

# absolute india

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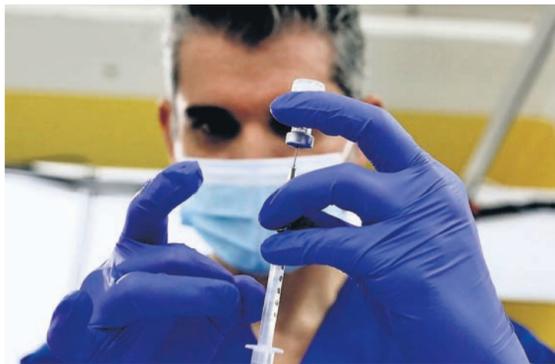
**OMICRON: BOOSTER SHOTS MAY BE NECESSARY IN INDIA, SAYS TOP VIROLOGIST**

## STEP UP FOR VAX

More details about the virus -- its virulence and severity as well as vaccine escape -- will be clear in the coming weeks as studies are underway.

“Various studies have shown that ‘booster shots increase the amount of antibodies and cut reinfection rates. Given these results, it is now time that India devises policies on booster shots and vaccination for children.”

**Dr. Shahid Jameel, Top Virologist**



**25 OMICRON CASES DETECTED IN INDIA SO FAR: GOVT**

**New Delhi:** A total of 25 cases of new Covid variant Omicron have been detected so far in India, across five states, a top Health Ministry official said on Friday. Addressing a press conference to brief on Omicron emergence in India, Joint Secretary, Lav Agarwal said these 25 cases have been detected in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka and Delhi, and all the patients have mild symptoms. According to the ministry, two states - Kerala and Maharashtra - have highest number of active Covid cases. Kerala has over 43 per cent of active cases while Maharashtra accounts for over 10 per cent. In total, 19 districts in India have 5 to 10 per cent of positivity rate and 8 districts have over 10 per cent Covid positivity rate. It also said that more than half of the adult population in the country is now fully vaccinated. Around 53.5 per cent of the adult population have been vaccinated with both vaccine doses.

evasion of antibodies and interferon, an early innate antiviral response,” the professor said at a webinar organised by the University. Early lab results from South Africa and US drug maker Pfizer showed about a 40- and 25-fold drop in virus neutralisation ability of the vaccine.

But what is clear so far is that this variant spreads more efficiently and can evade immunity even from an earlier infection of Covid-19 and vaccination. At the same time, there are also some positive indications such as the severity of the illness being possibly less than that caused by

**US AUTHORISES BOOSTERS FOR TEENS**

**Washington:** The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended individuals 16 and 17 years of age get a booster shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine at least six months after completing their first two doses. The CDC recommendation came hours after the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorised the Pfizer-BioNTech third shot to this age group, Xinhua news agency reported.

**NEW OMICRON CASES IN UK NEARLY DOUBLE IN A DAY**

**London:** An additional 249 people have tested positive for the Omicron Covid-19 variant in the UK, which increased the total number of cases with this strain to 817, health authorities confirmed. Thursday's figure is nearly double of what was reported a day ago (131 cases), reports Xinhua news agency. In the last 24 hours, the country registered 50,867 new Covid-19 cases, taking the overall infection tally to 10,722,083, while 148 new fatalities raised the death toll to 146,592.

Delta variant but this requires confirmation.

**CDS GEN BIPIN RAWAT, WIFE LAID TO REST WITH FULL MILITARY HONOURS**

## REST IN PEACE



Team Absolute | New Delhi

With 17 gun salutes by tri-services personnel, the last rites of India's first Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, and his wife, Madhulika Rawat, were performed with full military honours at Brar Square in Delhi Cantonment on Friday. The tri-services buglers played 'Last Post' followed by 'Rouse' just before the funeral pyres were lit by their daughter. Before that, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh laid a wreath and paid homage to the departed souls at the crematorium. "Paid my last respects to General Bipin Rawat and his wife, Madhulika Rawat. General Rawat devoted his life to serving and protecting our nation. India will remember his courage, valour and patriotism. Farewell General," Singh said in a tweet. General Rawat, with his wife and 11 other

armed forces personnel were killed after the IAF chopper they were travelling in crashed near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu on Wednesday. A funeral procession was taken out from the late General's residence on K. Kamraj Road to the Delhi Cantonment. Hundreds of people stood on both sides of the road during the procession to catch a glimpse of the final journey of India's first Chief of Defence Staff. A total of 99 officers of all ranks from the Army, Navy and Air force, and 33 members of the tri-services band were the front escort, while 99 officers of all ranks from the three services acted as the rear escort. Twelve officers from the Army, Navy and Air Force of the rank of Brigadier and equivalent were on vigil duty. The Indian Army also came up with an online link where one could pay tribute to the departed souls.

**TWO POLICEMEN KILLED BY MILITANTS IN J&K'S BANDIPORA**

**Srinagar:** Two policemen were killed in a militant attack in J&K's Bandipora on Friday, police said. Police sources said militants fired at a police party in Gulshan Chowk area of Bandipora town in the afternoon. "Two policemen were critically injured in this attack. They were shifted to hospital, but they succumbed to injuries," a source said. The area has been cordoned off for searches.

**EXPERT GROUP FORMED TO FINALISE AIR QUALITY FORECAST MODEL IN TERMS OF AQI, SC TOLD**

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) has told the Supreme Court that an "expert group" has been constituted to finalise an air quality forecast model in terms of the air quality index (AQI). In an affidavit, the CAQM Director said: "The Expert Group, constituted by the commission, having domain knowledge and data in the field of meteorological conditions impacting air quality, statistical modelling besides historical scientific data on air quality related parameters in Delhi-NCR along with the IITM and the IMD are in the process of finalising an air quality forecast model in terms of the Air Quality



Index (AQI), using WRF-Chem Forecasting model." In an earlier hearing, a bench comprising Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Surya Kant had asked the Centre to develop future models on air pollution, and then devise steps in advance to act on factors leading to pollution. The affidavit said: "The model takes into account local/nonlocal, natural and anthropogenic sources from emission inventories over Delhi-NCR

developed by TERI and MoES. The air quality forecast model is coupled with all the meteorological parameters such as wind speed & direction, humidity etc at surface and at different vertical levels. "Elaborating on steps taken to curb air pollution, the commission said a total of 1,534 sites were inspected by the flying squad and a total of 228 sites were issued notices of closure by the enforcement task force (ETF).

**HARYANA GOVERNMENT SUSPENDS PUBLIC NAMAZ**

Team Absolute | Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday temporarily suspended public namaz amidst the protests. A statement quoting the Chief Minister said all previous sanctions given for public prayers stood nullified and the state government will now work out an "amicable solution that will uphold all rights and ensure no encroachment or exploitation". Until then, he said, there would be no namaz offering in public places. "We have no issues anybody practising religion at their religious places but use of open spaces is not acceptable," the Chief Minister said categorically. "There should be no law and order situation or any tension about same. We got to know that there was a meeting



between groups and some places were agreed upon or allocated but we, with immediate effect, withdraw all and will work out amicable solution soon," he said, while referring to a recent agreement made by the Gurugram administration. "We will help Waqf board to get their spaces free of encroachment. Till then, people should offer prayers at their legal sites, homes etc. We won't infringe on any rights but nobody's allowed to bully," he added.

**UNIFORM VIDEO CONFERENCING NORMS ACROSS ALL COURTS SOON: KIREN RIJJU**

Team Absolute | New Delhi

New Delhi: Union Law Minister Kiren Rijju on Friday said in the Lok Sabha that the government has been working on a uniform video conferencing guideline for all courts of the country very soon. Noting that hearing of the cases via video conferencing will help in dealing with pendency of cases, he said in 21 High Courts, the government, in consultation with them, has implemented rules for video conferencing. "We are in trial mode so that we can provide a uniform video conferencing across all courts of the country," the Minister said. Responding to a question asked by the BJP lawmaker J.S. Mahto on the status of e-courts mission mode, Rijju also said the digitalisation of all courts has been in progress and during the entire Covid period the Courts have done commendable jobs. Replying to a question asked by the BJP MP Manoj Rajoria that orders by e-courts should also be given in Hindi and the local language, the Minister said that this would be done once the digitisation is completed.



**Varun Gandhi raised questions on law & order in Uttar Pradesh**

Team Absolute | Lucknow

In a shocking incident of excessive force in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur Dehat, a policeman was filmed mercilessly hitting a man carrying a child in his arms with laathis on Thursday. The cop has been suspended for "insensitivity", police said amid outrage over the incident. In a nearly one-minute-long clip, the cop - an inspector from the local police station - is first seen thrashing the man with sticks. Later, a second policeman is seen trying to violently yank the child out of the victim's arms as the child wails. The incident happened at the district hospital in Kanpur Dehat's Akbarpur town on Thursday afternoon. All through the distressing clip, the man can be heard pleading with the police not to hurt the child. "Bachhe ko lag jayegi (The child will get hurt)," the man is

heard saying as he tries to run away from the police. The cops chase him and a few of them try to forcefully pull the child away from him. The man holds on saying, "Iska maa bhi nahi hain (The child doesn't have a mother)." After immense outrage over the incident and the police response, the Kanpur Dehat police Twitter handle put out a statement, saying an inquiry has been ordered and the concerned police inspector has been removed from his post. Among those who expressed anger over the widely shared video was BJP MP Varun Gandhi. "A strong law and order system is the one where the weakest person can get justice... not the one where the one seeking justice has to face barbarity like this. This is painful. A scared society is not an example of law and order prevailing," he wrote in Hindi. "A strong law and order system is the one where the law is feared, not the police," he added.

**HEALTH MINISTRY EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER DECLINING MASK USAGE**

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union Health Ministry on Friday expressed serious concern over the declining trends of mask usage in the country even amid Omicron threat, citing a recently conducted survey which outlined that this has significantly dropped from September onwards. "Mask usage is declining in India. We have to remember that both vaccines and masks are important. As far as protection capability is concerned, we are now operating at a risky and unacceptable level. We should learn from the global situa-



tion," NITI Aayog's Member, Health, Dr V.K. Paul said, Member-Health, NITI Aayog. He said that the World Health Organisation has warned many times against the decline in mask usage. The global scene of Omicron is disturbing, said Paul, adding that the protocol against Omicron is same as the other variants, of following the Covid Appropriate Behavior. On the question of paediatric vaccine, he said that no recommendation has been made yet by the NTAGI.

**'No Farmer Died Due To Police Action During Farm Laws Protests'**

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union government today said that no farmer died due to police action during the year-long protests by farmers. Various farmer groups were protesting against three new farm laws, which have now been scrapped. The year-long protest at the Delhi borders was suspended by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Thursday after the Union government accepted their key pending demands, including withdrawal of police cases against the protesters and on Minimum Support Price (MSP). In a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar today said, "the subject of

compensation, etc. to the families of the deceased farmers in the farmers movement is with the concerned state governments." "No farmer died as a result of police action during the farmers' agitation," he said. Mr Tomar was responding to a joint question by Congress leader Dhiraj Prasad Sahu and AAP leader Sanjay Singh. The members had asked whether the government is planning to provide or made any provision towards livelihood monetary compensation to the families of the farmers who died during farmers' protests. Opposition parties, including the Congress, have been raising the issue of deaths of farmers during the year-long protests.

**53 KILLED AFTER TRAILER TRUCK OVERTURNS IN MEXICO**



**Mexico City:** At least 53 migrants were killed after a trailer truck overturned in southern Mexico, authorities have said. The trailer illegally transporting migrants, mostly from Central America, on Thursday overturned on the highway near Tuxtla Gutierrez, capital of southern Chiapas state, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the state's civil protection agency. Another 58 people were injured, with three in serious conditions, said Luis Manuel Garcia, head of the agency. According to Garcia, a mechanical failure caused the truck to hit a retaining wall on a curve before crashing into a pedestrian bridge, leading the cargo container to detach and overturn.



# CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN RISING IN GOA, BJP IDEOLOGY 'ANTI-WOMEN': PRIYANKA

PANAJI | Agencies

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Friday slammed the BJP-led coalition government in Goa over increasing crimes against women and said that the BJP ideology was "deeply anti-women".

"See how many attacks are happening on women. When attacks happen on women, when rapes happen, what does the Goa CM say? He says what they were doing out so late? Why were they on the beach? His minister says 'why are you wearing these kind of clothes?' When such attacks happen on women, the allegation is not on the one who rapes, but the one who is raped," she said at a women's convention



in South Goa.

"It is the government's responsibility that the crimes against women be stopped. They need to be tried and jailed. But this government hasn't done it. The Congress will increase the staffing of women in police stations. You have to be heard.

Wherever there is a BJP government, there are more crimes against women," she added.

Priyanka Gandhi, who is on a day-long visit to poll-bound Goa, also claimed that the BJP ideology was inherently against women. "The (Congress) ideology

gave this country, this state its freedom. It is very important that we protect this ideology. When we talk about women's power, about women's freedom, when we want such an atmosphere in the country where the women are free to express, are free of shackles, are free, then we can never talk about the ideology of the BJP," she said. "Because the BJP's ideology right from its roots is against women. BJP's ideology will never want women's empowerment. When they come and talk about women, when you see their schemes for women, it is only about providing gas cylinders and money for the household. And they think that their responsibility towards women ends there," she added.

## FIRE AT FARMER'S HOUSE KILLS 3 CATTLE IN UP'S GAUTAM BUDH NAGAR

New Delhi: Three cattle were charred to death in a fire at a farmer's house in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Budh Nagar district early on Friday. The farmer is safe, however, he lost three cattle to the fire in the incident in Muthiyana village, a police official said, adding that of the three dead cattle, two were buffaloes and one was a calf. The cattle were tied to a pole during the night. As soon as the blaze was reported, police rushed to the spot and doused the flames with the help of villagers. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. Initially, reports claimed it to be a handiwork of some unidentified miscreants which was later ruled out by the police. "Currently we are investigating all the angles," the official added.

# CBI arrests Trinamool leader in chit fund scam

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said on Friday that it has arrested Pranab Chatterjee, who is a Trinamool Congress leader and Chairman of the Burdwan Municipality in West Bengal, in connection with a chit fund fraud case. The case pertains to ponzi schemes that were reported from West Bengal and Odisha. The CBI said that the accused allegedly allured the public at large to invest in some scheme with a promise of high rate of returns at maturity, without the requisite permission from the regulatory authorities. A large number of



investors invested their hard-earned money with the said trust, which was being run by the accused, among others. It was also alleged that the trustees failed to repay the maturity amount, cheated the investors, misappropriated their hard-earned money, closed down the branches and fled. The CBI found that Chatterjee was closely associated with the trust and the

trustees. Chatterjee allegedly misappropriated over Rs 3 crore from the trust for personal use. On Friday, searches were conducted by the CBI at the premises of the accused, which led to the recovery of several incriminating materials. Chatterjee was produced before the Special CBI court, which remanded him to two-day CBI custody.

## Spirit and ethos among citizens basic strength of democracy: Modi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that the basic strength of democracy is the spirit and ethos "that lie within our citizens and societies".

The Prime Minister made the remarks while speaking at a programme, 'Summit for Democracy', hosted by US President Joe Biden.

"The structural features like multi-party elections, independent judiciary, and free media - are important instruments of democracy. However, the basic strength of democracy is the spirit and ethos that lie within our citi-



zens and our societies. Democracy is not only of the people, by the people, for the people but also with the people, within the people," the Prime Minister said.

Modi also pointed out that "different parts of the world have followed different paths of democratic development and there is much we can learn from each other".

# TN makes Covid jabs mandatory for students above 18 yr to attend college

CHENNAI | Agencies

The Tamil Nadu Health Department has made Covid vaccination mandatory for students above 18 years of age to attend college classes, Health Minister Ma Subramanian said on Friday.

Addressing media persons after attending a high-level meeting of educationists here, he said that the Secretary, Higher Education will write letters to all the educational institutions directing them to make it mandatory for students above 18 years of age to get at least one dose of the vaccine administered to them.



He said that only 46 per cent of engineering students above 18 years have taken the first dose of vaccine and only 12 per cent of the students

have taken both the doses of vaccine. Subramanian said that college administrators should verify the student list and ensure that 100 per cent

double doses have been administered. There have been reports of a higher possibility and risk of spread of infection in college canteens and dining area of the educational institutions. The Minister also said that student get-togethers and functions must not be held without prior permission from the Health Department. He also said that students must bring in food in disposable containers and be sent to canteens in batches.

With the Omicron variant creating problems in several countries, the Centre has directed all the state governments to focus on vaccination drives.

## Gambling racket busted in South Delhi, 16 held

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Police have busted a gambling racket in the southern area of the city and arrested 16 people in this connection, an official said Friday.

On the instance of the accused, the police recovered 1,000 playing chips, 37 playing bricks and Rs 1,95,000 cash stake money.

Three among the arrested accused are Chartered Accountants by profession and were running the gambling racket to lead a lavish life and to earn easy money. According to the official, the 16 gamblers identified as Ankur Bindal, Manish Bindal, Aakash Sarda, Abhishek, Sajjan



Mukhia, Prashant Goyal, Moksh, Sahil, Lalit, Sachin, Kartik Kalla, Vivek, Damanjeet Sodhi, Shashank Jain, Himanshu Jain and Arjun Arora were arrested under sections 3 and 4 of the Delhi gambling act.

On December 4, the police busted a major gambling racket in the eastern part of the city. As many as 29 people were arrested and Rs 4.20 lakh recovered in the raid.

## FOUR CYCLISTS TO COVER 6000 KM IN 33 DAYS

Agra: Four cyclists have embarked on a unique mission to cover 6,000 kms of the golden quadrilateral in 33 days.

Team leader Pramod Kumara Katara, a passionate cyclist and holder of many records, told IANS that the objective of the exercise was to promote paralympic games and to inspire those with physical disabilities. The other members of the team are Rakesh Kumar of Aurangabad, Pramod Kumar of Kolkatta, Manish of Prayagraj and Ajit of Ranchi.

Katara said: "Each day we will cycle 250 to 300 km. Starting from Agra we will touch Delhi, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkatta and return to Agra in 33 days." The team was flagged off by the Agra district magistrate PN Singh, from Khelgaon.

## 5 students, teacher of Veda Pathashala drown in Guntur

Guntur (Andhra Pradesh): Five students and a teacher of a Veda Pathashala (traditional Vedic school) were drowned in Krishna river in Andhra Pradesh's Guntur district on Friday, police said. The incident occurred in the evening near Madipadu village of Achampet mandal when the students had gone to the river for swimming. Informed by the locals, police rushed the spot and with the help of expert swim-

mers, retrieved the bodies. Four students were from Uttar Pradesh while the fifth one hailed from Madhya Pradesh. The teacher was from Andhra Pradesh. The deceased were identified Shiva Sharma (14) of Madhya Pradesh, Nitish Kumar Dixit (15), Harshit Shukla (15), Shubam Trivedi (17) and Anushanam Shukla (14), all from Uttar Pradesh and K. Subrahmanyam (24), a teacher who was from Narasaraopet town of

Guntur. Local people said a storm in the river led to the tragedy. Police registered a case and took up further investigation. Meanwhile, Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan has expressed his shock and grief over the tragedy. Conveying his condolences to the families of the deceased, he suggested that the management of educational institutions take all precautions for the safety of children.

## Cold wave intensifies in Kashmir, Ladakh

SRINAGAR | Agencies

Cold wave intensified in Kashmir and Ladakh on Friday with the Drass town literally freezing at minus 16.9 degrees Celsius.

An official of the Meteorological Department (MeT) said the minimum temperature remained below the freezing point in Kashmir and union territory of Ladakh.

The Drass town in Ladakh was the coldest at minus 16.9.

"Srinagar had minus 2.6, Pahalgam minus 5.9 and Gulmarg minus 6.0 as the minimum temperature." Drass town of Ladakh had minus 16.9, Leh minus 11.0 and Kargil minus



8.6 as the night's lowest temperature. "Jammu city and Katra town both had 8.2, Batote 4.9, Banihal 4.8 and Bhaderwah 1.0 as the minimum", the MeT official said. Weather is likely to remain generally dry till December 20, the official added.

## K'TAKA, UNDP JOIN HANDS TO IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

BENGALURU | Agencies

Karnataka's Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports has entered an LoU (Letter of Understanding) with the UNDP - United Nation's Development Programme, as part of the state-level initiative 'Code-Unnati', with an aim to improve access to entrepreneurship and employment opportunities among youth including women.

The LoU was signed in presence of C.N. Ashwath Narayan, Minister for Higher Education, IT/BI, and Skill

Development, at Vidhan Soudha on Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, he said, the initiative involving United Nations Volunteers (UNV) will be implemented in 4 districts of Bengaluru Rural, Ramanagara, Dakshina Kannada, and Raichuru to start with.

The LoU intends to provide a platform for cooperation between UNDP and the Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports to ensure joint implementation of the activities in close coordination with state, district, college level NSS units, the

Minister said. As part of this 50 colleges including Government Pre-University, ITIs, Polytechnics, and Arts & Science colleges have been identified to work with the faculties and students community.

They will work together in areas of Training and Capacity Building, Training on 21st century and Digital Skills, Entrepreneurship Development, Innovation Challenges/Boot Campus, Corporate Volunteering, and Industry Connect.

As part of training on 21st-century skills and digital skills, 20,000 stu-

dents of 50 selected colleges (two academic years) will be trained on career guidance through psychometric assessment and counselling followed by digital skills wherein 200 hours of the module will be delivered, he explained.

Amith Kumar, Head, UNDP India; Sindu Gangadharan, Director, SAP Labs India; S. Selvakumar, ACS, Department of Skill Development; Ashwin Gowda, MD, Skill Development Corporation, and Shalini Rajaneesh, ACS, Dept of Planning and Statistics were also present on the occasion.

## DELHI'S AIR QUALITY PLUNGES AGAIN, AQI SLIPS TO 293

New Delhi: Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) again inched closer to the 'very poor' category as it slipped to 293 at 9 a.m. Friday morning, System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research's (SAFAR) data said.

The level of PM 2.5 and PM 10 pollutants in the air were recorded at 'poor' and 'moderate' level, respectively.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', then 401 and between 500 is considered 'severe'. As per the Air Quality and Weather Bulletin for Delhi-NCR, the air quality is likely to be in the 'poor' category on December 10 and 11. And, it is likely to remain so till December 13 and deteriorate further to fall in the 'very poor' category on December 14 and 15, it added. On the weather front, Delhi witnessed a shallow fog this morning with the maximum and minimum temperature settling at 23 degrees Celsius and 8 degrees Celsius respectively. On Thursday evening, the national capital recorded a minimum temperature of 8.4 degree Celsius -- one notch below the average. According to India Meteorological Department (IMD), it was the lowest minimum temperature recorded in the month of December.

# Stubble burning decriminalised under Air Quality Commission Act: Bhupendra Yadav

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupendra Yadav on Friday said that stubble burning has been decriminalised under the Air Quality Commission Act and lands have been allotted for decomposition in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh.

Participating in a debate in the Lok Sabha on Climate Change, he also said that there has been a proposal to use stubble for bio-fuel in future and this has been sent to thermal power companies like National Thermal Power Corporation.

Earlier, resuming debate on the matter under Rule 193, BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri said that many countries have brought legislation to deal with air pollution, and the previous government did not do anything for 30 years. He also highlighted the different projects undertaken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat.



Noting that the concept of development needs to be changed, RSP member N.K. Premachandran said that it has having a direct effect of developmental process of the country.

About the Glasgow summit on climate change, he further said there has been a dilution of the basic principle and for the last 30 years, the principle of equity is diluted and lost.

## Only 70 medical colleges functional in India's backward areas

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Friday said out of the total 157 newly approved medical colleges in the country's backward areas, only 70 institutes have become functional till date.

"Health is a state subject, and primary responsibility to ensure availability of public health facilities lies with the state government. However, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare administers a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for 'Establishment of new Medical Colleges attached with existing district and referral hospitals' with preference to under-served areas and aspirational districts where there is no existing government or private medical college," he said in the Parliament. This step will help to improve the healthcare delivery system in these areas. In this scheme, the Central government has approved establishment of 157 new medical colleges in three phases. Out of these, 70 medical colleges have become functional till date. Answering another question on the steps taken by the Centre for making healthcare facilities



affordable for patients, he said: "To provide affordable and quality tertiary health care facilities, the government is setting up new All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) and upgrading Government Medical Colleges under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana. The state governments are also supported for setting up of new medical colleges as well as for increasing undergraduate and postgraduate medical seats."

"Further, under the National Health Mission (NHM), technical and financial support is provided to states and union territories for strengthening their healthcare systems upto district hospital level, based on the proposals submitted by them in their Program Implementation Plans (PIPs), subject to availability of resources.



## POLICE COMMISSIONER SYSTEM WILL BE EFFECTIVE AND HELPFUL IN DEALING WITH LAW AND ORDER: SHIVRAJ

It is the concern of everyone to stop the third wave of Corona, It is necessary to follow Covid appropriate behavior, Preparations of state government continue, Ministers in charge are looking after the arrangements of hospitals in the districts

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the police commissioner system has been implemented in two metros of the state, Bhopal and Indore. The growing metropolitan cities have different types of law and order problems. I am sure this system will prove to be effective and helpful. Chief Minister Chouhan was discussing with the media representatives after planting saplings in the Smart City. Chief Minister Chouhan said that stopping the third wave of Corona is everyone's concern. While making necessary efforts to prevent this, Covid friendly behaviour should be followed. Efforts are being made for this together with the public. Crisis Management



Committees have become active again. The state government is also making all necessary arrangements.

Chief Minister said that positive cases are coming every day, but there is no situation of worry right now. Cases start coming in large numbers as a result of carelessness, which gradually take the form of a wave. Our first priority is that the third wave of corona does not come in the state, yet our preparations are going on.

Chouhan said that all the ministers in charge are looking after the arrangements in the hospitals in their respective districts.

All necessary preparations are being made for oxygen plants, oxygen lines, concentrators, ventilators, hospital beds, children's wards, medicines etc. Chouhan has appealed to the people to cooperate in minimizing the chances of third wave by following Corona friendly behaviour.

## Makrand Deuskar Bhopal and Hari Narayan Chari Mishra appointed as a Police Commissioner of Indore



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Police commissioner has been appointed after the Madhya Pradesh government implemented the police commissioner system in metropolitan Bhopal and Indore.

According to the order issued by the state government, Makrand Deuskar has been made the police commissioner of Bhopal and Harinarayan Chari Mishra,

Indore. Apart from this, Bhopal Additional Commissioner of Police Irshad Wali and Indore Additional Commissioner of Police Manish Kapuria have been appointed.

The boundaries of 36 police stations in Indore Urban Police District and 38 Police Stations in Bhopal Urban Police District have been included in the Commissionerate System of Police. The posts and zones

of officers have also been fixed for the Police Commissioner system in both the metropolitan cities.

With the implementation of the commissioner system, the powers and authorities of the Indore and Bhopal Police Commissioners have been vested under the general control and supervision of the Director General of Police and Inspector General of Madhya Pradesh. The Commissioner of Police shall

## NCPCR issues notice on complaint of feeding beef to kids

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on Friday issued a notice to the Superintendent Police (SP) of Sagar district in Madhya Pradesh, seeking its report on a complaint of feeding cow meat to children at sewadhama ashram.

The move came after the Commission received a complaint against St. Francis Sevadhama located in the Shyampura area under Sagar district in Madhya Pradesh. The complaint alleged that minor children were being forced to eat beef and read the Bible.

Recently, two siblings residing in St. Francis Sevadhama with the help of their parents lodged a complaint in the Cantt police station in the district. As per the report, children have alleged that "they were forced to eat cow meat and read the Bible. On refusing to do so, the children alleged that they would be harassed by the ashram authorities."

Acting on the complaint, the NCPCR has



directed Sagar District SP to investigate the matter and submit its report within next 48 hours. Father of the children, Deshraj Raikvar had written a letter to the Child Welfare Committee, Sagar, mentioning that a woman, who introduced herself as a social worker, took his children to the sevadhama ashram. "I went to meet my children many times, but they did not allow me to meet them. Somehow, once I got a chance to meet children. My children said they did not want to stay at the ashram because they are being forced to eat cow meat. They were beaten up for refusing to eat the meat and reading the Bible," Deshraj wrote in his letter to the Child Welfare Committee, Sagar.

## DRONE FAIR WILL BE HELD IN GWALIOR, TODAY

Gwalior: Technology has made life easier in the changing times. Drones are very helpful in increasing technical capability. A Drone Fair is going to be held in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh on Saturday 11th December to tell how these drones work, how they can be used. It has been told that on the initiative of Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, a huge and attractive drone fair is going to be organized in Gwalior on December 11. The fair will be organized at MITS (Madhav Institute of Technology and Science) in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India and FICCI. Dr. RK Pandit, Director, MITS informed that all the departments are using drones to enhance India's technological capability. There is immense potential in this field. Other departments can also get information about using drones from this fair. A group of farmers, school and college students and researchers doing research in this field will participate in the drone fair.

## 50 percent concession in bus fares to the differently-abled in MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, the differently-abled passengers will get 50 percent concession in the fare during the bus journey, in this regard the Transport Commissioner has issued instructions to his subordinates. It has been told in the official information that the state government has given instructions to give 50 percent relaxation to the differently-abled persons in all the bus services of the state. Disabled person will get 50% discount in bus fare on showing UDID card.

All the regional, additional regional and district transport officers of the state have been instructed by Transport Commissioner Mukesh Jain that the disabled person should be given Unique Disabilities ID issued by the Central or State Government in the form of a certificate from the competent authority of the Divyangjan. Benefit of 50% discount on fare should be given on presenting the card.

It is noteworthy that the Unique ID has been issued by the Central Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. For Persons with Disabilities



(UDID) project is being run. In this, UDID cards are being given to the differently-abled. Through this card, Divyangjan can take advantage of various schemes of the Central and State Government. Madhya Pradesh ranks first in the country in manufacturing UDID cards.

## Child nutrition is base to build a capable, competent and prosperous nation : Governor Mangubhai Patel

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY CITIZEN. PUBLIC AWARENESS WORK SHOULD BE DONE WITH A NEW APPROACH. GOVERNOR ADDRESSES DISCUSSION ON CHILD NUTRITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that children's life, holistic development and well-being is an important aspect of building a capable, competent and prosperous nation. Every child should be healthy, acquire education and constantly move forward towards the path of development, it is not the



responsibility of any one department, institution or group, it is the responsibility of every citizen and it is also the biggest need for development. Governor was addressing a discussion on child nutrition by Madhya Pradesh Human Rights Commission at the RCVP Noronha Academy of

Administration and Management.

Governor Patel said that to remove the misconceptions prevalent among the economically, socially and geographically backward, deprived sections of the society and to create awareness regarding the importance of diet, breastfeeding in child nutri-

tion and the work of child nutrition should be done with a new approach. He said that it has been found in study and research that the first 1000 days of a person's life are very important. Nutritious food, family support and care during this period can save the precious lives of children. The Governor mentioned the efforts of Prime Minister S Narendra Modi to nurture the children of primary school by providing milk under the Sanjeevani Yojana when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat. Governor Patel informed that the parents of the children found great improvement in the health of their children within three months. A small effort towards child nutrition can make a big difference. There is a need of collective responsibility of the government, society and parents, to ensure proper care, protection and overall development of children. He also asked the Commission to cooperate in public awareness efforts towards the eradication of Sickle Cell disease.

## CM plants Gulmohar and Arjun saplings in Smart Udyan

## Famous poet Manzar Bhopali also plants saplings

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan along with famous poet Manzar Bhopali planted Gulmohar and Arjun saplings in Smart Udyan today. Poet Manzar Bhopali presented books titled "Saaye Mein Chale Aao" and "Taweez" to Chief Minister Shri Chouhan. Shayar Shri Manzar is known for his many poems like Ye Sadi Hamari Hai, Udasi Kyu, Lava, Tishnagi, Tawaez, Betiyon ke Liye.

Internationally renowned Urdu poet Manzar Bhopali participated in Mushaira for the first time at the age of 17. In a career spanning over three decades, Manzar Bhopali has recited his works in countless idioms across five continents and two dozen countries. Manzar Bhopali was awarded Madhya Pradesh Gaurav Puraskar in the year 2018 for his contribution in Urdu and Hindi literature. Manzar has received many national and international awards.



Chief Minister Chouhan tweeted after plantation - "Manzar Bhopali ji, who is ready to contribute in every possible way for the progress of environment and society along with literature, presented his poetry collection and I had a positive discussion with him on literature. While doing our work, we all must take out some time for environment and social service." Manzar Bhopali said that as a result of this initiative of Chief Minister Chouhan's tree plantation, after twenty years the scene of this area will be different.

## Strict adherence to Corona guideline in election process must

State Election Commissioner issues instructions during review of Panchayat general election preparations

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Corona guide line must be followed strictly in the Panchayat election process. There should be no carelessness in this regard. It must be kept in mind that cases of Corona do not increase due to elections. State Election Commissioner Basant Pratap Singh gave these instructions during a discussion through video conferencing with the Commissioner, Collector and Superintendent of Police regarding the preparations for the Panchayat general election.

State Election Commissioner Singh said that if the District Election Officers



have any problem, they can talk to me directly. If permission is required in relation to any work, they should send the proposal soon. He said that the officers and employees posted at the same place for more than 3 years should be transferred. Singh said that the account of the deposit amount received from the candidates should be clear. Ensure adherence to the Model Code of Conduct. Singh said that executive magistrates and police officers should jointly visit sensitive and very sensitive polling stations. He said that proper security arrangements should be made at every level. Counting of votes for the post of Sarpanch and Panch has to

be done at the polling station itself, so adequate security arrangements should be ensured there. Secretary State Election Commission B.S. Jamod said that the election information for the first and second phase would be issued on December 13 and for the third phase on December 30. Along with this, the list of reservation and polling stations will also be published. The status of vacancies and reservation of seats must be verified. Jamod said that like district and block headquarters, all arrangements should be ensured on time at cluster level also. Send the information of nomination papers daily through IEMS.

## Ken-Betwa link scheme a big boost to bundelkhand development

EVERY FARM IN BUNDELKHAND TO GET WATER. 8 LAKH II THOUSAND HECTARES TO BE IRRIGATED, 62 LAKH PEOPLE TO GET DRINKING WATER. SMART CITY PROJECT TO HAVE OVER RS 1000 CRORE WORTH OF WORK. SONCHIRAIH FESTIVAL INAUGURATED UNDER AAJEEVIKA MISSION

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Chief Minister, Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has given a huge gift of 44,605 crore rupees to Bundelkhand as ken-betwa link scheme. This is a wonderful task for the development of Bundelkhand. The scheme will provide water to every farm in Bundelkhand. This will irrigate 8



lakh 11 thousand hectare area and provide drinking water to 62 lakh people.

Chouhan said that about 1000 crore rupees work is being carried out in sagar in the smart city project. This will change the picture of Sagar city. It will become a smart city like Indore. The elevated corridor from Lakhna Banjara Lake to the Old Sagar will connect the old and new city. Further, it will be extended to the medical college. The auditorium

has been built in the city at a cost of Rs 12 crore. At the same time, various development works are being carried out.

The Chief Minister said that efforts are being made to increase the monthly income of every member to 10,000 rupees by empowering women Self Help Groups in the state. Urban women are also being linked to the Livelihood Mission. The SHGs are being provided funds for various activities as well as pack-

aging and marketing of their products.

Chouhan said that Sagar has stood first in the Pradhan Mantri Swayam Nidhi Yojana. Here, 8,000 street vendors have been given interest less loan of 10,000 rupees each for business. The Chief Minister, inaugurated the auditorium at a cost of Rs. 14.35 crore. Chouhan, laid the foundation stone of allvetted corridor works at a cost of Rs. 75.60 crores, Bundelkhand Cultural and Information Centre works worth Rs. 66.88 crores, City Governance Centres and 8 Zonal Citizen Facilitation Centres, of 20.32 crores Transport Cities and Mechanics Complex works worth Rs. 16.36 crores, dairy displacement works of Rs. 8 crore 02 lakh, fire station building works of Rs. 4.88 crore, upgradation of 6 mukti dhams worth Rs. 4.28 crore, old age home work of Rs. 3.83 crore, heritage conservation and restoration work of Rs. 3.10 crore, the redevelopment of MLB school as CM Rise school work of Rs. 2.77 crores and material recovery and facility centre work of Rs. 0.83 crore.



EDITOR'S SPECS

IMPACT OF COVID ON CHILDREN

**T**he Covid-19 pandemic is the biggest threat for children as it is rolling back progress on key challenges such as poverty, health and access to education, the Unicef said in a new report on Thursday, representing the biggest global crisis for children since the UN agency was founded 75 years ago. The widespread impact of the pandemic continues to deepen, the report warned, increasing poverty, entrenching inequality and threatening the rights of children like never before. The report showed that Covid-19 has pushed a staggering 100 million more children into poverty -- a 10 per cent increase since 2019. This corresponds to nearly two children every second since mid-March of last year, when the pandemic was declared. According to Unicef, even in a best-case scenario, recovery to pre-pandemic levels will take up to eight years. Furthermore, some 60 million children are now living in "monetary poor" households, and more than 23 million have missed out on essential vaccines, the highest number in more than a decade. Prior to the pandemic, roughly one billion children worldwide suffered at least one severe deprivation, such as lack of access to education, health, housing, nutrition, or sanitation and water. Unequal recovery is pushing the number higher. The report noted that at the peak of the pandemic, more than 1.6 billion students were shut out of school due to lockdowns. Worldwide, more than 13 per cent of adolescents aged 10 to 19 are affected by deteriorating mental health. Unicef reported that by October 2020, critical mental health services in 93 per cent of countries were disrupted or halted due to the spread of Coronavirus. Beyond the pandemic, the report warned of further threats to children that jeopardise their rights.

# KASHMIRIS PREFER KASHMIRIYAT OVER RADICALISATION

**T**hirty years of Pakistan sponsored militancy and violence have not been able to destroy Kashmiriyat which characterises religious and cultural harmony, patriotism and pride of people for their mountainous homeland of Kashmir. Soon after the gun toting militants appeared in the streets of Kashmir in 1990 they carried out the selective killings of members of Kashmiri Pandit community leading to the forced exodus of the entire community from the Valley.

These people left everything behind and are still living in exile. But a few members of the minority communities stayed behind and are still living in Kashmir. The Muslims have not let them down and continue to be a part of their festivities and mourning.

On December 7, 2021, residents of Begam village in South Kashmir's Kulgam district came together to help perform the last rites of their 75-year-old woman, Lajwanti Devi, a Kashmiri Rajput Hindu.

As only a few of her family members were around, Lajwanti's Muslim neighbours took it upon themselves to help perform her cremation. They shouldered her coffin and arranged wood for her cremation in the village. Hundreds of Muslim villagers participated in her last journey. Muslims performing the last rites of Kashmiri Pandits or Hindus has been a norm in the Valley especially during the past thirty years of Pakistan sponsored turmoil. Nefarious designs of the militants and their handlers to divide the people of Kashmir on religious lines have not been able to kill Kashmiriyat.

There have been target killings and other attempts but the basic ethos and culture have not been destroyed.

Kashmir, known as the abode of sufis and saints due to the centuries-old indigenous tradition of communal harmony and religious syncretism continues to be the same. People continue to follow what their ancestors had taught them.

**Ethos still alive**

Radical elements during the past few years have left no opportunity to pollute the minds of youngsters by preaching hate. Killing people in the name of religion has never been a part of Kashmiri culture. But the militant handlers during all these years have tried their best to tell the gun toting militants that killing someone for him following some



other religion is no sin.

Despite their attempts the hate mongers have not been able to dilute the ethos and the "we feeling" which Kashmiris have for each other. There is nothing unusual about Kashmiri Muslims performing the last rites of a Hindu or a Pandit. Prior to 1990 when Kashmiri Pandits used to live in the Valley members of both the communities were integral parts of each other. Celebrating festivals together, going for mohalla picnics, being a part of community get-to-gathers were common practices.

The first thing which Pakistan did after sending armed insurgents into Kashmir in 1990 it asked the militants to attack the secular identity of Kashmiris by targeting the members of minority communities.

The main intention was to pit one community against another so that the idea of secularism could be buried at the very onset of the insurgency.

The militant handlers to an extent succeeded in their evil designs as the Kashmiri Pandits left the Kashmir Valley to save their lives. But these terror sponsors failed to kill

the spirit of Kashmiriyat.

A few Kashmiri Pandits, who have not disposed off their properties in rural areas, have made their Muslim neighbours as the custodians with a hope that one day they will return to their roots.

The process to get back Kashmiri Pandits has already commenced. People sitting across the Line of Control (LoC) see it as yet another defeat for them. In October this year militants turned their guns towards the members of minority communities and killed eleven civilians, including a prominent Kashmiri Pandit pharmacist Makhan Lal Bindroo, five non-local labourers, two teachers -- a Sikh woman, Supinder Kaur and a Hindu man, Deep Chand -- the message was clear the militants wanted to create fear and thwart the process of resettlement of the members of minority communities in Kashmir.

Irony is that Bindroo had not migrated from the Valley and had stayed back during the turbulent times, while the Sikh woman was taking care of a Muslim

orphan girl.

**Muslims want KPs to return**

The so-called sympathizers of Kashmiri people, who claim to be fighting for the 'Azadi' of Kashmiris, were unable to digest that members of the majority community have welcomed Kashmiri Pandits with open arms and are providing them with every possible help to resettle in their homeland.

According to Jammu and Kashmir Police, militants who were involved in the recent civilian killings, have been neutralized and there is no possibility about Pakistan succeeding in its attempt to recreate a situation like the 1990s.

The killings of civilians carried out by the militants' evoked widespread condemnation from the members of the majority community. They reacted by expressing sympathies with the bereaved families and by terming the barbaric murders as terrorism.

**The difference between 1990 and 2021 was clearly visible.**

In 1990 members of the majority community in Kashmir remained silent fearing reprisal but this time around they mustered courage to lift the veil from ugly face of terror.

Attempts of the adversary to kill Kashmiriyat have not worked as the people of the Valley have shown that they won't allow Kashmir to turn into another Pakistan where Muslims kill Muslims just for the sake of them belonging to different sects.

Kashmiri Pandits want to return and their Muslim brethrens too want to see them back. The inclusive culture has been a hallmark of Kashmir. Kashmiriyat signifies a centuries-old indigenous secularism of Kashmir and it cannot be torn apart by sending guns, bombs and grenades or by creating a wedge between the people who have lived together for centuries.

Before being a Muslim or Pandit, the people of Kashmir consider themselves as Kashmiris. History stands testimony to the fact that invaders like Mughals and Afghans also tried to attack the very spirit of Kashmiriyat but they failed. Pakistan too has tried to do the same but has bitten the dust as the people of Kashmir seem in no mood to abandon the legacy they have inherited from their ancestors.

international

## TERROR THREAT LOOMS AGAIN AS TTP DECLINES CEASEFIRE EXTENSION

Islamabad | Agencies

**P**akistan is bracing for a new wave of increased terror outbreak from the dreaded Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani faction of the Afghan Taliban, which had agreed for a month-long ceasefire with the Imran Khan-led government, as the militant outfit has now refused to give any extension to the agreement.

In a statement, the TTP has accused the Pakistan government of failing to honour the decisions mutually agreed in the ceasefire agreement. "The Pakistan government has not only failed to implement the decisions reached between the two sides but to the contrary, the security forces conducted raids in Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, Swat, Bajaur, Swabi and North Waziristan and killed detained militants," the statement says.

"Under the circumstances, it is not possible to extend the ceasefire," it added.

Previously, the Pakistan government and the TTP had been in negotiations and had come down to a



month-long ceasefire agreement, in which, both sides agreed on a six-point agreement.

Both sides had accepted that the Taliban-led Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan (IEA) would play the role of a mediator and that both sides would form a five-member committee each, which would be the talking points of negotiations for the next course of action and demands of both sides.

An agreement was reached to enforce a month-long ceasefire from November 1 to 30. The Pakistan government agreed that it would release

at least 102 improvised mujahideen and hand them over to the TTP, under the supervision of the IEA. It was expected that the month long ceasefire would be extended further after successful talks with the TTP. But that has not happened. In an audio message, Taliban commander Mufti Noor Wali Mahsud announced an end to the ceasefire and asked all TTP fighters to resume attacks. "Since the TTP has not heard back from the mediators or the government, therefore, past midnight, our fighters reserve the right to resume attacks wherever they were," Noor Wali

Mahsud was heard as saying in the audio message. The end to the ceasefire has come as a major blow to the Pakistan government as it brushes aside efforts to secure a peace agreement and closes doors for positive engagement between the TTP militants and the government going forward. While the ceasefire had a visible impact, as TTP-led militant attacks inside Pakistan, which saw a major surge in the recent past, declined considerably. It was also made clear from both sides that there would be some red lines, that would not be crossed. This included grouping, re-grouping, safe havens, movements of militants from the Pakistani side. On the other hand, the TTP had set its condition to enforce Shariah Islamic law and re-enforcement of the tribal areas as Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which was merged into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2017.

But with the current end to the ceasefire, Pakistani security forces and the locals brace for increased targeted attacks by the TTP militants, a problem that the country has been fighting for decades.

## Moon encourages private firms to go carbon neutral

Seoul | Agencies

**S**outh Korean President Moon Jae-in on Friday encouraged private firms to go carbon neutral, pledging the government will provide financial and regulatory support for their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Moon made the remarks at a meeting on carbon neutrality with chief executives of some 40 big and medium-sized companies, including Hyundai Motor, LG Display and SK Innovation, reports Yonhap News Agency.

Moon said the government will use its policy of carbon neutrality to increase the competitiveness of the manufacturing industry.

To that end, the government will increase tax deductions for companies' facility and research spending, Moon said.

The government also aims to develop the carbon-



neutrality industry into a next-generation driver of growth, he said.

"The government will make bold investments on infrastructure for new energy solutions, such as hydrogen, renewable energy and electricity networks," Moon said. At the same time, the government will spare no efforts to secure a stable supply of raw materials, Moon said. South Korea has finalised a decision to

reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent from 2018 levels by 2030. The nation also confirmed its goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, as the nation started tackling the challenge of simultaneously responding to climate change and attaining sustainable growth. Moon has pledged South Korea will complete the phaseout of coal-fired power generation by 2050.

## US HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING VICTIM'S FAMILY FILES \$100M SUIT

**Washington:** The family of Riley Franz, a student who was shot in the neck at Oxford High School in the US state of Michigan on November 30, has filed a \$100 million lawsuit, local media reported. The federal lawsuit, filed on Thursday, accuses school officials of dismissing violent threats, not only in the hours and days before Ethan Crumbley's shooting, but also two weeks earlier when students and parents raised concerns, local media quoted attorney Geoffrey Fieger as saying.

In addition to the federal lawsuit, a similar suit will be filed in state court, which will also seek \$100 million, Xinhua news agency quoted Fieger as further saying. Riley Franz, 17, and her sister Bella, 14, were together when Riley and other students were shot. Crumbley "posted countdowns and threats of bodily harm, including death, on his social media accounts, warning of violent tendencies and murderous ideology prior to actually coming to school with the handgun and ammunition to perpetuate the slaughter", the suit says. The night before the shooting, Crumbley said on Twitter: "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds. See you tomorrow Oxford."

The goal of claiming a high price in the suit is "to compel people to do something" to prevent school shootings, said Fieger.

Defendants in the federal suit include school district superintendent Timothy Throne, Oxford High School Principal Steven Wolf, two teachers, two counsellors and a staff member.

## Unicef worried over reimplementing of migrant protocols at US-Mexico border

GENEVA | Agencies

**T**he Unicef has expressed worries over the reimplementing of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) at the US southern border with Mexico, as required by a court order, could put the safety and well-being of asylum-seeking children and their families at risk. The MPP is a US government program, initiated in January 2019, under which the country returns to Mexico certain citizens and nationals of countries other than Mexico while their American removal proceedings are pending. MPP applies to those who arrive from Mexico by land. "Following the initial implementation of MPP in January 2019, more than 70,000 asylum seekers



were forced to return to Mexico until US immigration courts could resolve their cases. Those subject to MPP, including many children and adolescents, waited for months in shelters and makeshift camps in Mexico without access to appropriate housing, hygiene, nutrition and essential services," the UN agency said in a statement. Although the Unicef welcomes "commitments from the US government to assist Central American

countries in tackling the root causes of migration and provide humanitarian assistance to those in need", it contended that the MPP could have "profound consequences for children, many of whom have been left with no safe options to escape dire conditions and threats in their home countries". "All migrant children have the right to protection, essential services, to live in adequate conditions with dignity and to be with their families." "Children - no matter where they come from or what their migration status - are children first and foremost. It is imperative that all governments prioritize the protection and wellbeing of children in line with their best interests and guarantee their access to asylum procedures in a timely manner,"

the Unicef statement added. On June 1, the Secretary of Homeland Security determined that the MPP should be terminated and issued a memorandum to that effect.

On August 13 however, the US District Court for the Northern District of Texas determined that the June 1 memo was not issued in compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act and ordered the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to "enforce and implement MPP in good faith". On October 29, after an extensive and comprehensive review, the Secretary of Homeland Security issued a new memorandum terminating MPP, which DHS as soon as practicable after issuance of a final judicial decision to vacate the Texas injunction.

## New Zealand works to modernise conservation law

Washington | Agencies

**T**he New Zealand government is stepping up its work to address long-standing problems in conservation law to lay the foundation for future reform, Conservation Minister Kiri Allan said on Friday. "More than 4,000 native species are threatened or at risk of extinction. We are at a defining moment for nature, yet much of our legislation is decades old and not fit for purpose," Xinhua news agency quoted Allan as saying in a statement. "It is a complex web of 24 acts, developed largely on an ad-hoc basis over a span of nearly 70 years," the Minister said. Allan added that the scientific understanding of species and ecosystems has grown con-



siderably over this time, but this is not reflected in the legislation. Roadmap will be released that sets out the work ahead in the next four years to modernize New Zealand's conservation law, Allan said, adding that better legislation will provide the tools to deal with some of the biggest emerging threats to biodiversity -- invasive species, climate change, habitat loss, pollution, and fragmentation of landscapes and ecosystems.



# MUMBAI MAYOR GETS LETTER WITH DEATH THREATS, SECURITY BEEFED UP

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar on Friday received an anonymous letter with death threats in a foul language, a couple of days after she lodged a complaint against a BJP legislator for using offensive words against her. Pednekar told media persons that the letter in Marathi, threatening to kill her and her family, was received in her mailbox, but it was not sealed and she would lodge a complaint with Byculla police in the matter. The sender has warned that she would face repercussions if she messed with 'Dada', after which the Mumbai Police have strengthened security around her south Mumbai residence even as several women Shiv Sainiks condemned the targeting of the city's First Citizen. The Mayor said that the letter was



apparently posted in Panvel, Raigad district and asserted that she would not be cowed down by such intimidatory tactics. Last year in December, she had received death threats on telephone which was received by her aide when she was subjected to abuses and warnings to kill her, and after her complaint, the accused was nabbed from Gujarat in January this year. This week, Pednekar complained to Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil and Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale and filed the plea with Marine Drive Police Station against BJP legislator and ex-minister Ashish Shelar. Following her complaint, Shelar - who claimed it was politically motivated and his comments were twisted out of context - was arrested under various charges but later granted bail by the police.

# Nawab Malik apologises to HC for making statements against Wankhedes

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik on Friday tendered an unconditional apology in the Bombay High Court for "wilfully breaching" his undertaking to the court to refrain from making any statements against Narcotics Control Bureau Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede and his family. In his affidavit in response to an explanation sought by the court why action should not be taken against him as prima facie, Malik had "wilfully breached" its order, he tendered an "unconditional apology" to Justice S. J. Kathawalla and Justice Milind Jadhav. "At the outset, I tender my unconditional apology to this Honourable Court in respect of the breaches of my undertaking given to this



Honourable Court as recorded in the orders dated November 25 and 29, 2021. I had no intention to disrespect, dishonour, overreach or breach the said order," said Malik. He also said that his utterances were not any press releases or statements but were part of interviews with the media outlets when he was merely replying to questions asked by journalists. "These responses were made by me in the belief that such responses made in the course of interviews were not within the ambit of his undertaking before the

court," said Malik, in reference to the defamation case filed by the NCB officer's father, Dnyanesh Wankhede. The NCP leader assured that he would not make any more personal comments on the Wankhedes until the pendency of the defamation suit, and the apology was accepted by the court. "I however believe my statement will not prevent me from commenting on the political misuse of central agencies, and the conduct of their officers in the course of performance of their official duties hereafter," Malik said in the affidavit. Following the undertaking by Malik's lawyer Aspi Chinoy, Wankhede's counsel Birendra Saraf urged that the Minister must not misuse the (above) statement to continue making defamatory utterances against the NCB officer.

# Six arrested for Jewellery dacoity, 19 Lakh recovered

Thane | Agencies

Six persons have been arrested in connection with a case of dacoity in Navi Mumbai, in which a jeweller was allegedly robbed of cash to the tune of Rs 19 lakh, the police said on Friday. The accused allegedly robbed a jeweller from Ambejogai of Beed district at Kalamboli in Navi Mumbai on November 27, an official said. The accused threw chilli powder on the victim, when the latter alighted from a bus and robbed him at gunpoint, he said. Following the incident, a case was registered at Kamothe and the police zeroed in on the accused based on technical and intelligence inputs and arrested them from Mumbai, Navi Mumbai,



Thane, Pune and Karnataka, the official said. The accused have been identified as Aniket Joma Mhatre (23), Kartik Sushil Sinha (24), Kiran Vijay Pawar (21), Bhima Ramrao Pawar (21), Manoj Gurmya Rathod (22), Laxman Subash Rathod (21), he said. The police have recovered three weapons, Rs19 lakh cash and two vehicles used in the crime, the official added.

# ON SHARAD PAWAR'S 81ST BIRTHDAY, NCP TO LAUNCH 'SWABHIMAN SAPTAH'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

To mark the 81st birthday of senior leader Sharad Pawar on Sunday (December 12), the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) will organise a weeklong 'Swabhiman Saptah' from December 14-20, state party chief and Minister Jayant Patil announced here on Friday. He said NCP president Pawar will accept peoples' wishes and address a virtual rally from Mumbai's Nehru Centre on Sunday morning, and urged his admirers and followers to refrain from coming to greet him personally. "Pawar Saheb will also address the virtual rally which will be telecast live on the party's official Facebook page and YouTube channel. A few senior leaders shall also be present on the occasion," said Patil. He said that like every year, even this year the NCP will have a few unique initiatives to mark the occasion, including the launch of a party App by Pawar, which will help enhance coordination between the organisation and its workers all over. The NCP Student Wing will organ-



ise a Maharashtra Youth Carnival for encouraging college students with competitions and other activities with prizes. During the Swabhiman Week, the party activists across the state will create awareness about Covid-19 vaccinations and exhort people to go for inoculation at the nearest venue, the importance of following Covid protocols, testing, etc. The party and all its frontal organisations will also conduct a series of social activities like health camps, blood donation drives, distributing medicines to the needy, tree plantation and environment-related initiatives. Present with Patil were NCP state general secretary Shivajirao Garje, spokesperson Mahesh Chavan and Student Wing President Sunil Gavhane. Hailing from Pune's Baramati, Pawar, the senior-most leader in the country respected across the political spectrum, with over 55 years of active political career serving at the state and Centre. He is the architect of the 2-year-old Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance government of Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress led by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

# 7 NEW OMICRON CASES IN MUMBAI, PUNE, MAHA TOTAL NOW 17

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After a gap of four days, seven new cases of the Covid-19 variant Omicron have been detected in Maharashtra - three in Mumbai and four in Pune, taking the state's total to 17, health officials said on Friday. The cases confirmed in Mumbai are three males aged 25, 37 and 48 years, all with a recent travel history to the UK, South Africa and Tanzania. In Pune, the four new patients, including a three-and-half-year-old child, are the close contacts of the Indian-origin Nigerian woman who was detected Omicron positive last Sunday. Of the new cases, 4 are fully vaccinated while one has taken a single jab, one has not been inoculated, and the child is not eligible for the vaccine. Three of them are having mild



symptoms and the others are found asymptomatic, but all have been isolated and undergoing treatment at various hospitals in Mumbai and Pune. Surveillance at the international airports in Mumbai, Pune, and Nagpur has been further intensified with 9,678 passengers landing here from the "high risk" countries from the total 61,439 travellers. From these, the samples of 25 found positive have been sent from genomic sequencing, including 20 from the "at risk" nations and five from other countries, said health officials. A total of 89 samples have been sent for genomic sequencing of which results of 47 are awaited, and so far 17 have been found infected with Omicron. Last week on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, a total of 10 Omicron cases were detected among passengers arriving in the state.

# Encube Ethicals Enters Indian Consumer Market with Soframycin

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai: Encube Ethicals, a leading manufacturer of Rx and OTC skincare products globally, has entered into the Indian consumer market with its recent acquisition of Soframycin from Sanofi. Encube is entering into the Indian B2C market for the first time and will be setting up a PAN India network, leveraging and building on Sanofi's existing network. With this acquisition, Encube is taking its first step towards addressing the Indian market with its own labelled products. Currently, the brand is sold through a network of more than 3000 distributors and

550,000+ retailers across the country, and it is already well entrenched in the Indian household and minds. Mehul Shah, Founder and Managing Director - Encube Ethicals, said, "We will leverage our world-class large-scale manufacturing and a robust distribution network to make the product available across the country, in the remotest corners. It is one of the most affordable options available and enjoys the trust of prescribers, distribution partners, retailers, and patients alike. We are building a portfolio and you will see this franchise grow in near future. Over the coming months, Encube will be

unfolding a series of initiatives including investing in sales and support manpower, branding and communications campaigns, digital outreach, and awareness programmes, which will help the brand not only further enhance the mind-share of consumers but also grow the topline for the company. "Encube's will use its robust manufacturing capabilities and distribution network to make the product available in several parts of the country where there is a strong growth potential. We will also invest in a sales team and digital platforms to communicate the product benefits to the right audience," added Shah.

# MINOR GIRL RAPED IN MAHARASHTRA, 8 ACCUSED SENT TO POLICE CUSTODY

Beed (Maharashtra): Eight people arrested for allegedly raping a 16-year-old girl in Beed district in Maharashtra have been sent to five days police custody by a court in Ambejogai, an official said on Friday. The eight, including a retired nayab tehsildar, a lodge owner, a police constable, a home guard, were held on Wednesday and produced in court on Thursday, the official said, adding that 23 people have been arrested in the case so far. The victim has claimed she was married off at the age of 13 but left her husband as he was exploitative and returned home, which she left this May after her father allegedly molested her, the official said. "She has said she stayed near Ambejogai bus stand after leaving home before being rescued. She has claimed she was raped by over 400 men, including two policemen, in the last two months. All the claims are being probed," he said. The Ambejogai police have registered a case of rape, gang-rape, molestation, and voluntarily causing hurt, besides invoking sections of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, he added.

# NCP MINISTER REVEALS SHARAD PAWAR'S 'STATE SECRET', CONGRESS SCOWLS, BJP RATTLED

Quaid Najmi | Agencies

State politics heated up again with Nationalist Congress Party Minister Dr Jitendra Awhad declaring that the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) would return to power and NCP President Sharad was keen to continue Uddhav Thackeray as the Chief Minister again after 2024 Assembly polls. Contending that it was Pawar's "secret desire" which he had expressed in close circles, Dr Awhad said at a party meeting in Navi Mumbai that the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress would once more unitedly contest the 2024 Assembly elections and come back to power, relegating the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to the Opposition benches again. The NCP Minister's statement assumes significance, coming months after Sena MP and Chief Spokesperson Sanjay Raut had also said the same, but it was scornfully ignored as a "tall claim". Dr Awhad's statement was greeted with smugness by Sena leaders, the Congress smelt a rat while the BJP was left rattled though it has not yet reacted. This time, the state Congress Working President Arif Naseem Khan made it clear that the MVA experiment was born (in 2019) owing to the peculiar political situation then and functions on the basis of a Common Minimum Programme. "The Congress is growing stronger in the state, particularly at the grassroots level. Our firm endeavour is to win the maximum seats and also elect our CM," Khan told correspondent. However, he declined to comment on Dr



Awhad's statement or whether the party would adopt a solitary path and said the "Congress will take a call depending on the political situation in 2024". Sena's former face and Vasant Naik Sheti Swavalamban Mission Chairman Kishore Tiwari - accorded a MoS status - said

Pawar's sentiments are "a testimony to the performance of CM Thackerayji, as compared with the dismal tenure of BJP with Devendra Fadnavis as CM." It is also the people's open wish to vote the MVA back with a thumping 200-plus seats in 2024. The masses have not

forgotten the treatment the BJP meted out to the farmers, the inflation, fuel prices, unemployment, false promises and hounding of non-BJP governments by letting loose central agencies on them," Tiwari told correspondent. Despite repeated attempts, top BJP leaders were not available for their comments, but sources indicated a sense of despair as the party repeatedly missed its "deadlines" predicting the MVA collapse in the past 25 months. Coming barely 10 days after the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote "RIP" for the Congress-led UPA, the Congress was buoyed by the Sena-NCP's response then. Now, the Congress anticipates the possibility of new permutations and combinations emerging with "turncoats" defecting from the BJP ranks, both in the state and national levels, prompting the party (Congress) to adopt a wait-and-watch policy. For the present, despite the occasional hiccups, things appear hunky-dory among the three allies and cracks are sealed, at least, temporarily with high-level confabulations - like the recent ones between Sanjay Raut with Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi - that ensure the three-tyre government remains accident-free. A senior NCP leader reiterated that the priority for the 3-parties is "to ensure the BJP is kept out at any cost," starting with the upcoming civic elections in early-2022, followed by the 2024 Lok Sabha and then the 2024 Assembly polls.



## Florence Pugh, Rami Malek join Nolan's 'Oppenheimer'

Malek playing a scientist; Pugh appearing as Jean Tatlock, a Communist Party member who has a love affair with Oppenheimer; and Safdie starring as Edward Teller, a physicist involved in the Manhattan Project.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker Christopher Nolan is adding more star power to his World War II drama 'Oppenheimer'. Oscar winner Rami Malek, Oscar nominee Florence Pugh and 'Uncut Gems' director Benny Safdie have joined a star-studded cast that already includes Robert Downey Jr., Matt Damon, Cillian Murphy and Emily Blunt, reports variety.com.

The film and its story about the development of the atomic bomb, is an artistic and financial risk for Nolan and Universal Studios.

It carries a \$100 million budget, and adult dramas

have not fared too well at the box office of late, even those with major stars such as Will Smith's 'King Richard' or Damon's 'The Last Duel'.

Malek recently starred as the villain in the James Bond sequel 'No Time to Die', Pugh picked up the baton from Scarlett Johansson in Marvel's 'Black Widow', and Safdie had a supporting role in Paul Thomas Anderson's 'Licorice Pizza'.

Nolan's film is based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel 'American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer' by Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin.

Murphy will star as Oppenheimer; with



## KIM KARDASHIAN FORETELLS THE FUTURE AS SHE WEARS A 'BILLION DOLLAR BABY' TEE IN THROWBACK SNAP WITH KOURTNEY KARDASHIAN

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kim Kardashian posted a throwback snap of her and sister Kourtney Kardashian in their early teenage years. As the 41-year-old SKIMS founder and her older sister, 42, were the picture of the nineties, she remarked '1994 coolness.'

A then 14-year-old Kim seemed to manifest her now billion dollar net worth early as she donned a 'billion dollar baby' tee in the photo alongside 15-year-old Kourtney.

The Keeping Up With the Kardashians star seemed to be taking a walk down memory lane as she captured an image that was saved to her computer.

The image of the sisters looked to be taken on a coach bus with Kim seated just behind Kourtney who smiled with her mouth closed in a pink T-shirt with a crown.

A then pre-teen Kim showed off her natural beauty at a young age as she beamed bright while wearing a cropped 'billion dollar baby' tee and two barrettes in her short hair. Flash forward 27 years, the KKW Beauty founder now boasts a net worth of \$1.2 billion dollars, made possible by the success of both her beauty brand and SKIMS as well as endorsement deals, small investments and her reality TV stardom.

## JENNIFER ANISTON: FILM BUSINESS ISN'T AS GLAMOROUS AS IT ONCE WAS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Jennifer Aniston, who shot to global fame as Rachel Green in 'Friends', believes the industry has changed dramatically over recent years. She told The Hollywood Reporter: "I don't know what the industry is anymore. It's not the same industry that it used to be. It's not that glamorous anymore. It's slowly becoming about TikTok and Instagram followers."

"It's like, we're hiring now based on followers, not talent? Oh, dear. And I'm losing touch. I'm not

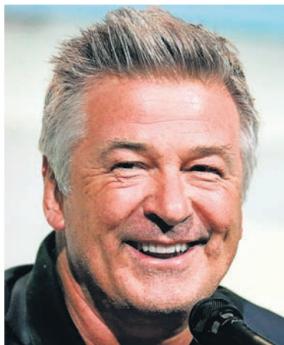
great at going, 'I'm going to stay relevant and join TikTok.'" Aniston joined Instagram in October 2019, and became the fastest user to reach one million followers. Discussing her relationship with social media, she said: "I used to say, can't I just join Twitter for a day and say 'Debunk' or 'That's b\*\*\*\*\*'? The answer was no, because then people respond and you have to follow up, and I was like, 'Well, that sounds terrible. I don't want to do that.'" Despite this, the actress previously shared that she generally enjoys interacting with her fans.



## Alec Baldwin posts crew members' defence of 'Rust' production

Los Angeles | Agencies

Veteran star Alec Baldwin published a lengthy defense of the 'Rust' production signed by 25 members of the crew, a day before ABC News is set to air a two-hour special about the on-set tragedy. In the letter published on Thursday, the crew members sought to push back on claims that chaotic and unsafe conditions on set contributed to the death of Halyna Hutchins, reports variety.com.



Baldwin was preparing for a scene on October 21 when he shot Hutchins with a live round from a Colt .45. Detectives continue to look into the circumstances, and have focused on potential lapses and an air of "complacency" on the production.

The crew members argued in the letter that the narrative of an unsafe set is false.

"Unfortunately, in the film industry, it is common to work on unprofessional or hectic productions to gain experience or credits," they wrote.

"Many of us have worked on those types of productions. 'Rust' was not one of them. 'Rust' was professional."

They characterised some of the crew members who have spoken out against the production as "disgruntled".

They also stated that the letter was not "sanctioned or influenced" by the film's producers.

"The descriptions of 'Rust' as a chaotic, dangerous and exploitative workplace are false and distract from what matters most: the memory of Halyna Hutchins, and the need to find modern alternatives to outdated industry firearm and safety practices."

The letter was sent to the New Mexico Film Office and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.

## JUSSIE SMOLLETT CONVICTED OF LYING ABOUT HATE CRIME ATTACK

Los Angeles: Former 'Empire' star was convicted of five counts of lying to the police about the incident, where he claimed to have been the victim of a racist, homophobic assault. He was however, acquitted on a sixth charge. At trial this week, Smollett, 39, stood by denials that he staged the hoax attack against himself, reports the BBC. Prosecutors countered that he "lied for hours" on the stand as he repeated what he told to Chicago police.



He was found guilty on Thursday of five counts of disorderly conduct. Each count carries a penalty of up to three years in prison. Given Smollett's lack of previous convictions, experts have said a lighter sentence or probation is likely.

A sentencing date has yet to be scheduled.

The jury of six men and six women reached its decision a day after deliberations began. The trial stemmed from the January 2019 incident when the actor told police he was the victim of an attack. Smollett, who is black and gay, told police he was set upon by two assailants who shouted slurs, yelled a Trump slogan, dumped a "chemical substance" on him, and tied a noose around his neck while he was walking late at night in Chicago.

## 'SHOWTRIAL': CELINE BUCKENS STEALS THE SHOW IN CRIME DRAMA



TROY RIBEIRO

(Streaming on: Lionsgate Play)

**Direction:** Zara Hayes  
**Cast:** Celine Buckens, Tracy Ifeachor, Abra Thompson, Sinead Keenan, Joseph Payne, Lolita Chakrabarti.  
**Duration:** Averaging 55 minutes per episode  
**Ratings:** \*\*\* (three stars)



This five-episode series streaming on Lionsgate Play is a simple, straightforward crime procedural drama where the yin and yang of the story are the accused and the prosecution, debating on a murder.

Set in Bristol, Hannah Ellis (Abra Thompson), a bright and promising university student, goes missing. She was last spotted walking home after a student ball where she served drinks.

The case lands in the hands of DI Paula Cassidy (Sinead Keenan). Like all missing person's cases, Paula along with her colleagues, pour into Hannah's phone records and finds out that she had received intimi-

dating text messages from her classmate Talitha Campbell (Celine Buckens), the estranged daughter of a well-known property developer.

Talitha is called for questioning at the police station, where she is assigned Cleo Roberts (Tracy Ifeachor), the solicitor on duty, as her lawyer. During the questioning,

Talitha's juvenile, prudish and arrogant attitude makes her the prime suspect.

Hours later, Hannah's body is found dumped into the river. The police claimed that her body was disposed of with cruel indifference, and Talitha is now booked, as a suspect for murder.

Further delving into the case Talitha's best

friend Dhillon Harwood (Joseph Payne), son of a shadow Cabinet Minister (Lolita Chakrabarti), is pulled into the case. On further questioning, he confesses to his involvement.

The first three episodes delve into the technicalities of the prosecution. Every angle; lust, jealousy, and hate, are explored, and the subplots borrowed from real-life cases are too frivolous, to even hold your interest.

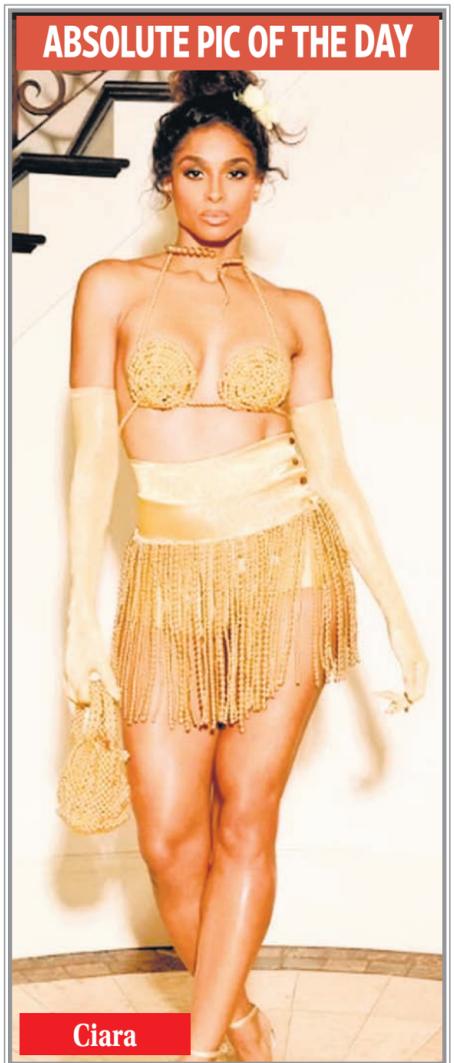
There are scenes between the police and the Crown Prosecution Service ensuring that the case becomes a watertight case. The last two episodes are more of courtroom drama, with the lawyers playing tug-of-war to convince the jury.

But it is Celine Buckens who keeps you hooked with her 'poor little rich girl' act. She has drug and daddy issues and is also sexually active with one of her professors. Her demeanour from the very beginning is intriguing, and Buckens essays her histrionics brilliantly.

Matching Buckens is Tracy Ifeachor, who balances the act with her straitjacket behaviour. Sinead Keenan as DI Paula Cassidy is sincere but trite. All other actors in a supporting role deliver what is expected of them, but none break the glass ceiling. Their acts are all perfunctory. One can't blame them for this. It's the writing that is at fault.

Also, the denouement is so formulaic and predictable.

'Showtrial' has its moments, but overall, it is neither a tense nor an exciting series.



Ciara



### NATIONAL SHOOTING C'SHIP

## Divyansh Panwar wins senior and junior air rifle titles

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former world number one Divyansh Singh Panwar won back-to-back men's 10m air rifle national championship titles after shooting an impressive 250 in the final of the 64th National Shooting Championship Competitions (NSSC) at the MP Shooting academy range in Bhopal on Friday.

Maharashtra's Rudranksh Balasaheb Patil came second with 249.3 while Assam's Hriday Hazarika won the bronze with a score of 228.2. The men's 10m air rifle discipline saw a record participation of 768 athletes this time around with over 800 registering to compete.

The Rajasthan shooter, just like in the 63rd Nationals, also won the junior men's competition for a double gold on the day. He shot 252.2 in the junior final as Rudranksh settled for silver here as well with 251.2.



Delhi's Paarth Makhija came third with a score of 229.9.

Elsewhere in Patiala at the New Moti Bagh Gun Club ranges, Madhya Pradesh's Aakash Kushwaha

and Pragati Dubey won the mixed team trap competition. They beat Haryana's Lakshay Sheoran and Bhavna Chaudhary by a 42-37 margin in the gold medal match. Tamil Nadu won bronze in the event.

### ASHES, 1ST TEST

## MALAN, ROOT FIGHTBACK TO HELP ENGLAND CLOSE DAY THREE ON A HIGH

Brisbane | Agencies

David Malan and Joe Root's spirited fightback helped England close day three of first Ashes Test at The Gabba on a high as the tourists reached 220/2 at stumps, trailing by 58 runs. The 159-run partnership between Malan (80 not out) and Root (86 not out) has set the scene for an intriguing day four with eight wickets in hand. It was the day where England finally managed to claw their way back into the match after Australia took a lead of 278 runs.

The tourists were 61/2 after 21 overs when Root joined Malan in the middle. Australia skipper Pat Cummins had taken the first wicket, with Rory Burns trying to cut but the short ball took the glove edge behind to keeper Alex Carey. Haseeb Hameed looked set for a big score before getting strangled down leg off Mitchell Starc in the 21st over.

From that point, the fightback began with Root and Malan adding 46 runs off 90 balls till tea came. Malan was tentative in the beginning and Root took 20 balls to hit his first



### Brief scores

England 147 & 220/2 in 70 overs (Joe Root 86 not out, David Malan 80 not out, Pat Cummins 1/43, Mitchell Starc 1/60) trail Australia 425 in 104.3 overs (Travis Head 152, David Warner 94, Ollie Robinson 3/58, Mark Wood 3/85) by 58 runs.

boundary of the innings, a clip through mid-wicket off Josh Hazlewood. Though the duo had their own shares of luck and survival, especially for Malan against off-spinner Nathan Lyon, the duo turned the tide in the final session, playing with fluency and positivity as pitch started to become very good for some scintillating strokeplay. The partnership grew in confidence and runs as

England made 113 runs in the final session but did not lose a single wicket. Add to it, Root went past former skipper Michael Vaughan for most Test runs by an England player in a calendar year. Starc, Cummins (with his short-ball plan) and Lyon along with other bowling options in Cameron Green and Marnus Labuschagne weren't able to trouble Malan and Root much. But now it

seems that the second new ball could provide Australia with much-needed breakthrough and could begin with Hazlewood, who was given just eight overs in the final session. Earlier, Travis Head, resuming from his overnight score of 112, started off in his aggressive fashion on day three with a pull through square leg off Chris Woakes. Starc gave him good company by smashing boundaries against Woakes, Ollie Robinson and Mark Wood. Though Starc fell to Woakes, Head was unperturbed as he slammed a six each off Stokes and Wood over mid-off and fine leg respectively, before slog-sweeping Jack Leach through wide of mid-wicket to bring up his 150. Head was eventually bowled for 152 off 148 balls by a cracking yorker from Wood, becoming the last wicket to fall as Australia were 425 all out in 104.3 overs. Head's stands with Starc (85 runs) and Lyon (29 runs) were crucial for the hosts in stretching their lead to 278 runs, something which may not turn out to be enough if Root and Malan's association continues on Saturday.

### EUROPA LEAGUE: NAPOLI, LAZIO, SOCIEDAD REACH KNOCKOUTS; LEICESTER, PSV OUSTED

Paris | Agencies

Italian sides Napoli and Lazio along with Spanish club Real Sociedad, Galatasaray, Spartak Moscow, Crvena Zvezda, Braga, and Dinamo Zagreb all advanced from the Group stage of the UEFA Europa League, completing the line-up for the next stage in the second-tier competition in European club football.

Turkish club Galatasaray, Spartak Moscow (RUS), and Crvena Zvezda (SRB) topped their respective groups and along with Frankfurt (GER), Leverkusen (GER), Lyon (FRA), Monaco (FRA), and English side West Ham United as the eight teams



to clinch a direct berth in the Round of 16.

Real Sociedad (ESP), Napoli (ITA), Lazio (ITA), Braga (POR), and Dinamo Zagreb (CRO) ended as runners-up in their respective groups and joined Olympiacos (GRE), Rangers (SCO), and Real Betis (ESP) in the knockout playoffs stage. These eight will join the eight teams that were transferred from the UEFA Champions League -- Atalanta (ITA), Barcelona (ESP), Dortmund (GER), Leipzig (GER), Porto (POR), Sevilla (ESP), Sheriff (MDA), Zenit St Petersburg (RUS) to complete the lineup for the 16-team knockout playoffs. The eight playoff winners will advance to the last-16 stage.

## Carolina Marin pulls out of 2021 BWF World Championships

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Three-time champion shuttler Carolina Marin on Friday pulled out of the 2021 BWF World Championship after failing to regain fitness following a knee injury. The 28-year-old Marin had earlier withdrawn from the All England Championships this year after suffering the injury during the Swiss Open. However, she was planning



to make a comeback at the World Championships beginning in Huelva, Spain this Sunday. The Rio Olympics gold medalist also

said that her team will evaluate her knee progress and based on that she will take the call on her participation in upcoming tournaments. Apart from Marin, two-time gold medalist male shuttler Kento Momota of Japan and the 2017 World Championships gold medalist Nozomi Okuhara have already withdrawn from the tournament because of various reasons.

### ASIAN CHAMPIONS TROPHY

## Defending Champions India leave for men's event in Dhaka

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Indian Men's Hockey Team left for Dhaka on Friday to defend their title at the Asian Champions Trophy to begin from December 14. This will be India's first international outing after their bronze medal-winning performance at the Tokyo Olympic Games. Captain Manpreet Singh expressed the team's excitement ahead of the prestigious continental championship. "This is our first outing after the Tokyo Olympics so naturally there is a lot of excitement among the players. We have had a good training camp in Bhubaneswar and I feel since the weather here is quite similar to that of Dhaka, we won't take long to acclimatize," he said.

"With only eight players from the Tokyo Olympic squad making the team for the Asian Champions Trophy and the rest of stalwarts including PR Sreejesh being rested for this tournament, this will be a great opportunity for youngsters in the team to perform," said the captain. With nearly ten players who were part of the Tokyo Olympic squad being

rested, this is a fantastic opportunity for the players who had been waiting on the sidelines to get a chance to perform in a major international tournament. This will be a good platform for them to showcase their talent and temperament," stated the star midfielder. Talking about the competition, Manpreet said, "It will be a good tournament not just in terms of competition but also to understand other team's capabilities. We assess the progress of other Asian countries ahead of the all-important Asian Games and Asia Cup next year." India will play their opening match against Korea on December 14, followed by a match against hosts Bangladesh on December 15. Their third match will be against arch-rivals Pakistan on December 17 and on December 18 India will take on Malaysia followed by their match against Japan on December 19. The semi-finals will be played on December 21 followed by the final on December 22. In the previous edition of this event held in Muscat, Oman, India had jointly lifted the title along with Pakistan as the Final was called off due to incessant rains.

### IISL: ODISHA FC BEAT NORTHEAST UNITED, JUMP TO SECOND PLACE IN POINTS TABLE

Vasco (Goa): Odisha FC jump to second place in the points table after defeating NorthEast United 1-0 in the 2021-22 Hero Indian Super League (ISL) at the Tilak Maidan Stadium on Friday. For Odisha FC, Jonathas Cristian scored a second-half goal, while NorthEast United tried hard but failed to level the score.

Odisha now have nine points from four matches, three behind league leaders Mumbai City FC who have 12 points from five games. NorthEast, meanwhile, dropped to ninth with four points from five games.

NorthEast United started on the front foot with Deshorn Brown dribbling past two defenders early on and firing wide from an acute angle.

It was all about the Highlanders in the opening exchanges barring an Aridai Suarez curler that skimmed the crossbar and went out. Brown was at it again as he tried to dance past a few Odisha defenders after goalkeeper Mirshad Michu found him with a long ball, only for the home side to avert the danger. Five minutes to halftime, the brilliant Brown left Odisha defenders in his wake with a buccaneering run into the box but his effort was off target as he took one touch too many. In the second period, Odisha scuffed a golden opportunity to draw first blood when Javier Hernandez headed wide of the target after being fed by a lovely through ball from Aridai. Frenchman Mathias Coureur then failed to make the most of a free header, nodding wide from close range. The deadlock was finally broken in the 81st minute when two substitutes Thoiba Singh and Jonathas combined for a well-drilled goal.

Thoiba, who came in place of Isaac Chhakchhuak in the 62nd minute, did well to cross for Jonathas whose drop header left a diving Mirshad with no chance. Liridon Krasniqi had made way for Jonathas in the 62nd minute.

In the dying exchanges, NorthEast tried hard to draw level but Odisha kept them at bay and ensured they keep their good run going.

## ISL: Odisha FC beat NorthEast United, jump to second place in points table

Vasco (Goa) | Agencies

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## VILLARREAL BEAT ATLANTA 3-2, COMPLETE LAST-16 LINEUP

Bergamo | Agencies

Needing a draw to advance into the next stage, Spanish side Villarreal edged past Italian club Atalanta 3-2 to become the last team to reach the Round of 16 in the UEFA Champions League.

In a match postponed from Wednesday night due to heavy snow in Bergamo, Villarreal survived some anxious moments as the Italians came back from 0-3 down to make it 2-3 but in the end, their fightback on Thursday fell short and the Spanish club progressed to the knockout rounds of the top-tier European club competition.

Villarreal needed a draw to finish second behind Manchester United in Group F and seal their place in the UEFA Champions League Round of 16.

They started the match with seven points from five games with Atalanta on six both trailing United, who were at 11 after a draw with Young Boys



Wednesday. But Unai Emery's men won 2-3 against a hard-working Atalanta side, who even at 0-3 down were still in the match.

Arnaud Danjuma (3, 51), with a double, and Etienne Capoue (42) scored Villarreal's goals while Atalanta

replied through Ruslan Malinovskyi (71) and Duvan Zapata (80).

The match went Villarreal's way from the start and they came out firing on all cylinders. In the third minute, Dani Parejo sent a fantastic pass to Danjuma, who was clinical

and finished calmly through goalkeeper Juan Musso's legs to score the first goal of the tie.

However, Villarreal held on to the lead and managed the closing stages of the game well, thus qualifying for the next stage.

## REIGNING CHAMPION IGA SWIATEK, NO.1 BARTY TO START SEASON IN ADELAIDE

Adelaide | Agencies

Defending champion, Poland's Iga Swiatek, and world No.1 Ashleigh Barty of Australia are among the leading names who will start their 2022 season at the Adelaide International, which commences on January 2. The entry list for the WTA 500 tournament features nine of the world's top-10 players. Also scheduled to play in the capital of South Australia are WTA Finals champion Garbine Muguruza of Spain, French Open champion from the Czech Republic Barbora Krejickova and Olympic gold medalist, Switzerland's Belinda Bencic, who was the 2021 runner-up to Swiatek.

Former Grand Slam champions Petra Kvitova, Victoria Azarenka, Jelena Ostapenko and Sofia Kenin will also begin their seasons in Adelaide, bringing the



total of major trophies held in the field to 12. They will be joined by US Open finalist Leylah Fernandez and former World No.1 Karolina Pliskova. Aryna Sabalenka, Ons Jabeur, Coco Gauff and Paula Badosa are also scheduled to start 2022 in Adelaide, according to wtatennis.com. 2022 will mark the third year of the Adelaide International. Barty defeated Dayana Yastremska of Ukraine to win the inaugural edition in 2020, becoming the first Australian WTA champion on home soil since Jarmila Wolfe at Hobart 2011. In 2021, Swiatek triumphed over Bencic to win her second career title following Roland Garros 2020.



Brown was at it again as he tried to dance past a few Odisha defenders after goalkeeper Mirshad Michu found him with a long ball, only for the home side to

avert the danger. Five minutes to halftime, the brilliant Brown left Odisha defenders in his wake with a buccaneering run into the box but his



## Pooja: 'Soch liya' introduces roller coaster chemistry the lead characters share

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Pooja Hegde, who is gearing up for the release of her upcoming pan-India film 'Radhe Shyam', says the song 'Soch liya' from the movie introduces the chemistry her character Prerana shares with Prabhas's. The film will be released in four languages -- Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Malayalam. The latest song is sung by Arijit Singh and composed by Mithoon. Pooja's avatar in 'Soch Liya' has classic European get-up and vintage charm written all over it. Talking about the number, Pooja said: "Soch Liya presents many shades of Prerana in 'Radhe Shyam'. I'm thrilled that the song is out now. What's special about it is that it takes viewers through a mixed bag of emotions." It introduces the roller-coaster of the chemistry the lead characters share. I'm happy to have a song I can hear on the loop." The song shows Pooja staging a plethora of emotions while she reacts to flirtation by her co-star Prabhas, evades him and seems immune to his charm. Her expressions hint at separation and spur curiosity about her role in the epic saga. 'Radhe Shyam' is slated for release on January 14, 2022. Being a Radha Krishna Kumar's directorial, 'Radhe Shyam' is billed as an epic love story made under UV Creations banner.



## Dharmendra shares his life's struggles on 'IBD 2'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Dharmendra will be seen gifting his personal watch to contestant Dibbay Das on "India's Best Dancer 2". He is coming as a celebrity guest along with Asha Parekh on Sunday's special episode. After looking at the performance of Dibbay Das, he not only gives him his

watch but also shares his struggles in the initial days of his career in the industry.

Dharmendra said: "Hard work can take you places. I have also struggled a lot in my life and continue to do so. In life, either you control your time or the time controls you. I was crazy passionate about cameras, and I still am, which is what drove me to overcome all difficulties." Contestant Dibbay Das and choreographer Pankaj Thapa will be seen giving a performance on the song "Kitna

Pyara Wada Hai". Dibbay Das, who hails from Assam's Silchar has lived a difficult life. He started his journey as a food delivery boy and now part of the dance reality show. The 86-year-old actor further asks Dibbay to focus on his work and move ahead in life. "I've always lived from my heart, not from my mind. Also, there was a sense of responsibility when it came to my family. I never thought about being number 1 or number 2, I just wanted to do honest work. You too, Dibbay, should keep at it," he advises. "India's Best Dancer 2" airs on Sony Entertainment Television.



## ANUSHKA CONFIRMS 'KATVIC' WILL BE HER NEW NEIGHBOURS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif, who became husband and wife on Thursday, will soon move into a new plush apartment in Mumbai's Juhu neighbourhood, where Anushka Sharma and her husband, Team India's Test captain, Virat Kohli, will be their neighbours. Even as Bollywood celebrities showered their best wishes on the newly-wed couple, Anushka, too, congratulated 'KatVic' and confirmed that they will indeed be her neighbours.

Anushka, who has worked with Katrina in Yash Chopra's

2012 romantic drama 'Jab Tak Hai Jaan', took to Instagram and shared Katrina's post with pictures of the couple. Anushka wrote in the caption: "Congratulations to both of you beautiful people! Wishing you guys a lifetime of togetherness, love and understanding." She continued in the caption: "Also glad you are finally married so that now you can move into your house soon and we can stop hearing construction sounds." Anushka tagged both Vicky and Katrina in the story. Vicky and Katrina, according to sources, have rented a sea-facing apartment, the security deposit of which is said to be close to Rs 1.75 crore and the rent is around Rs 8 lakh a month.

## Additi Gupta says 'Dhadkan Zindaggi Kii' is a relatable story

Team Absolute | Mumbai



Actress Additi Gupta, who plays the lead role of Dr. Deepika in the medical drama "Dhadkan Zindaggi Kii", says that she finds the story, character and even the title of the show relatable. "The relatability factor works with people and it is also something that helps me to connect. The show has that kind of a narrative and approach," she says. Giving us a glimpse of the story, which is based on doctors and their struggles, she adds: "We consider doctors as Gods, and we expect so much but ultimately they are humans. Also nobody talks about how they feel when they are unable to save a life. The show also has that part of it. But majorly it's about women. We're talking about a woman who had to struggle a lot to reach where she's today. A lot of other taboo topics will also be highlighted. "It's not just the medical field that we are talking about but in every aspect of life, even something as basic as a woman driving." As the show is based on doctors, it is thrilling for Additi to play this profession on screen. "It's thrilling even to learn about medicines, how to use a stethoscope, and how to do that during pregnancy, various terms, and how surgeries are done. You need to be authentic," she says.

## 'AARYA SEASON 2':

## SUSHMITA SEN ENTHRALLS YOU WITH HER PERFORMANCE



TROY RIBEIRO

### 'Aarya Season 2' (Streaming on: Disney+ Hotstar)

**Direction:** Ram Madhavani  
**Cast:** Sushmita Sen, Ankur Bhatia, Vikas Kumar, Maya Sarao, Vishwajeet Pradhan, Sugandha Garg, Geetanjali Kulkarni, Jayant Kripalani, Akash Khurana, Sohaila Kapur, Dilnaz Irani, Charu Shankar.

**Duration:** Averaging 40 minutes per episode.

**Ratings:** \*\*\*1/2 (three stars and half)



"Kahnwale kuch bi kahenge, I'm just a working mother." This dialogue with the Investigating Police Officer ACP Yunis Khan (Vikas Kumar), in the last episode of the second season of 'Aarya', encapsulates the mind-set of Aarya Sareen (Sushmita Sen), who is no stranger to the criminal underworld due to her family's connections.

So lucid is the narrative that those who have not seen season one of the series will not have any difficulty following the thread of events in season two.

This eight-episode series begins from where it left in season 1.

After Aarya's husband Tej Sareen, a reluctant crime syndicate operator murdered for stealing drugs worth 300 crore from Udayveer Shekhawat (Akash Khurana), which belonged to the Russian

Mafia, her father Zorawar Rathod (Jayant Kripalani) and brother Sangram (Ankur Bhatia) are accused of his murder.

How Aarya struggles to balance raising her three children, keeping the police investigation at bay, and is invariably sucked into the sticky web of dodgy deals, violent threats, and double-crosses forms the crux of this narrative.

So innocuous is Aarya's approach to her tumultuous life that it makes the series appealing. The first episode, titled 'Mujhe Yahan Se Bhaagna Hai', exposes her desperation to flee the country due to the impending threats they face. What follows are, 'An Eye for an Eye', 'Ab Hum Vaapas Jaa Rahe Hai', 'Sangram Kahan Hai', '300 Crore Ka Consignment', 'I Hate You', 'Phir Se Panje Baahar Nikaalo' and 'Isko Mere Raaste Se Hataa Do'.

There are also a few moments in the series, especially events in episodes four and eight, dealing with the weaknesses of the characters that appear trite, formulaic, and forced.

But overall, the script ignites your interest with enough sympathy and an equal amount of intrigue and brilliance. The best of which - springs in episode six, where the tormented mother in desperation leaps like a ferocious tigress.

This inspiring and jaw-dropping moment is enough for you to root for Sushmita Sen, who essays Aarya effortlessly - balancing reluctance, innocence, and zealous determination, with a compelling grit.

The final episode ends on a cliff-hanger, ensuring that you look forward to season three.



## 'RRR' TO HIT OTT AFTER 90 DAYS FROM THEATRICAL RELEASE

Hyderabad: SS Rajamouli and his 'RRR' team seem to be dizzy after the thumping response they received for the theatrical trailer of 'RRR'. The trailer, which was unveiled on Thursday, was even screened at the theatres in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The 'RRR' team, who interacted with the media in Mumbai during the trailer launch event, had a great time sharing their experiences working for the movie. In his latest interaction with media, the Hindi language version distributor of RRR, Jayanti Lal Gada, revealed details on the OTT release of the magnum opus. On being quizzed about the film's OTT/Digital release, Jayanti Lal Gada said: "RRR" will be available on the OTT platform only after at least 90 days from the theatrical release."

It is to be noted that ZEE5 and Netflix own the post-theatrical digital streaming rights of Ram Charan and NTR starrer 'RRR'. The makers are currently occupied with the promotional activities. Rajamouli and his whole team are to travel to important cities in India, to promote the visual wonder- 'RRR'. Alia Bhatt and Olivia Morris are the female leads in the movie, while Ajay Devgn is playing an important role. MM Keeravani is the music composer, while DVV Danayya is bankrolling the movie under DVV Entertainments.

'RRR' is slated for its huge release on January 7, 2022. It is a multi-lingual movie.

## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Aahna Kumra