they showed a lack of coordination, lost balls easily all over the turf to allow Japan to launch easy counter-attacks. The easy turn-overs allowed by the Indians cost them three of the five goals Japan scored in this match. The scoreline could have looked more lopsided for India if goalkeepers Suraj Karkera and Krishan Pathak had not brought out a couple of good saves each.

Injured Anrich Nortje ruled out of Test series against India

Johannesburg | Agencies

South Africa fast bowler Anrich Nortje has been ruled out of the upcoming three-match Test series against India due to a "persistent" hip injury, the Cricket South Africa (CSA) confirmed on Tuesday.

The 28-year old has not bowled since the Men's T20 World Cup in November, and is still struggling with the niggle. He does not have sufficient bowling loads under his belt to be cleared to play.

"Anrich Nortje has been ruled out of the 3-match #BetwayTestSeries due to a persistent injury," said CSA in a tweet.

The CSA also said that no replacement would be brought in for Nortje, who has been South Africa's premier fast bowler across formats in recent times.

The right-arm pacer's



absence is a massive blow to

South Africa as he is their leading bowler in Tests this year. Nortje has taken 25 wickets from five Tests at 20.76, six ahead of his teammate, Keshav Maharaj.

Nortje last represented his country in Test cricket in the West Indies earlier this year in June. He picked eight wickets across two Test matches on the tour and starred in a 2-0 series win for

the visitors.

His absence against India could pave an international comeback for Duane Olivier who last played a Test for South Africa in 2019. Olivier, with 10 Test caps, returned to South Africa earlier this year after a Kolpak stint and has been the leading wicket-taker in the domestic first-class competition with 28 wickets at an average of 11.14.

Root's patience running out as he asks players to learn fast

Adelaide | Agencies

England captain Joe Root might be running out of patience as he said after the tourists' 275-run defeat in the second Ashes Test that the team has to "learn fast" if it still harbours hopes of regaining the Ashes.

England have lost both the Ashes Tests so far -- by nine wickets at The Gabba and by 275 runs at the Adelaide Oval -- and stare at a whitewash as they prepare for the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) from December 26. There was brave resistance from Jos Buttler, who fended off 207 deliveries and stayed at the crease for more than four hours for his 26 on Day 5, but England were still unable to avoid a humiliating defeat.

"We need to learn, and we need to learn fast," Root said, making his displeasure known. "The frustration with-in our dressing room is that



we've not quite executed some basic things well enough for the second game in a row, and we need to respond very quickly. The disappointing thing about this week is that we made the same mistakes as last week. "The most disappointing thing for me is the amount of no-balls we keep bowling, and the number of chances we missed again, after last week." Root was quoted as saying by icc-cricket.com on Tuesday. Having not won a Test in Australia since

2010/11, England must now win three on the trot to regain the urn. Much of the focus through both Tests so far has been on England's selection choices, with bowling stalwarts James Anderson and Stuart Broad left out of The Gabba Test but recalled at the Adelaide Oval at the expense of spinner Jack Leach and Mark Wood. However, rather than focusing on selection issues, Root turned his attention to what the team got wrong in the second Test.

VIJAY HAZARE 2021-22: HIMACHAL, TAMIL NADU ENTER SEMIS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu entered the semifinals of the ongoing 2021-22 Vijay Hazare Trophy after defeating Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh in their respective quarterfinal matches on Tuesday. N Jagadeesan's century and Shahrukh Khan's blazing innings lower down the order helped Tamil Nadu thrash Karnataka by a mammoth 151 runs in quarterfinal 2 to secure a place in the semifinals of the 50-over tournament in Jaipur. Put into bat, Tamil Nadu lost Baba Aparajith early. But, Jagadeesan led the way for the team with his third List A century, scoring 102 off 101, with nine boundaries and a six. During the process, he stitched crucial partnerships of 147 with R Sai Kishore (61 off 71) and 58 with Dinesh Karthik (44 off 37). Karnataka had a chance to make a comeback in the game after they picked the wickets of Jagadeesan, Karthik and Vijay Shankar in a space of five overs. However, Shahrukh played a counter-attacking knock, smashing an unbeaten 39-ball 79, which included seven fours and six sixes. Baba Indrajith also played a



useful supporting act with a fairly crisp 24-ball 31 as Tamil Nadu posted a total of 354 for 8 in 50 overs.

In reply, Karnataka got off to a poor start as Devdutt Padikkal fell for a second-ball duck - his second successive failure in the tournament. Thereafter, Rohan Kadam and K

Brief scores

Tamil Nadu vs Karnataka

Tamil Nadu 354 for 8 in 50 overs (N Jagadeesan 102, M Shahrukh Khan 79 not out, R Sai Kishore 61, Dinesh Karthik 44, Praveen Dubey 3/67) beat Karnataka 203 all out in 39 overs (S Sharath 43, K V Siddharth 29, R Silambarasan 4/36, Washington Sundar 3/43) by 151 runs.

Himachal vs Uttar Pradesh

UP 207/9 (Rinku Singh 76, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 46; Vinay Galetiya 3/19, Siddharth Sharma 2/27) lost to Himachal Pradesh 208/5 (Prashant Chopra 99, Nikhil Gangta 58; Shivam Mavi 3/34) by five wickets.

Nadu's score. R Silambarasan separated the duo and returned four wickets, while Washington Sundar cleaned up the tail taking three scalps to his credit. In Quarter Final 1, Prashant Chopra's vital innings of 99 helped Himachal secure a semifinal spot on a tricky batting surface at the , where Himachal secured a five-wicket win over Uttar Pradesh. Put in to bat, Uttar Pradesh's top four were cleaned up by Vinay Galetiya's triple strike, leaving them reeling at 39 for 4 by the 15th over. However, Rinku Singh revived UP's innings yet again, with two crucial partnerships. He stitched a 64 run stand with Akshdeep Nath and 75 with Bhuvneshwar Kumar. His innings of 76 helped steer Uttar Pradesh to a competitive 207 for 9. In reply, Himachal opener Shubham Arora was dismissed for 19 in the 18th over of the innings. From there, Prashant Chopra and Nikhil Gangta stitched a 122-run stand for the second wicket.

Ankit Rajput struck twice in the 38th over but by then the game had already slipped away by then for Uttar Pradesh. Shivam Mavi also picked a couple of more wickets, but it did little to halt Himachal as they chased the target in 45.3 overs.

USA set for historic cricket series against ICC Full Member Ireland

Lauderhill (Florida) | Agencies

For the first time since September 2019, USA are set to host an international cricket match when they face ICC Full Member Nation Ireland in the inaugural T20I at the Central Broward Regional Park Stadium Turf Ground here on December 22. The series involves two T20Is, followed by three One-day Internationals and will conclude on December 30.

The preparations haven't gone as planned due to the COVID-19 pandemic with the practice games getting cancelled and both teams training individually on the centre wicket. Ireland have had to make many changes to their squad after several of their members -- including Barry McCarthy, George Dockrell, Harry Tector and Gareth Delany -- tested COVID-positive ahead of the limited-overs series. They will join the team after 10-day isolation.

With several uncertainties, Josh



Little cut short his Lankan Premier League stint to join the Ireland squad here. For the USA, Karima Gore, Jaskaran Malhotra and Aaron Jones have been ruled out after being named in the initial squads. To cover

for the absentees, four players have received their maiden national call-up, three of whom are U-19 players. Ritwik Behera has been named in both the ODI and T20I squads, while Yasir Mohammed and Ali Sheikh

have been called up for the T20I squad along with Ryan Scott. Rusty Theron too will be unavailable due to a groin injury. All the games will be played at Central Broward Regional Park Stadium Turf Ground here.

PREMIER LEAGUE REPORTS 90 NEW CASES

London | Agencies

A total of 90 new positive cases for COVID-19 from 20 clubs have been reported by the English Premier League, over two times the previous highest weekly record.

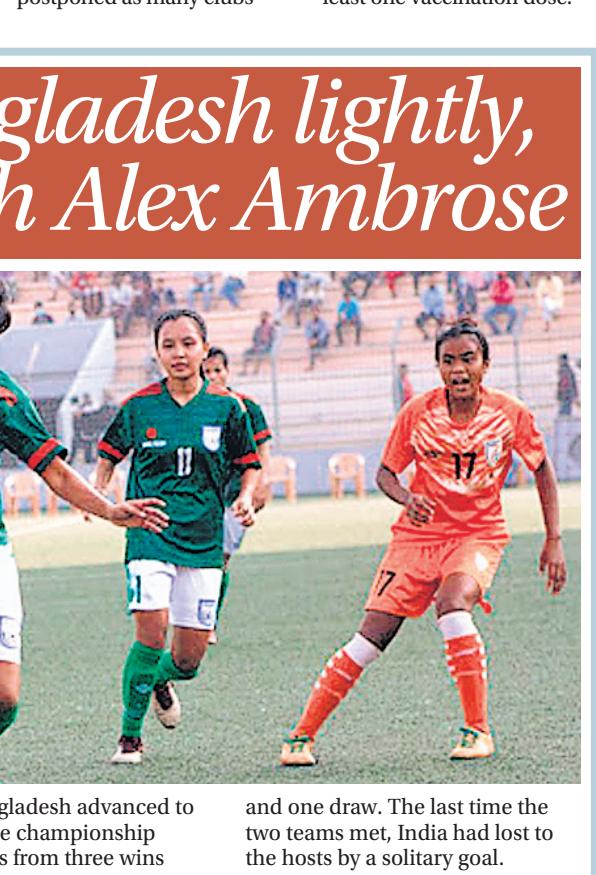
One week ago, the English top-flight football league confirmed that 3,805 players and club staff were tested for COVID-19 between December 6 and December 12, among which 42 new positive cases were recorded.

The League has reverted to its emergency measures since then and has increased testing of players and club staff to daily Lateral Flow and twice-weekly PCR tests, having previously carried out Lateral Flow testing twice a week, Xinhua reports. "The League can today confirm



that between Monday 13 December and Sunday 19 December, a record 12,345 COVID-19 tests were administered on players and club staff. Of these, there were 90 new positive cases," read a statement released on Monday evening.

Several fixtures have been postponed as many clubs



India Junior's star Deepika topscorer at U21 Khelo India Women's Hockey League

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India Junior women's hockey team star Deepika became the top scorer in the first phase of the Khelo India Women's Hockey League Under 21, which concluded on Tuesday at the Major Dhyanchand Stadium.

The India Junior girls won all their six games and scored a total of 52 goals, conceding just twice in the tournament, and topped seven-team Pool A with a total of 18 points. Deepika scored 16 of those 52 goals.

Deepika is now looking ahead to a possible break where she would be keen on going back to her home in Haryana where she hasn't been in the last two and a half years. The team would regroup in the first week of January



2022, preparing for the postponed Junior Women's Hockey World Cup, scheduled in South Africa.

We are not taking Bangladesh lightly, says U-19 football coach Alex Ambrose

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After booking their spot in the final of the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship, head coach Alex Ambrose said that the team will continue their winning attitude against Bangladesh in the final on Wednesday.

"Bangladesh are a strong team. But we won't stop fighting. Even if there is a five percent chance of winning, we will fight for it" Ambrose said on Tuesday, ahead of the summit clash against hosts Bangladesh. "We are not taking them lightly. I am very happy that the girls are showing great focus and hunger. We played four games with the same energy and passion and the girls are ready with the same attitude. This is a platform for the players to develop themselves, and I am proud to say that



they have done a great job", he said. India finished the group stage with nine points from four match-

es, while Bangladesh advanced to the final of the championship with 10 points from three wins and one draw. The last time the two teams met, India had lost to the hosts by a solitary goal.



AYUSHMANN LIKES TO WALK ON THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED: VAANI KAPOOR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Vaani Kapoor has praised her 'Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui' co-star Ayushmann Khurana for constantly putting himself up to test and said that the actor likes to walk on road less travelled, which is why he is so important in the landscape of Indian cinema today.

Vaani, who plays a transgender woman in 'Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui', said: "It is gutsy for an A-list actor like Ayushmann to constantly put himself up to test when he could easily choose conventional subjects for success. "From what I know of Ayushmann, he likes to walk on the road less travelled and that's why he is so important in the landscape of Indian cinema today."

The actress said that he is a 'genre-bending, envelope-pushing star who is restless to contribute towards societal good.'

"This is what makes him so endearing and incredibly unique."

Vaani said that it was important that a film like 'Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui' had Ayushmann so that it became palatable for family audiences.

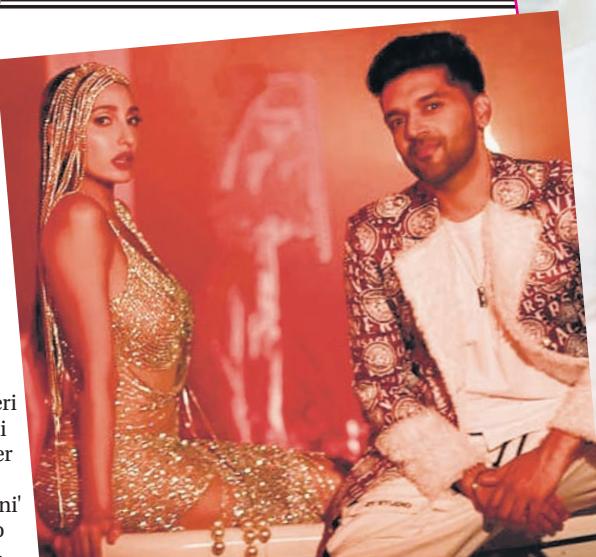
"That's how important Ayushmann is to Indian cinema today. He will stand by projects that are disruptive and important for people to ponder over. He has created a genre of his own today and there are not many stars in the history of Indian cinema who have managed to do this." She is really happy that she got a chance to collaborate with Ayushmann and connect with him. "I hope Ayushmann stays on course and further challenges the status quo in the Indian film industry." Ayushmann will be next seen in Anubhav Sinha's 'Anek', Anubhuti Kashyap's 'Doctor G' and filmmaker Aanand L. Rai's 'Action Hero' being directed by debutant Anirudh Iyer.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

After delivering the super hit track 'Naach Meri Rani', Guru Randhawa and Nora Fatehi are back with a new track 'Dance Meri Rani' composed by Tanishk Bagchi with lyrics penned by Rashmi Virag. Zahrah S. Khan, who sang Nora's hit 'Kusu Kusu' has also lent her vocals to the track released by the music label T-Series.

Talking about the song, Guru Randhawa says, "With 'Dance Meri Rani' we are getting into a new zone of music and introducing people to Afro beats. It's a foot tapping number that has been picturised very interestingly. This is definitely something new for audiences to look out for. With Nora, one can expect a lot of glitz and glamour." Nora, who turns mermaid for the track, shares, "As an artiste, I always strive to deliver diverse content that impresses the audience. The public today is very aware, so it is very important that we treat them with something new and interesting always." "I'm grateful to all the love people across the world showered on 'Nach Meri Rani' and I felt responsible to my audience to take 'Dance Meri Rani' to one step higher and hence we have ensured to present an amalgamation of cultures, aesthetics and foot-tapping tunes making the song an audio as well as a visual treat", she adds.



Guru Randhawa, Nora Fatehi reunite for 'Dance Meri Rani'



'BIGG BOSS 15'

Rashami, Karan blame Rakhi for 'unfair' decisions during 'Ticket To Finale'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Ticket to Finale task in 'Bigg Boss 15' house has created a rift between Rashami Desai and Rakhi Sawant. Rashami says Rakhi is

not honest in her decisions as a 'sanchalak'.

During the 'Dragon Fire' task, Karan Kundrata, Abhijit Bichukale and Rashami Desai have a chance to become the second finalist. Now, the nomi-

nated contestants including Pratik, Nishant, Shamita, Umar and Devoleena have to play the game and the winner has the chance to eliminate one contestant. Karan plans to target Shamita with Tejasswi and

Umar's help. Rakhi teams up with Pratik, Shamita and others. Tejasswi asks Rakhi to make a fair judgment in the task. As Rakhi is the 'sanchalak', she plans to favour Devoleena and Pratik. This makes Rashami and Karan angry.

Rashami argues with Rakhi and says: "You are not doing right." Karan also has a heated argument with Rakhi. He in fact warns her to be ready to face the consequences. Rakhi also shouts at them.



Raghav Sachar: Making Bollywood music is like shopping

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Independent singer-songwriter Raghav Sachar says that making music for Bollywood is more of keeping the pure artiste aside and understanding the demand of the film rather than the collaborative process that earlier used to happen.

Even though he is known for some popular songs like 'Kabul Fiza', 'Rustom Vahi', 'Dil Mera' in Bollywood movies, asked about why he does not do more Bollywood music be it playback singing or composing, in conversation with reporter, Raghav shared how things have changed.

Raghav told reporter: "I am a singer, composer and an instrumentalist. I play saxophone, flute and other instruments too. So for me, I can put my creative energy into making a song in a multiple ways. When we are doing a project for Bollywood, we have to keep the pure artiste, the creative mind aside and

rather have to submit to the vision of the director who has the overall picture in mind. When I was younger, I was not submissive enough all the time to do so. In last couple of years, the process of Bollywood music projects has changed even more."

He further added, "These days, doing Bollywood music is more of shopping. I was asked if I have a love song on a specific theme, and I sent a couple of songs that I composed earlier and kept in my song bank. Out of three songs, they will select one and then with a few changes here and there, and eventually, the song gets released. So it is not that of a deeper creative and collaborative process for me where I get to know the world of the story, the character, situation everything in detail. Perhaps that is why my room for creative satisfaction is still all the independent music that I create."



Esha Gupta



Team Absolute | Mumbai

'**G**irls Will Be Girls', the maiden production to emerge from the newly minted Pushing Buttons Studios, a unit jointly founded by actors Ali Fazal and Richa Chadha has won the distinguished 'Aide aux cinémas du monde' grant.

Richa and Ali's 'Girls will be Girls' conferred with fund based out of France

WAMIQA GABBI ON '83': IT IS A PRIVILEGE, HUGE RESPONSIBILITY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Wamiqa Gabbi, who will be seen essaying the role of cricketer Madan Lal's wife in the upcoming film '83', says to be able to work in the film and present the historic moment in front of the Indian audiences all over again is a privilege and a huge responsibility.

Wamiqa said: "Cricket and movies are something that brings the nation together, and here is a film that celebrates the two in the biggest possible way. To be able to work in the film and present this historic moment in front of the Indian audiences all over again is a privilege in itself."

"It is also a huge responsibility that needs to be dealt with utmost attention to details, keeping in mind the emotional sentiments associated with this event and the game in general. "But we, team 83 is committed to doing our best, and hopefully, like Kapil Dev - hitting this one out of the park!"

'83' highlights India winning the 1983 World Cup under the leadership of Kapil Dev, played by Ranveer Singh. Actor-singer Hardayal Sandhu will essay the role of Madan Lal in the Kabir Khan directorial.

The film is all set to release theatrically worldwide on Thursday.

