

absolute india

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Australian retain upper hand despite England's late fightback...

2021 fifth warmest in India since 1901; northeast monsoon rains highest since 1901

CLIMATE INDIGNITY

- ▶ The five warmest years on record, in descending order, are: 2016 (+0.71-degree Celsius), 2009 (+0.55-degree Celsius), 2017 (+0.541-degree Celsius), 2010 (+0.539-degree Celsius), and 2021 (+0.44-degree Celsius).
- ▶ It may be mentioned that 11 out of 15 warmest years were during the recent 15 years (2007-2021).
- ▶ The seasonal rainfall during the northeast monsoon season over the core region of the south peninsula was exceptionally above normal (171 per cent of LPA) and was the highest (579.1 mm) since 1901.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The year 2021 was the fifth warmest year since nationwide records commenced in 1901, while the seasonal rainfall during the

northeast monsoon season over the core region of the south peninsula was the highest since 1901, the 'Statement on Climate of India during 2021' released on Friday said. As per India Meteorological

Department (IMD), for temperature, the long period average (LPA) is considered based on 1981-2010 period, while for rainfall, the LPA is based on 1961-2010 period.

Temperature records

The annual mean land surface air temperature averaged over India during 2021 was 0.44-degree Celsius above the LPA based on 1981-2010 period. Thereby, the year 2021 was the fifth warmest year since nationwide records commenced in 1901, the statement said, adding, "However, this is lower than the highest warming observed over India during 2016 when it was 0.71-degree Celsius above the LPA." The winter (January to February) and post-monsoon (October to December) seasons with all-India mean temperature anomalies (Actual - LPA Temperature) of +0.78-degree Celsius and +0.42-degree Celsius, respectively, mainly contributed to this warming, the IMD explained. The past decade (2011-2020/ 2012-2021) was also the warmest decade on record with the decadal averaged annual mean temperature anomaly (Actual-LPA) of 0.34-degree Celsius/0.37 degree-Celsius. The country averaged annual mean temperature during 1901-2021 showed an increasing trend of 0.63-degree Celsius/100 years with a significant increasing trend in maximum temperature (0.990C/100 years) and a relatively lower increasing trend (0.260C/100 years) in minimum temperature. The country averaged seasonal mean temperatures in 2021 which were also above the LPA during all the seasons with the winter (January to February), pre-monsoon (March to May), monsoon (June to September) and post-monsoon (October to December) seasons recording anomalies of +0.78-degree Celsius, +0.35-degree Celsius, +0.34-degree Celsius and +0.42-degree Celsius, respectively. The country averaged mean monthly temperatures were warmer than normal during all the months of the year except for four months (April, May, June, and November). Among the months, the highest country averaged monthly mean temperatures were recorded in March (1.24-degree Celsius, third warmest since 1901), followed by August (0.52-degree Celsius, third warmest since 1901), January (0.67-degree Celsius, fifth warmest since 1901), and October (0.77-degree Celsius, fifth warmest since 1901).

Record rainfall in 2021

The 2021 annual rainfall over the country as a whole was 105 per cent of its LPA based on the 1961-2010 period. The southwest monsoon season rainfall over the country as a whole was 99 per cent of its LPA. However, it was the 2021 northeast/post-monsoon season (October-December) rainfall over the country as a whole that was above normal (144 per cent of LPA). The seasonal rainfall during the northeast monsoon season over the core region of the south peninsula was exceptionally above normal (171 per cent of LPA) and was the highest (579.1 mm) since 1901. All the five subdivisions of the core region except coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam received large excess/excess rainfall during the season.

'OUR DESIRE FOR PEACE SHOULDN'T BE MISTAKEN OTHERWISE': GEN NARAVANE

General Naravane said the Army has instituted additional safeguards to prevent any further attempts at military brinkmanship.

- After the violent clash on May 5, 2020, both -- Indian and Chinese militaries -- gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.
- As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process last year in the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area.
- Each side currently has around 50,000 to 60,000 troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the sensitive sector.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian Army stands firm to counter any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo along the country's borders and India's desire for peace is born out of strength and should not be mistaken otherwise, Army Chief General MM Naravane said.

The army chief also said that differences in perceptions and disputes are best resolved through established norms based on the principle of equal and mutual security.

"We believe that the differences in perceptions and disputes are best resolved through established norms based on the principle of equal and mutual security," he said.

"Our desire for peace and tranquillity is born out of our inherent strength. It should not be mistaken otherwise," he added.

Institutional mechanisms and safeguards to counter state-sponsored terrorism have been strengthened both along the borders and the hinterland, General Naravane said.

These mechanisms and safeguards have proven effective in lowering the levels of violence, he said.

"Our actions have demonstrated our capability and willingness to strike at the source of terrorism," the Army chief said.

"We stand firm to counter any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo along our borders. Our response to such attempts has been swift, calibrated and decisive as was seen when the situation so demanded."

China-India trade at record high despite border tension

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An increase in China-India trade in 2021, which reached a record high surpassing \$125 billion amid bilateral tensions, is just another piece of proof that New Delhi is unable to reduce its dependence on the Chinese market, Beijing's state media claimed. The total amount of trade between China and India in 2021 stood at \$125.66 billion, up 43.3 per cent from 2020, said the Global Times report citing statistics released by the General Administration of Customs (GAC). Of which, China's exports to India were \$97.52 billion,



up 46.2 per cent, while China imported \$28.14 billion worth of goods from India, up 34.2 per cent.

Analysts attributed the surge in trade to the complementary aspects of the industrial chains of the two countries. For example, about 50-

60 per cent of chemicals and other materials used by the Indian pharmaceutical industry, which is a pillar industry, are imported from China. India was China's 15th largest trade partner in 2021, the Global Times quoted the GAC as saying.

VIRAT KOHLI STEPS DOWN AS TEST CAPTAIN OF INDIA

Kohli stepped down from Test captaincy as the most successful skipper in the longest format of the game for India and fourth overall. Under his time as the captain, India played 68 Tests, winning 40, losing 17 and drawing 11 matches, having a win percentage of 58.82 while registering memorable wins in overseas and home conditions.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day after India lost the series 1-2 to South Africa with a seven-wicket defeat at Cape Town, Virat Kohli has stepped down as the Test captain.

Kohli, who first captained India at the Adelaide Test in 2014 against Australia, was appointed to the full-time role after MS Dhoni announced his retirement from the format ahead of the fourth Test at Sydney in January 2015. It also means that the Cape Town Test was the last match of Kohli as India captain.

The most notable victories from the time under Kohli will be the 2018/19 Border-Gavaskar Trophy win, where India won a Test series



in Australia for the first time and leading 2-1 in England in the 2021

"It's been 7 years of hard work, toil and relentless perseverance every-day to take the team in the right direction. I've done the job with absolute honesty and left nothing out there. Everything has to come to a halt at some stage and for me as Test Captain of India, it's now. I have always believed in giving my 120 percent in everything I do, and if I can't do that, I know it's not the right thing to do. I have absolute clarity in my heart and I cannot be dishonest to my team."

series apart from reaching the World Test Championship (WTC)

final at Southampton in the same year. He also took the Indian team to the number one ranking in Tests apart from overseeing the development of the pace-attack reaching a world-class level and fitness being given prime importance.

In September 2021, Kohli had announced that he would be leaving the T20I captaincy after the Men's T20 World Cup in the UAE. He had also stepped down as the captain of IPL side Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) after the completion of the second half of the tournament in the UAE. Two months later, in December, Kohli was replaced by Rohit Sharma as the ODI captain.

EITHER YOU SINK OR YOU SWIM: MANNAT SIWACH

N. Lothungbeni Humtsoe | New Delhi
Mannat Siwach, Miss Teen International India 2021, is a 16-year-old from Jaipur who is a passion advocate against child abuse and neglect. Mannat, who comes from an army background and has inherited the traits of self-discipline, perseverance, and diligence, speaks exclusively to correspondent about her experience and preparations to contest Miss Teen International 2022 in the Philippines.



"About one year back, when I got to know that there is something like Teen Pageants too, I realised that this was the best opportunity for me since I would be able to get a lot of experience and exposure at a very young age which would help me in the future too and I think Miss Teen Diva 2021 was the right platform for me. Believe in yourself and toil hard. These two things are the key ingredients to everything in life. Also, make sure that you focus on yourself and are consistent throughout because as I always say, life gives you only two options: either you sink or you swim."

FOREST COVER IN INDIA INCREASED BY 24.62% SINCE 2019: REPORT

- ▶ The total forest cover is 7,13,789 sq kms, which is 21.71 per cent of the geographical area of the country while tree cover is 95,748 sq kms (2.91 per cent of GA). This is an increase of 2,261 sq kms (0.28 per cent) in total forest and tree cover in the country compared to the 2019 assessment.
- ▶ The area under Very Dense Forest, Moderately Dense Forest and Open Forest is 99,779 sq kms, which is 3.04 per cent of the geographical area (GA), 3,06,890 sq kms (9.33 per cent of GA) and 3,07,120 sq kms (9.34 per cent of GA) respectively.
- ▶ The top five states in terms of increase in forest cover are Andhra Pradesh (647 sq kms), Telangana (632 sq kms), Odisha (537 sq kms), Karnataka (155 sq kms) and Jharkhand (110 sq kms).
- ▶ The forest cover in 52 tiger reserves is 55,666.27 sq km, which is 7.80 per cent of India's total forest cover and 74.51 per cent of the total area of tiger reserves, according to the India State of Forest Report 2021.
- ▶ The tiger reserves occupy an area of approximately 74,710.53 sq km, which is 2.27 per cent of India's total geographical area.
- ▶ Percentage wise total forest cover with respect to the area of digitised tiger reserve boundary shows that Pakke (Arunachal Pradesh) has the largest forest cover at 96.83 per cent.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The forest and tree cover in India is now 8,09,537 sq kms, which is 24.62 per cent of the country's geographical area and 1,540 sq kms more compared to the 2019 assessment, said the India State of Forest Report 2021, released by Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav at a virtual ceremony on Thursday. The country's tree cover (small patches outside forests) which is on the rise, is estimated to be 95,748 sq km, or 2.91 per cent of GA. There is an increase of 721 sq kms in the vegetative cover as compared to the 2019 data, the report said. An important aspect highlighted in the report is the mangrove cover for the vast 7,500 kms coastline spread over 12 states and Union Territories. The latest report mentions that the mangrove cover is 4,992 sq kms, which is



0.15 per cent of the GA. There has been a net increase of 17 sq kms in the mangrove cover compared to 2019. Odisha (8 sq kms) and Maharashtra (4 sq kms) have shown significant improvement. Total number of bamboo culms has increased by 13,882 million since 2019. The total estimated green weight of bamboo culms at the national level is 402 million tonnes. The present assessment observed an increase of about 124 million tonnes equivalent green weight of bamboo as compared to the previous assessment.

January 16 to be celebrated as 'National Startup Day': PM

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced that January 16 will be celebrated as 'Startup' day and said that while small businesses are the spine of India's economy, Start-Ups are the game changers.

"I congratulate all the startups of the country, all the innovative youth, who are raising the flag of India in the world of Start-Ups. For the culture of Start-Ups to reach the far-flung parts of the country, it has been decided to celebrate January 16 as National Start-up Day," Modi announced. Recalling the concept of the current decade as the 'techade' of India, the Prime Minister listed three important aspects of the massive changes that the government is making in this decade to strengthen the innovation, entrepreneurship, and startup ecosystem.





WET SPELL OVER EAST, CENTRAL INDIA, DENSE FOG OVER NORTH INDIA: IMD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday said the wet spell over east India and coastal Andhra Pradesh would continue during next two days and decrease significantly thereafter while dense to very dense fog would continue over north India during next 4-5 days.

The IMD also predicted cold day conditions over northwest India for the next two days.

A trough runs from north interior Karnataka to north interior Odisha in lower tropospheric levels and there is a cyclonic circulation over south Konkan in lower tropospheric levels, under the influence of which, the IMD said, there would be scattered to fairly widespread light/moderate rainfall very likely over coastal Andhra Pradesh till January 16 and isolated to scattered light/moderate rainfall over Marathwada, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana on Saturday.

On Saturday, isolated light/moder-



ate rainfall is very likely over sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim and Jharkhand, isolated thunderstorms with lightning/hail very likely over sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim and isolated light/moderate rainfall over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura.

Under the influence of a cyclonic

circulation over southwest Bay of Bengal and another over south Tamil Nadu in lower tropospheric levels; isolated light rainfall/thundershowers is expected over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala, and Mahe during next 4-5 days.

Two fresh Western Disturbances are very likely to affect northwest India, the first from January 16, which

is likely to cause isolated to scattered precipitation on January 16 and 17; while the second would be from January 18 and is likely to cause light/moderate scattered to fairly widespread precipitation over Western Himalayan Region and light isolated to scattered rainfall over adjoining plains for subsequent 2-3 days.

The IMD said there would be no significant change in minimum temperatures in northwest India during next three days and rise by 2-3 degrees Celsius thereafter. It also said, there would be no significant change in minimum temperatures over east India during the next three days and fall by 2-3 degrees Celsius thereafter.

It predicted no significant change in minimum temperatures over Gujarat and Maharashtra during the next 24 hours and said there would be a gradual rise by 2-4 degrees Celsius thereafter.

Cold wave conditions are very likely in isolated pockets over west Uttar Pradesh and west Madhya Pradesh during the next two days.

Chhattisgarh to generate 12-15L employment opportunities

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Chhattisgarh has constituted an Employment Mission under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel with an aim to generate 12 to 15 lakh new employment opportunities in the next five years, officials said on Saturday.

The state government has decided to name Chief Secretary and various senior officials as key members of this mission.

The government has directed Chief Executive Officer of the mission, Alok Shukla to prepare and submit an action plan regarding the mission within a month.

The government said that in the last three years, many innovative programmes have been launched in the state with the objective of promoting employment in every district here. "These innovations have created a large number



of permanent employment opportunities and have improved people's income and standard of living.

"Along with the initiatives of Chhattisgarh Herbals, there is an immense scope of creating new employment opportunities through effective implementation of the programs such as Godhan Nyay Mission, Tea-Coffee Board, giving the status of agriculture to fisheries and lac production, establish-

ment of rural industrial park, and initiatives such as millet mission and commercial plantation," a statement said.

Under the mission, co-ordination will be established between all the aforementioned new programmes and the skill development programmes conducted in the urban and rural areas.

Moreover, expertise of institutions such as IIT, IIIT, IIM, NIT will also be taken to create new opportunities.

Seven die after consuming spurious liquor in Bihar

PATNA | Agencies

At least seven persons in Bihar's Nalanda district have died after allegedly consuming spurious liquor following which the authorities have initiated an action, officials said on Saturday.

Nalanda District Magistrate Shashank Shubhankar has said a "combing operation" has started in the area around the Chhoti Pahari locality.

Shubhankar said he and district Superintendent of Police, Ashok Mishra will lead the combing operation to check and find if any liquor manufacturing units are functioning in the region.

Both Shubhankar and Mishra visited the Chhoti Pahari area on Saturday.

"We have taken the statement of the victims' family members. Two of them have claimed that they were having other diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure etc. One of the victims' family claimed that the deceased individual often consumed liquor," Shubhankar said.

"We have sent the bodies for post-mortem to ascertain the cause of the death," Shubhankar said.



Meanwhile, the family members of the deceased individuals claimed that the deaths have happened due to the consumption of "poisonous liquor".

Reacting to the deaths, Prem Ranjan Patel, the spokesperson of the BJP Bihar unit, said: "We have a long-standing demand to review the decision of liquor ban in the state. Liquor is not banned in Bihar. It is available everywhere as the liquor mafias are involved in this... and are supported by the officials in the police and excise department. They are responsible for the failure of liquor ban in Bihar." The police and excise department only

5 HELD IN BRIBERY CASE INVOLVING GAIL OFFICIAL; RS 84 LAKH RECOVERED

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday conducted raids at the residence of Director (Marketing) of GAIL, and several NCR-based locations in connection with a bribery case, and arrested five persons for their alleged involvement in the case.

ES Ranganathan, the Director (Marketing) at GAIL, allegedly took bribe from private persons for issuing discount order on the purchase of petro chemical products.

An official said that the CBI team has collected some incriminating documents following the raid. It also recovered a cash of Rs 84 lakh.

A CBI official said that a case was lodged in this regard on January 14.

The CBI had got the information that Ranganathan is indulging in corrupt and illegal activities in criminal conspiracy with two individuals -- Pawan Gaur and Rajesh Kumar. These two persons were allegedly acting as his middleman, by obtaining bribe from the private companies buying petro chemical products marketed by the GAIL.

"We were informed that at the



direction of Rajesh, Pawan had asked Ranganathan for allowing some discount to the buyers on petro chemical products being marketed by GAIL in lieu of illegal gratification. They met at Noida several times," said a CBI source.

In order to collect bribe amount, Rajesh had further contacted other dealers, who would be the prospective beneficiaries of discount. In December, Rajesh collected the

demanding bribe amount and delivered it to Pawan for Ranganathan.

On the direction of Ranganathan, a Gurugram-based businessman N. Ramakrishnan Nair collected Rs 40 lakh from Pawan.

"Rajesh also entered a negotiation with two more prospective beneficiary dealers -- namely Saurabh Gupta and Aditya Bansal, and convinced them for paying bribe in exchange for the favourable orders from GAIL,"

said the source.

The CBI official said that Rajesh requested Saurabh Gupta for fulfilling his commitment for issuance of the discount order by GAIL and also informed that Ranganathan had demanded Rs 15 lakh but agreed to take Rs 12 lakh.

Pawan also asked Saurabh to pay the amount at the earliest.

Saurabh had already given Rs 3 lakh to Rajesh and decided to pay the rest of the amount through the Hawala channel.

On January 14, Aditya Bansal also gave a bribe amount to Rajesh for Ranganathan.

"Ranganathan on the request of Pawan and Rajesh got some checks conducted in the month of November, in the premises of some authorised stockists of GAIL.

However, before the said surprise check, Ranganathan had also cautioned some of his favoured parties. Thus they committed huge fraud and we lodged a case of prevention of corruption act," said the CBI official.

The official said that during the raid they have recorded the statement of arrested persons. Further probe into the matter is underway.

KTR's invite to Elon Musk draws praise on Twitter

HYDERABAD | Agencies

Telangana Industry and Commerce Minister K.T. Rama Rao as invite to Tesla CEO Elon Musk to set up shop in the state was hailed by many including actors, leading journalists, entrepreneurs and others.

Hours after KTR, as the minister is popularly known, invited Elon Musk to bring the popular electric vehicles to India, several Twitter users heaped praise on him.

"Hey Elon, I am the Industry & Commerce Minister of Telangana state in India. Will be happy to partner Tesla in working through the challenges to set shop in India/Telangana. Our state is a champion in sustainability initiatives & a top notch business destination in India," tweeted KTR.

His tweet was in response to Elon Musk's tweet on bringing EV to India. His tweet read "Still working through a lot of challenges with the government". Eminent personalities including



actors, journalists and industry leaders backed KTR's tweet and supported the idea. "Love this car so much Elon Musk. Feels like hope is around the corner," wrote actor Genelia Deshmukh. "Elon Musk, Come to Hyderabad -



India! It will be epic to have you. The Government here in Telangana is terrific too," tweeted actor Vijay Devarakonda. "Elon Musk sir you have best land & infrastructure in Telangana of course best Minister & Administration KTR,"

WOMAN DIES AFTER KITE STRING SLITS HER THROAT IN MP

Bhopal: A 20-year-old woman died in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, on Saturday after a glass-coated Chinese 'manja slit her throat.

The deceased, who has been identified as Neha Anjana, was driving her Scooty and crossing a bridge when the kite string slit her throat.

The people present on the spot took her to a nearby hospital where the doctors declared her dead. The incident prompted Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to issue an instruction to the officials concerned to launch a search operation against life-threatening Chinese manja in all the districts. Chouhan also instructed the district officials to take strict action against those found selling banned Chinese manja. "I am instructing all the district heads to investigate and ensure that dangerous manjas are not being sold and take strict action against those found selling them," Chohan said.

27-year-old gored to death by bull at Jallikattu event in TN

CHENNAI | Agencies

A 27-year-old man was gored to death by his own bull at the Jallikattu event held at Periyai Suriyur in Tamil Nadu's Tiruchi district on Saturday morning. This is the second death caused during the bull-taming competition in the state.

Addressing the media, the Jallikattu organisers said that the victim, Meenakshisundaram, was guiding his bull to the entrance of the event when the bull gored him on his thigh. When he started bleeding, he was taken to Tiruchi Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Government Hospital where the doctors declared him brought dead.

At least nine people have been injured till now at the Periyai Suriyur Jallikattu and are receiving treatment at various hospitals.

The organisers said that 400 bulls



and 300 bull tamers are expected to take part in the competition. The district administration has insisted on a Covid negative certificate for the bull owners as well as the tamers. A strong police contingent is present at the Jallikattu venue. On Friday, a 19-year-old youth was gored to death by a bull at the Jallikattu event in Madurai.

Aggregators, delivery services required to ensure 10% and 5% EVs in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Aggregators and delivery services in Delhi would need to ensure that 10 per cent of all new two-wheelers and 5 per cent of all new four-wheelers are electric in the next three months, a Delhi government draft policy under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, notified.

Besides, aggregators and delivery services will have to ensure that 50 per cent of all new two-wheelers and 25 per cent of all new four-wheelers are electric by March 2023.

This step has been taken to combat Delhi's air pollution and achieve net carbon neutrality, making it the first state in India to adopt an aggregator policy to regulate vehicular emissions from the ride-hailing industry.

The Delhi government under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, notified a draft policy on Friday on the same.

The aggregators such as ride-hailing services as well as delivery service providers (such as food delivery, e-



commerce logistics providers, couriers etc.) have altered the vehicular patterns in Delhi. Cabs have been the

most popular model, followed by buses, bikes and auto rickshaws, which have gained matured ridership

and continue expanding their businesses, Delhi government mentioned in a release.

Reena Gupta, advisor to Environment Minister Gopal Rai, mentioned while talking about the draft policy, "The essence of the proposed policy by the Delhi government is to ensure the entire spectrum of vehicles used by aggregators and delivery service providers are brought into the fold of a sustainable, clean and electric mobility, given the impact of large-scale adoption of clean vehicles and the serious concern over the air quality of Delhi."

Delhi government will also be making a representation to the Commission for Air Quality Management to direct other states in the NCR area to also adopt the policy.

The currently approved draft policy has now been put in the public domain, inviting suggestions and objections of the general public within a period of 60 days, post which it would be notified for implementation.

K'TAKA HORROR: SON ARRESTED FOR RAPING HIS MOTHER



DAKSHINA KANNADA | Agencies

In a shocking incident, a case of son committing rape on his mother has been reported from Kedambadi village in Puttur taluk in Dakshina Kannada district in Karnataka. The mother has been hospitalized and the son has been taken into custody, police said on Saturday.

According to police, after the sexual assault by the accused, the victim mother fell sick and was admitted to Puttur government hospital. The 58-year-old mother had lodged a complaint with the Puttur Rural police station about the rape. The police have registered a case under

IPC sections 362 (2) (n) and 506 against the accused. The police said that mother and the accused lived in the same house. The incident had taken place on January 12. The accused who went to sleep in his room, woke up at 3 a.m. and went to his mother's room and committed the crime. When the mother resisted and screamed, the accused gagged her mouth with a cloth. He had also threatened her that, if she informed anyone about the incident he would kill her. The accused sexually assaulted her again the next morning. Presently, the mother is being treated as an inpatient at Puttur government hospital. The accused is married

and his wife is staying in her parents' house. The police are questioning the accused and further investigation is on.

CHANGE OF NAME

I SUSHMITA GHOSH is legally spouse of No.4575525M L/HAV SRI-MANTA GHOSH presently residing at Ghoshpara Gouripur Paranjpur Malda STATE-West Bengal Pin-732204 have changed my name from SMT SUSHMITA GHOSH to SUSHMITA GHOSH Vide affidavit no 74AA 645284 date 14 01 2022

CHANGE OF NAME

I No.JC- 376755K SUB ANSARI SARFARAZ AHMAD S/O NISHAT AHMAD ANSARI presently residing at 147 Sanyukt Vihar Near Vidhya Sagar Institute, Awadhपुरी Huzur, BHOPAL STATE: MADHYA PRADESH Pin-462022 have changed my name from ANSARI SARFARAZ AHMAD NISHAT AHMAD to ANSARI SARFARAZ AHMAD Vide affidavit No. 74AA 645283 date 14 01 2022

ECI extends ban on physical rallies, road shows till Jan 22

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Saturday extended the ban on the physical rallies and road shows till January 22, however, it has allowed the political parties to hold indoor meetings of maximum of 300 persons or 50 per cent of the capacity of the hall or the prescribed limit set by State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA). The decision came after the Election Commission held separate virtual meetings with the Union Health Secretary, Chief Secretaries and Health Secretaries of Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, as also the Chief Electoral Officers of these five poll bound states.

The Commission has decided that there would be no road show, Pad-yatra, cycle, bike or vehicle rally, procession, physical rally of any political parties or candidates (including probable) or any other group related to election shall be allowed till January 22, and the Commission will subsequently review the situation and issue further instructions accordingly after the said date. Earlier after announcing the poll schedule, the EC had banned these activities till January 15.



NOTICE ISSUED TO SP OVER PUBLIC EVENT

Lucknow: Referring to Friday's event in the run-up to the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, attended by hundreds has landed the Samajwadi Party in trouble just weeks before the Uttar Pradesh election with the Election Commission demanding an explanation for organising the gathering "in the name of virtual rally" in violation of COVID-19 curbs. "Your explanation shall reach the Commission within 24 hours of receipt of this notice, failing which the Commission shall take appropriate decision in the matter without further reference to you," the notice to the Samajwadi Party general secretary read.

BENGAL CIVIC BODY POLLS POSTPONED

The West Bengal State Election Commission on Saturday postponed polls to four municipal corporations by three weeks to February 12 in the wake of rising COVID-19 cases. According to a notification issued by the SEC, elections to Siliguri, Chandannagar, Bidhannagar and Asansol municipal corporations will now be held on February 12 instead of January 22. Polling will be held from 7 AM to 5 PM, it said. Earlier in the day, the state government sent a letter to the SEC, giving its consent to reschedule the election dates, owing to the present pandemic situation, an SEC official said.

YOGI TO CONTEST FROM GORAKHPUR URBAN



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The BJP on Saturday released its first list of 107 candidates for Uttar Pradesh. Chief minister Yogi Adityanath will contest from Gorakhpur (Urban) assembly constituency and deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya to contest from Sirathu assembly seat in Prayagraj district. Chief minister Adityanath and deputy chief minister Maurya are currently members of state legislative council.

Of 83 sitting MLAs, 63 have been repeated and 20 MLAs have been dropped. Social equation has been taken into account while finalising the candidates. More than 60 per cent of the candidates announced

CONG MLA DROPPED FOR SONU SOOD'S SISTER JOINS BJP

Chandigarh: After the Congress denied ticket to him for the upcoming Punjab assembly polls, Moga MLA Harjot Kamal on Saturday joined the Bharatiya Janata Party in the presence of its senior leadership, including Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

are either from the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Schedule Caste (SC) communities. About 44 candidates are from the OBC communities and 19 are from SC communities.

AKHILESH YADAV TAKES JIBE AT YOGI

"As far as contesting elections is concerned, earlier it was said that he (Adityanath) will contest from Mathura, Prayagraj, Ayodhya or Deoband. I am happy that the BJP has already sent him home (Gorakhpur). Although he is in Gorakhpur, he had a ticket dated March 11 (counting of votes on March 10) booked for it earlier. I think that he should stay back in Gorakhpur and there is no need for him to return (to Lucknow). Heartiest congratulations. I would tell the BJP that I am no longer going to take BJP MLAs or ministers (into SP), you can cut their tickets."



NO ALLIANCE WITH SP: CHANDRASHEKHAR

Lucknow: Chandrashekhar Azad, president of the Azad Samaj Party (ASP), has dubbed Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav as 'anti-Dalit' and made it clear that he is not going to form an alliance with the SP in the upcoming assembly polls. Chandrashekhar claimed that Akhilesh does not understand the meaning of social justice and accused the SP chief of humiliating Dalits. He only needs Dalit votes, not leaders. It has become clear from his behaviour that he is similar to the BJP."



CHANNI TO CONTEST FROM CHAMKAUR SAHIB

New Delhi: The Congress on Saturday released the first list of candidates and state President Navjot Singh Sidhu will contest from his seat at Amritsar East and Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi from Chamkaur Sahib. Former State President Partap Singh Bajwa will contest from Qadiyan. The Congress first list has covered all prominent names in the party. Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa will contest from Dera Baba Nanak while from Sangrur Vijay Inder Singla has been fielded.



Mumbai logs highest one-day Covid deaths in 6 months

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai on Saturday reported 11 new coronavirus-related deaths, the highest single-day toll since July 29 last year, and 10,661 fresh infections, the civic body said. As many as 21,474 patients were discharged, taking the total of recoveries to 8,99,358. The number of new infected patients has been decreasing for the last three days, as per the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's data. Further, only 722 of the new 10,661 patients found during the day were admitted to hospitals, which raised the number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients to 5,962. As many as 8,955 or 84 per cent of the new patients were asymptomatic. The city on July 29, 2021, had reported 13 deaths and the mortality figure had started declining after that.

INDIA LOGS 2,68,833 FRESH COVID CASES, 402 DEATHS

New Delhi: Amid the ongoing Covid-19 resurgence, India registered 2,68,833 new cases and 402 deaths in the last 24 hours, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Saturday. While the new fatalities have increased the nationwide death toll to 4,85,752, the active caseload has jumped to 14,17,820, accounting for 3.85 per cent of the country's total positive cases, the Ministry said. Meanwhile, the Omicron infection tally has climbed to 6,041, a 5.01 per cent increase from

Farmers' 'Mission UP' on Feb 1 if demands not met; SKM to remain apolitical

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) said on Saturday that it will hit the ground again from February 1 by launching a 'Mission UP' movement if the government does not relent to their demands.

Led by SKM leader Rakesh Tikait, a team of farmers would embark on a three-day tour of Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh from January 21 and meet the families of the victims of the October 4 violence. If things are not found to be satisfactory, Tikait and the SKM team will camp there and start the 'Mission UP' from February 1.



"There has been no progress. No committee has been formed on Minimum Support Price (MSP). There is only some action on withdrawing cases against farmers in Haryana, but not much progress on that count in other

states, including Delhi. There has been no discussion on our demand in connection with power bills. That leaves us with no option but to launch Mission UP from February 1." SKM leader Yudhveer Singh told a media conference.

SKM, a consortium of 40-odd farmers' organisations, had on December 9 declared to suspend their 15-month-long agitation that had started to protest the three contentious farm laws passed in 2020.

INTRUDER HANDED TO PAK RANGERS BY BSF

Jammu: One Pakistani intruder who had inadvertently crossed the international border into Samba sector of Jammu was handed to the Pakistan Rangers through a flag meeting, the BSF said on Saturday. "Pakistani national handed over to Pakistan Rangers at 6.45 p.m. on proper receipt through flag meeting," the BSF said.

Earlier on Saturday afternoon, one Pakistani national crossed over inadvertently to India on Balhad border.

He came about 200 metres inside India when alert BSF troops apprehended him. On preliminary questioning it is found that he crossed inadvertently.

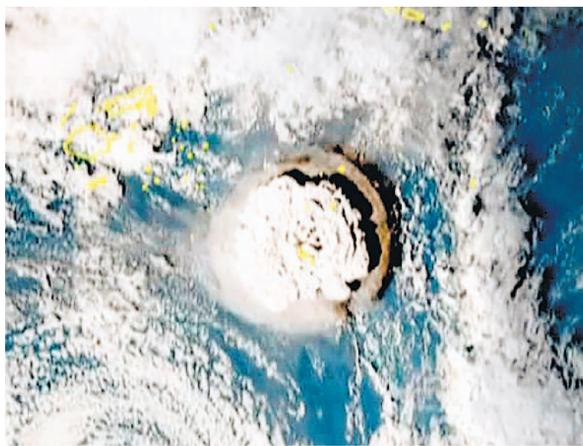
BSF said he belonged to border area of Shakargarh tehsil of Pakistan.

On January 5, a Sector Commander level meeting was held between the BSF and the Pakistan Rangers on International Border in Suchetgarh area in which the main emphasis was given by BSF delegation on the infiltration attempts of Pakistan based anti-national elements and recovery of arms and ammunition and narcotics on international border and other issues related to border management.

TSUNAMI WARNING FOR US WEST COAST AFTER VOLCANIC ERUPTION

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai on Saturday reported 11 new coronavirus-related deaths, the highest single-day toll since July 29 last year, and 10,661 fresh infections, the civic body said. As many as 21,474 patients were discharged, taking the total of recoveries to 8,99,358. The number of new infected patients has been decreasing for the last three days, as per the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's data. Further, only 722 of the new 10,661 patients found during the day were admitted to hospitals, which raised the number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients to 5,962. As many as 8,955 or 84 per cent of the new patients were asymptomatic. The city on July 29, 2021, had reported 13 deaths and the mortality figure had started declining after that.



TSUNAMI REACHES JAPAN

Tokyo: Tsunami reached Japan late Saturday through early Sunday, and waves as high as three meters were possible, the Japan Meteorological Agency said, hours after a massive volcanic eruption near Tonga. The agency said a 1.2 metre (about four feet) tsunami reached the remote southern island of Amami Oshima around 11:55 pm (1455 GMT) Saturday before other areas along Japan's Pacific coast observed smaller tsunami. The eastern shores of northernmost Hokkaido island as well as southwestern regions of Kochi and Wakayama also saw tsunami as high as 0.9 metres shortly after midnight, the agency said.

Sec 45 of PMLA will only apply to those arrested by ED: Delhi Court

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Court has observed that the provisions of Section 45 of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) will only apply if a person has been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate. The court made the observation recently while granting bail to accused in a case titled "Directorate of Enforcement Vs. Zenic Cars India Pvt. Ltd. & Ors", concerning the commission of offences under section(s) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. The order was passed by the Court of Naveen Kumar Kashyap, Special Judge, Tis Hazari, while deciding the regular bail applications filed by the accused persons under section 439 Cr.P.C. Counsel for the ED also stated



that section 45(1) has neither been stayed nor has its operation been rendered as nullity by any order of the Supreme Court. Additional Sessions Judge, District Court Tis Hazari, Naveen Kumar Kashyap while granting bail observed that section 45(1) PMLA as it stands today contains the phrase "shall be released on bail". As such, for section 45 PMLA to come into operation, a person has to be arrested first.

The Court also observed that Article 21 of the constitution mandates that no person shall be deprived of his life and personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. Article 21 in view of its expansive meaning not only protects life and liberty but also envisages a fair procedure.

CENTRE TO ISSUE POSTAL STAMP TO MARK ONE YEAR OF VACCINATION

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central government is all set to issue a postal stamp to mark the completion of one year of vaccination drive against Covid-19, officials said on Saturday. As the nation is going to complete one year of vaccination drive on Sunday which began on January 16 last year, a commemorative postal stamp will be issued to mark the occasion.

India on Sunday will mark the first anniversary of the nationwide vaccination drive with the health care and frontline workers first in line to receive the vaccine dose.

The vaccination drive was later expanded to citizens and people with comorbidities, and finally all above 18 plus. The drive for administering precautionary dose to the healthcare workers, front-line workers and sixty plus individuals commenced on January 10. Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya will issue the postal stamp and address a programme virtually.

Union Minister of State for Communications Devisinh Chauhan will also join the programme along with Dr Krishna Ella, Chairman and Managing Director, Bharat Biotech.

Yati Narsinghanand arrested for Haridwar hate speeches

Team Absolute | Lucknow

Yati Narsinghanand - one of the religious leaders who organised an event in Haridwar last month that called for the genocide of Muslims - was arrested on Saturday, becoming the second person to be taken into custody following an intervention by the Supreme Court.

Jitendra Narayan Singh Tyagi, who was Waseem Rizvi before he converted, was the first accused to be arrested in the hate speech case involving the Haridwar "Dharma Sansad" or religious assembly.

Over the last two weeks, the saffron-robed Narsinghanand has gone from cackling with cops about how a police officer "will be



on our side" to cursing them - "all of you will die," he said on Thursday after the first arrest.

Narsinghanand is among more than 10 people named in the FIRs lodged over speeches that called for genocide and the use of arms against Muslims. Besides him and

Tyagi, the police have also taken an interest in another religious leader Sadhvi Annapurna under immense pressure.

The first arrest in the case came nearly a month after the event, only after the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Uttarakhand government to submit an affidavit within 10 days on action taken in the case.

Clips from the Haridwar event -- held from December 17 to 20 -- were circulated on social media and drew sharp criticism from former military chiefs, retired judges, activists and even international tennis legend Martina Navratilova.

Those who organised the event and gave the hate speeches maintain that they have done no wrong.

ARMY VETERANS MOVE SC SEEKING SIT PROBE

New Delhi: Three Army veterans have moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to constitute a special investigating team (SIT) to probe the alleged hate speeches made at Haridwar and Delhi last month. The petitioners -- Major General S.G. Vombatkere, Colonel P.K. Nair and Major Priyadarshi Chowdhury -- cited the videos circulated on social media where blatant calls for genocide against minority communities were made. The plea contended that one of the speeches specifically calls upon the police and the army

to pick up arms against the minorities. Citing the Delhi event, the plea said that in the video of the event, a gentleman can be seen administering an oath to a group of people to "die for and kill" to make India a "Hindu Rashtra". The seditious and divisive speeches violate not only the criminal law of the land, but also strike at the core of Article 19 of the Constitution of India. These speeches stained the secular fabric of the nation and also have serious potential to impact public order adversely," read the plea.



MAHARASHTRA POSTS DROP IN COVID-19 CASES AT 43,211; POSITIVITY RATE OF 21 %

The state has reported 238 new cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus, raising their overall count to 1,605.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra on Friday recorded 43,211 new coronavirus cases, down by 3,195 from a day ago, and 19 fresh fatalities linked to the infection, while the active tally crossed the 2.60-lakh mark, the health department said. Meanwhile, Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope said the Centre should think about enforcing mandatory Covid-19 vaccination to tide over hesitancy among a segment of people.

The state has reported 238 new cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus, raising their overall count to 1,605, a health department official said. Maharashtra's positivity rate is 21.13 per



cent, the official said. With 13,702 cases, Mumbai recorded a drop of 16.55% in daily Covid-19 cases on Thursday from the

previous day. However, this drop didn't reflect in the state's tally as Maharashtra again reported over 46,406 cases on Thursday, while

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The official also maintained that the present surge is mainly restricted to cities and areas like Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, Palghar Pune and Nagpur, which relatively have better anti-coronavirus vaccination coverage.

amid the scare caused by the Omicron variant of coronavirus, a senior official of the Maharashtra health department has said that the Delta strain of the virus still accounts for the maximum number of infection cases in the state as revealed by the genome sequencing of the patients' samples.

Dr Pradeep Vyas, additional chief secretary of the health department, in a letter written to his colleagues on Wednesday said that the Delta variant was found in 68 per cent samples, out of the over 4,200 analysed, while



the remaining 32 per cent patients were found infected with the Omicron strain. The Delta variant had wreaked havoc during the second wave of the pandemic last year. The Omicron strain, which was first detected in South Africa in November 2021, started spreading in India from the first week of December. Till Friday night, Maharashtra has reported 1,605 Omicron cases, while its overall

Covid-19 infection tally has jumped to 71,24,278. "Since November 1 last year, the samples of 4,265 COVID-19 patients were sent for genome sequencing. The results of 4,201 cases have been issued, which indicate that Omicron variant was detected in 1,367 cases or in 32 per cent, while the prevalence of Delta variant was found in the remaining 68 per cent cases," Dr Vyas said in the letter. It also said that of the 2,40,133 active

coronavirus cases in Maharashtra till Wednesday (January 12), 90 per cent patients were in home isolation or in COVID Care Centres.

"We have seen three weeks of the present surge in COVID-19 infections. Till January 12, there were 2,40,133 active COVID-19 cases, of which 90.9 per cent were either in home isolation or in COVID Care Centre. Only 21,783 patients or 9.1 per cent of the total active cases were in hospital," the letter said. Of these hospitalised patients, 16,175 or 74.2 per cent had mild symptoms and 5,608 of them or 2.3 per cent needed ICU or oxygen support. Only 700 patients, which is about 0.29 per cent of the total active cases, were on ventilators, he said. The official also maintained that the present surge is mainly restricted to cities and areas like Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, Palghar Pune and Nagpur, which relatively have better anti-coronavirus vaccination coverage. He asked his colleagues that these observations should be taken into consideration while gearing up to tackle the present surge, he said.

Maharashtra to have a village of books in every district soon

Subhash Desai, Marathi language minister, said the aim behind creating such villages is to inculcate reading habit among the people, especially children.

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The Maharashtra government will develop a 'village of books' in each district on the lines of Britain's 'Hay-On-Wye,' the famous town of books. It has earmarked Rs 50 lakh per village for implementation of the idea.

Subhash Desai, Marathi language minister, said the aim behind creating such villages is to inculcate reading habit among the people, especially children. The Hay-On-Wye town has received international acclaim. "On a



similar line, we want to work on this concept to spread Marathi language and culture on a global platform," Desai said. According to the Marathi language department, initially the vil-

lage of books will be started in six administrative regions of Maharashtra and later it will be implemented in each district. "The government has decided to extend all

possible help to develop the infrastructure and other facilities in the designated villages. Small libraries and bookshelves will be set up in at least 10 prominent spots of the chosen villages," said a government official. While identifying the villages for the project, the ones that have a traditional legacy or are already a known tourist spot, or are cultural/pilgrimage/historical sites will be preferred. "The village should have won the awards in cleanliness and other state government competitions such as strife-free village. It should have a lot of greenery," he said. The district collectors have been told to ensure that the villagers participate in this movement actively. "They should offer their space to set up the libraries. The government will provide the funds to develop the places and each spot will get Rs 5 lakh to buy furniture, books etc.," said the official.

Indian Hotel and Restaurant Association seeks support from Maharashtra govt

India's hotel industry is among the worst hit by the pandemic, having contracted 47% in April-June 2020. In May 2020, the industry saw occupancy slump 77% on year.

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The Indian Hotel and Restaurant Association has written to the Maharashtra government and has met NCP chief Sharad Pawar seeking support for the struggling industry, following fresh curbs amid the third covid wave in the country. In a letter to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, AHAR has urged for extension in timings for dine-in services in restaurants and bars to midnight from the current 10pm. It has also sought specific guidelines and clarity

regarding food delivery services round the clock.

In another letter to deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, it has sought a reduction in FL III licence fee to 50% to compensate for the loss of regular business. The licence is for sale of imported foreign liquors and Indian made foreign liquors on which excise duty has been paid at special rates. Shivanand Shetty, president, AHAR, said, Disruptions witnessed for the past two years have thrown the industry into dire straits forcing many businesses to shut. We have sought extension of dine-in

services till midnight along with a request for 50% reduction of the liquor license fee for the year 2022-23. This waiver will help in generating revenue for the state government and also help re-open establishments. "According to research company Mordor Intelligence, India's hotel industry is among the worst hit by the pandemic, having contracted 47% in April-June 2020. In May 2020, the industry saw occupancy slump 77% on year. The domestic hospitality industry is likely to witness a decline of over 65% in 2021.

Maharashtra govt sanctions Rs 17.76 crore to repair lakes in Latur

The Maharashtra government has sanctioned Rs 17.76 crore to repair seepage lakes in Udgir and Jalkot tehsils of Latur district, state Minister Sanjay Bansode said.

Latur | Agencies

The Maharashtra government has sanctioned Rs 17.76 crore to repair seepage lakes in Udgir and Jalkot tehsils of Latur district, state Minister Sanjay Bansode said on Friday.

Speaking to reporters here, the minister for water supply and public works said the repairs will help increase the area under irrigation.

"A fund of Rs 17.76 crore has been sanctioned for repairing lakes at Udgir and Jalkot. Of this, Rs 13.35 crore will be used for repairing 39 lakes in Udgir and Rs 4.41 crore will be utilised for 23 slakes in Jalkot. The repair will increase the area under irrigation," Bansode said.

The government had asked for a proposal under the Chief Minister's Water



Conservation Scheme to repair damaged lakes. Accordingly, the water conservation department was instructed to survey the most dangerous lakes in Udgir and Jalkot tehsils, he said. The water conservation department inspected the lakes and prepared a budget to repair 39 seepage lakes in Udgir and

23 in Jalkot, the minister said. The department of soil and water conservation has given the administrative approval for Rs 4.41 crore, he said. At least 1,522 cubic feet of water will be created from the repaired seepage lakes in Udgir and Jalkot tehsils and 328-hectare area will be restored, he added.

MAHA ATS LAWYERS TO TRACK MALEGAON-2008 BLAST CASE HEARING

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Alarmed by witnesses turning hostile in the Malegaon-2008 blasts case, the Maharashtra government lawyers shall now remain in the Special NIA Court where the trial is being conducted on a daily basis, Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil said here on Saturday.

He told the media persons that the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had taken over the case (from the state ATS), but the state government is perturbed at the manner in which several critical witnesses have become hostile in the Special Court.

The significant development came two days after the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) ally Congress had raised the issue and drawn the attention of the Home Ministry and the ATS.

Congress state Working President M. Arif Naseem Khan had submitted a memorandum to the Additional Director-General of Police and ATS chief Vineet Agrawal urging necessary measures to monitor the case closely.

"We are thankful to Home Minister Walse-Patil for accepting our demand for a team to keep a track on the court proceedings. The presence of the ATS lawyers will help in a free and fair trial," Khan said in a statement.

An ex-minister, Khan reiterated that the NIA is allegedly 'weakening' the Malegaon-2008 case and not pursuing it with 'honesty and sincerity'.

In his memorandum to the ATS Chief Agrawal,



Khan contended that the witnesses turning hostile are invoking the names of Bharatiya Janata Party-RSS leaders to "malign the Maharashtra government and ATS" for gaining political mileage in the upcoming Uttar Pradesh elections.

The September 29, 2008 (Malegaon 2008) bomb blast was allegedly engineered in this minority-dominated Nashik town by Hindu fundamentalists, killing 6 and injuring over 100 others, during the Ramadan month when Muslims were breaking their fast. The Maharashtra Police and then the ATS probed the case till 2011 when it was taken

over by the NIA, and the trial is going on daily before the Special NIA Court in Mumbai.

Among the accused in the sensational Malegaon 2008 case are BJP MP Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, Swami Amritananda Dev Teerth, Dayanand Pandey, Lt. Col. Prasad S. Purohit, and others.

Khan said that the ATS was being sought to be tarnished as an 'anti-Hindu' agency with the witnesses, allegedly influenced by the accused, deliberately naming BJP-RSS people ahead of the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls for political gains.

BULLIBAI APP CASE

Mumbai court sends accused Shweta Singh, Mayank Rawat to judicial custody

On Friday, Rawat tested Covid-19 positive during his medical test. The cyber crime officials informed the Bandra Metropolitan Magistrate that his custody was not further required.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A court in Mumbai on Friday remanded Shweta Singh and Mayank Rawat to judicial custody. Both Singh and Rawat were arrested in Uttarakhnad in connection with the case pertaining to the 'Bulli Bai' app, which targeted Muslim women by putting up their images online for 'auction'.

On Friday, Rawat tested Covid-19 positive during his medical test. The cyber crime officials informed the Bandra Metropolitan Magistrate that his custody was not further required.

Meanwhile, officials informed the court that following the arrest of another accused, Vishal Kumar, the mastermind in the case, Niraj Bishnoi, had informed Singh and Rawat and they had deleted their social media accounts. The officials sought extension of police custody of Singh. However, Singh's lawyer Chitaranjan Das argued in court that

Singh had been in custody for eight days and there was no need for the extension of police custody.

Advocate Das also informed the court that Singh was slapped in the custody of the cyber crime officials. The court asked Singh if she was suffering any pain but observed that there were no external injuries. The court has directed the DCP Cyber Crime to conduct inquiry into the alleged ill treatment of Singh in custody and proceed as per law.

Meanwhile, Rawat's advocate sought bail for his client. He said, "The court has asked police officials to submit their say on the application and the application will be heard on Monday."

Earlier on January 10, the court had extended the police custody of Shweta Singh and Mayank Rawal till January 14. Besides, the court remanded another accused, Vishal Kumar Jha, who was the first to be arrested in the case from Bengaluru, to judicial custody till January 24 as he had tested positive for coronavirus.

Singh and Rawal were arrested by the Mumbai police's cyber cell from Uttarakhnad on January 5, while Jha was arrested from Bengaluru on January 4.

The police had earlier claimed that Singh was the prime accused, who had created a Twitter handle of the app. The Delhi police's special cell, which

has also registered an FIR in the case, on January 6 arrested one Niraj Bishnoi from Assam. According to the police, Bishnoi was the main creator of the app.

COUNSEL ALLEGES ACCUSED IN BULLI BAI CASE WAS SLAPPED

Mumbai: A serious allegation of custodial torture has been levelled by accused Shweta Singh, against the an officer of the Mumbai Cyber Cell which is probing the Bulli Bai app case. Singh's counsel told the metropolitan magistrate court in Bandra on Friday, that an officer attached to the Cyber Cell slapped her during custodial interrogation. Additional Metropolitan Magistrate Komalsingh Rajput has directed Deputy Commissioner of Police (Cyber) Dr Rashmi Karandikar to investigate the allegation. Dr Karandikar told mid-day, "I deny all such allegations. All the accused were properly treated and were given N-95 masks as well as hand sanitisers." An officer attached to Mumbai Cyber Cell told mid-day, "We have been taking all precautions while dealing with the case and following every legal step with utmost sensitivity." The Mumbai cyber cell is likely to submit its report by Monday, said a source.

Fraudster dupes woman of Rs 2.45 lakh

Over the last few years, many cyber-fraudsters have been uploading their own numbers as that of customer care service for banks, online shopping portals, online marketplaces, wine shops, and courier services among others and have duped hundreds of people.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A 36-year-old homemaker lost Rs 2.45 lakh after she was tricked into sharing her bank details by online fraudsters impersonating as executives of Amazon's customer care. Over the last few years, many cyber-fraudsters have been uploading their own numbers as that of customer care service for banks, online shopping portals, online marketplaces, wine shops, and courier services among others and have duped hundreds of people.

In this case, an FIR has been registered with the Borivali police station on January 11. The complainant told the police that she had bought a bottle for her two-month baby from Amazon. However, she did not like it and wanted to return it. On January 10, she searched for the number of

Amazon's customer care on Google and got a number and called on it. The fraudster received the phone and impersonated an executive of Amazon. He asked the account details she had used to make the payment and made her download and install the Anydesk app which gives third-party access to one's devices.

After accessing her phone, he generated some transaction-related messages and asked her to forward it to him on his mobile number. The woman forwarded these messages and soon, Rs 50,000 got debited from her account. When she confronted the fraudster, the latter said that was actually the amount she can use for shopping on Amazon. Hours later, the woman realized that the fraudster had also managed to transfer her fixed deposit amount.





25PC ADVANCE CLAIM AMOUNT OF CROP INSURANCE WILL BE GIVEN ALONG WITH THE ASSISTANCE AMOUNT: CM

Chief Minister reached the fields of hail affected farmers
Observation of crops affected by hailstorm in Unarsi Kalan and Chhoti Raghogarh village

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the damage caused to crops due to hailstorm will be fully compensated. In case of more than 50 percent loss in crops, farmers will be given the benefit of crop insurance scheme along with compensation of 30 thousand rupees per hectare. 25 percent of the claim amount will be given in advance from the insurance company and the remaining 75 percent will be given on the finalization of the claim. Chouhan also announced that the loan of the affected farmers would be changed from short to medium term and the amount of interest for one year would be filled by the state government.

Chouhan was addressing the farmers after taking stock of the crops damaged by hailstorm in Unarsi Kalan village of Lateri tehsil of Vidisha



district on Saturday. Chouhan visited the coriander, wheat, gram and mustard fields of the farmers and took stock of the damage caused to the crops by hail and consoled the farmers. Chouhan said that I am with the farmers in this hour of crisis, farmers should not worry, their loss will be fully compensated. The Chief Minister instructed the Collector that a transparent system should be adopted in the survey work of crops and the survey list should be pasted in the Gram Panchayat building. No farmer should

be left out of the survey. The crop of the farmers who have objection should be surveyed again. Chouhan said that wherever there has been damage due to hailstorm in the state, the assistance will be given by conducting survey with full sensitivity. The Chief Minister also directed to provide assistance for damage to brick kilns, houses and cattle etc. as per rules. Chief Minister assured the farmers that they should not panic, the government is with the farmers with utmost sensitivity and all possi-

ble help will be given to them and the benefits of the schemes will also be given to them. Chouhan said that crops have also been damaged in Aaron, Raghogarh and Chachoda of border district including Sironj. Damage to crops in these areas will also be compensated. Chouhan also interacted with the farmers face-to-face. He said that Unarsi Kalan is a big village. A hospital will be constructed here, which will provide health facilities to the people of dozens of nearby villages. Chouhan reached village Chhoti Raghogarh to take stock of the crop in the field of the elderly farmer Phulbai. Fulbai's eyes became moist while giving information about the damage caused to the gram crop due to the hailstorm. Chief Minister hugged Phoolbai and wiping her tears said that Chintane kare apne bhai will get full compensation for the loss. He directed the District Collector to provide immediate assistance of Rs 50,000 to Phoolbai. It is noteworthy that in about 18 villages of Lateri Tehsil including Unarsi Kalan and Chhoti Raghogarh, more than 2 thousand hectares of gram, coriander, mustard and wheat crops of 1720 farmers have been damaged. The revenue staff has surveyed and passed an assistance amount of Rs. 5 crore 50 lakh.

Representatives of Sarpanch Sangh Met CM Village Level Crisis Management Group Has Important Role in Controlling Covid: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the members of the Village Level Crisis Management Group have a very important role in the control of corona infection. The members of the group have played a remarkable role in the first and second wave of corona in the state. The aggression of the current third wave may be low but all precautions should be taken. In this direction, our aware Panchayat representatives in the village, who have fulfilled their responsibility in the past, have to be active in the interest of society. Vaccination is a powerful means of protection against corona infection. This is a strong protection shield. The people who have been left out of vaccination have to be motivated to get the vaccine by visiting door-to-door. The ongoing vaccination work for the adolescent group is also to be accelerated, so that



no eligible adolescent is deprived of vaccination. Chouhan was addressing the representatives of Sarpanch Sangh at his residence today. Sarpanch Sangh handed over a suggestion letter to Chief Minister regarding

completion of construction works in rural areas. The Chief Minister assured to take necessary decision after studying the suggestions received. Sarpanch Sangh functionaries and public representatives were present.

Covid-19 rise in State five times faster than second wave so far

Team Absolute | Bhopal

It took more than one and a half months during the second wave for daily infections to go from 200 to 4,000, but this time, it took just 10 days. The recent surge is far steeper than the second wave but, fortunately, not as devastating. So far, hospitalisations have been low.

The beginning of the second wave when traced to February 15, 2021, when 203 cases were reported. It was a new high almost every day after that and 50 days later, the daily count crossed 4,000 on April 7. This time, however, the growth has been exponential. On January 3, MP's daily Covid count had touched 221, and on January 13 - just 10 days later - it raced past the 4,000 mark.

For the second consecutive day on Friday more than 4,000 new cases were reported in a single day in state as 4,755 people tested positive. The phenomenal growth of infection in the state could be well understood from the fact that on January 6, daily infections crossed 1,000 mark, on January 9, it crossed 2,000 mark and on Jan 11 it crossed 3,000 mark and then on January 13 it crossed 4,000 mark. So far in 14 days of this year, a total of 25,263 new Covid-19 cases have been reported in the state. And positivity rate has increased many folds from 0.20 on January 1 to 5.9 on January 14. On January 14, there were 21,837 active cases in the state, as per the released by directorate of health services.



Among the districts- 37 districts including Indore and Bhopal reported cases in double figures, in-fact Indore alone reported 1,291 new Covid-19 cases, while cases were reported in single figures from all other districts. New infections were reported from 43 districts of the state. Districts where more than 100 new cases were reported include Indore where 1,291 tested positive, followed by 1008 new cases reported from Bhopal, 570 new cases from Gwalior, 349 new cases from Jabalpur, 263 new cases from Sagar district and 186 new cases from Positivity rate of 5.9% was reported in the state. Positivity rate is the number of people testing positive out of every 100 samples tested. A total of 79,786 samples were tested in the state. On the brighter side, 1,008 people recovered, taking the count of those who have recovered so far from Covid-19 to 7,87,298.

WILL GET AFFECTED FARMERS OUT OF TROUBLE: CM

Relief Amount of 30 Thousand Rupees per Hectare Will Be Given on More Than 50 Percent Loss
Chief Minister Took Stock of Hailstorm Affected Crops in Village Bajawan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that farmers affected by unseasonal rains and hailstorms will be helped to overcome the crisis in this hour of trouble. The relief amount and insurance amount for the damage caused to the crops will be paid to the farmers soon. Chouhan was inspecting the affected crops in village Bajawan of tehsil Mungaoli of Ashoknagar district on Friday.

While interacting with the farmers, Chouhan said that in this hour of crisis, I have come to village Bajawan to join in the sufferings of the farmers. I know very well the plight of the farmers. The farmer irrigates the crops with his sweat, only then we get a grain of food. Meanwhile, if the natural calamity wreaks havoc on the crops, then the



crops get ruined. This shatters the dreams of the farmers. Chouhan said that the damage caused to the crops would be compensated by providing relief and insurance amount. He directed the commissioner and collector that the work of survey of crop damage should be completed by January 18. Survey work should be done with complete

honesty and transparency. After the survey, the list should be put up in the panchayats, so that the farmers concerned can also become aware. If anyone has any objection, it can be resolved. Chouhan said that those farmers who have suffered more than 50 percent loss, relief amount of Rs. 30 thousand per hectare would be provided to them.

Also, in crop insurance, if crops have been damaged, 25 percent advance amount and the remaining 75 percent amount will be given after crop assessment. He said that I myself went to the fields and

Chouhan inspected the wheat crop in the field of farmer Hazarilal. Farmer Hazarilal told that the crop has suffered a lot due to hailstorm. "Also, my daughter's wedding has been fixed for next month. I am very distressed." On this, Chouhan, while comforting the aggrieved farmer, said that if there is a marriage of the daughter, we will make arrangements for that too, so that there is no problem in the daughter's marriage. Don't worry about it at all.

Chouhan reached the farm of farmer Rajkumari Bai and took stock of the damage caused to the mustard crop. The Chief Minister assured farmer Rajkumari Bai who was saddened by the loss of crops and comforted her that the damage caused would be compensated.

Chouhan asked the villagers to get everyone vaccinated in the village and wear masks in view of the crisis of third wave of Covid-19. The third wave of Covid has arrived, we all need to take preventive measures and precautions. All the villagers should follow the Covid friendly behaviour and guideline.

State government bans visitors from meeting jail inmates till March end

From November 1 last year, visitors were allowed to meet the inmates of jails in the state after a decline in coronavirus cases.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In view of the rising cases of COVID-19 in Madhya Pradesh, the state government has banned visitors from meeting prison inmates till the end of March this year in an attempt to prevent the spread of infection.

An order to this effect was issued by the state jail department on Friday. "In a bid to prevent the spread of the pandemic inside the prisons, the visits

of friends, family members and acquaintances of jail inmates will remain banned till March 31. The jail inmates will continue to avail the facility of e-meeting (through video calls) and incoming phone calls," the order read.

From November 1 last year, visitors were allowed to meet the inmates of jails in the state after a decline in coronavirus cases. In March 2021, after the announcement of the coronavirus-induced lockdown, the jail department had banned prison visits till October end last year. Considering a spike in the infection cases again, the Madhya Pradesh government has already announced that all schools and hostels for Classes 1 to 12 in the state will remain shut till January 31.

Besides the closure of schools, the state government has also banned all religious and commercial fairs and rallies, additional chief secretary (Home) Dr Rajesh Rajora had said on Friday.

Only 250 people are now allowed to attend political, cultural, religious, social, educational, entertainment and other such events, he said.

Programmes can be held with only up to 50 per cent of the seating capacity in closed spaces. Also, sports events can be organised with 50 per cent of the capacity of stadiums, the official said.

The COVID-19 tally in Madhya Pradesh rose to 8,19,228 on Friday with detection of 4,755 case during the day, while the death toll stood at 10,543, a health department said.

IGRMS organises exhibition focusing on folk and tribal culture of West Bengal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

An exhibition focusing on folk and tribal culture of West Bengal organized by Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) was inaugurated by Saurabh Bandyopadhyay, Divisional Railway, Bhopal. On this occasion Bandyopadhyay said, this exhibition depicts the socio-economic, cultural life religious beliefs and emotional ties of the People of West Bengal and it is a true step to commemorate the 75th years of independence, it's glorious history, culture and people. It is a humble effort to showcase the rich cultural heritage, customs, traditions, mutual co-ordination and co-operation among its people that portray unity in diversity. On this occa-



sion Praveen Kumar Mishra, Director IGRMS told, this exhibition is an attempt to portray the multifaceted cultural aspects of west Bengal through diverse collection of IGRMS belonging to different folk and tribal communities like Toto, Rajbanshi, Santhal, Munda, Bhumij, Mech, Kol, Rabha, Mahali, Jana, Sonar, Paundra, Soddar, karmakar, Sutradhar Malpahariya, Lodha, Bhutia, Lepcha etc. Durga Pooja the biggest,

most popular and widely celebrated festival of West Bengal has been recently added in the representative list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO he adds. The co-ordinator of the exhibition Dr. Soma Kiro said that topographically the state can be divided into four distinct regions the hilly tracts of Darjeeling in the north; The Tarai forests and plains north of the river Ganges; the western plateau being an extension of the Chhotanagpur and specialities which has shaped and deeply imbedded into the life and life style of the people and has substantially influenced the culture, the tradition, the heritage, the cuisine, the apparel, the festivals, the literature - especially folklore, folk songs, folk theater and also the arts and crafts of that particular region.

CM PLANTED SAPLINGS OF GULMOHAR AND MOULSHREE



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Gulmohar and Moulshree along with the office bearers of social organisation Deep Rekha in Smart Park located in Shyamala Hills on Saturday and also offered Shramdaan. Chouhan received information about the activities of the organisation. The members of Deep Rekha Sanstha told that they are working continuously in the field of environment. The organisation also distributes feeding equipment for birds. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan congratulated the organisation for its constructive work. Moulshree is also called Kesava in Sanskrit, Moulshree or Bakool in Hindi. It is a tree of medicinal importance, which has been used in Ayurveda for centuries.

Gulmohar is considered one of the most beautiful trees in the world. Flowers blooming in big bunches between the leaves of Gulmohar give a distinct attraction to this tree. In summer, instead of leaves, Gulmohar trees are laden with flowers. It is also rich in medicinal properties.

Discussion with Sushasan Sansthan Partners THAT WHICH DOES GOOD TO OTHERS IS GOOD GOVERNANCE: CM

"MADHYA PRADESH SUSHASAN AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT" AND "SUSHASAN DIGEST" MAGAZINE RELEASED

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that good governance is that which does good to others and no one is put to trouble. He said that nobody should be out to trouble and people live happily, this is good governance. Ram Rajya also means good governance. He also mentioned a Choupa of Ramayana by Goswami Tulsidas which says 'Daihiik Daivik Bhoutik Tapa'. Chouhan said that no stone will be left unturned in the task of fulfilling the basic needs of the people, food clothing and shelter, giving happiness of mind and intellect and mobilizing resources for happiness. Chief Minister was addressing the Good Governance Seminar, 'Madhya Pradesh sushasan and Development Report' and the release function of 'Sushasan Digest' magazine at

Kushabhau Thackeray Auditorium.

Chouhan said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is taking the country forward in every direction through various innovations, which is being appreciated globally. He said that for good governance, we organized various panchayats in the state. A voice came from among the panchayats that till the time a daughter is not considered a boon instead of a burden, people will not allow daughters to be born. Out of that thought emerged 'Ladli Laxmi Yojana'. He said that I am proud to say that the sex ratio is changing now. Daughters are being born and that too at par with sons. Chouhan said that we will change the picture of the state through self-employment. We will leave no stone unturned for women empowerment. Chouhan said that we are confident that we will change the state through self-help groups.

Our goal is to improve health and education. He said that we are implementing 'Ek Zila Ek Utpad'. He told that people now want to eat coarse grains, not wheat. We want to encourage the production of coarse cereals. Chouhan said that development and public welfare projects, we are working with the cooperation of the people and will continue to do so. He said that the meaning of democracy is the rule of the people to be run by the people. In the Panchayats, we have decided the strategy for the development of Madhya Pradesh after consulting the people. In the programme, Shombi Sharp, United Nations Resident Coordinator in India, Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Vice Chairman, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis and V Srinivasa, Secretary, DARP, appreciated the various efforts and plans being con-

ducted for good governance in Madhya Pradesh under the leadership of Chief Minister Chouhan. Prof. Chaturvedi said that instead of quantity, work should be done about quality of education. He said that development without culture is not good. He said that the Institute of Good Governance is deciding the scale of indexing for Madhya Pradesh's own ranking. He also emphasised on boosting the industries in the state. Chaturvedi said that Madhya Pradesh has been placed at number one among the states developing on the basis of agriculture in the ranking released by the Central Government. In the programme, Vice Chancellors of various universities and representatives of NGOs expressed their views and informed about the efforts being made in the direction of good governance.

CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO FORMER PM GULZARI LAL NANDA



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid homage to former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Gulzari Lal Nanda on his 23rd death anniversary by garlanding his portrait in his residence hall. Chouhan also remembered the contribution of Late Nanda. Chouhan has tweeted- "I bow at the feet of former Prime Minister of India, Bharat Ratna Gulzari Lal Nanda ji on his death anniversary. The flame of his virtuous thoughts will always inspire all of us to work for the progress of the nation and society."



REBEL WILSON TO HOST BAFTAS ON MARCH 13

London | Agencies

Bridesmaids' and 'Pitch Perfect' star, and body positivity advocate, Rebel Wilson will host the British Academy of Film & Television Arts (BAFTA) Awards on March 13.

The Australian actress, who has been living and working in Hollywood for more than a decade, "stole the show" at the 2020 BAFTAs, recalls 'Variety'.

In her "a gag-filled speech" while presenting the award for best director, she managed to mention Prince Harry, Prince Andrew, coronavirus (then still but a

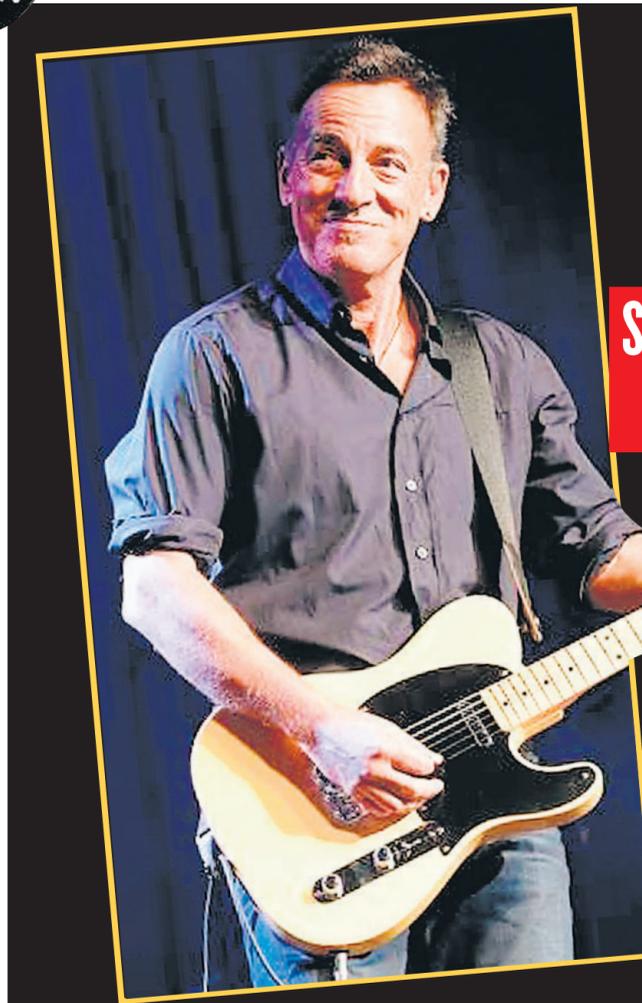
conceptual threat), the lack of swag bags, 'Cats' (in which she had starred) and the absence of women nominated for best director.

That was before the actress, best remembered for her character 'Fat Amy' in 'Pitch Perfect', had lost 60 pounds last year.

The 2020 BAFTAs took place semi-virtually and were hosted by British presenters Edith Bowman and Dermot O'Leary.

"I look at the exceptional, daring talent nominated in this category and I don't think I could do what they do," Wilson had said of the all-male nominees. "Honestly, I just don't have the b***s."

Reacting to the announcement that she was going to host the BAFTAs, Wilson said with her characteristic humour: "I am very honoured to be hosting the EE British Academy Film Awards in March, where Covid will no longer exist because it will clearly have been cancelled by then."



AARON ECKHART SIGNED UP FOR ACTION THRILLER 'THE BRICKLAYER'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Aaron Eckhart, best known for his stint as Harvey Dent in Christopher Nolan's 'The Dark Knight', is set to star in the action thriller 'The Bricklayer'.

The film will be directed by Renny Harlin of ('Die Hard 2'; 'Cliffhanger') with screenplay by Hannah Weg ('Septembers of Shiraz') and Matt Johnson ('Into the Blue'), reports 'Deadline'.

The story will follow the life of a retired CIA operative, who is called on duty after an international conspiracy rattles the intelligence agency, which is blamed for the murders of

international journalists.

According to 'Deadline', Millennium Media will produce the film, shooting for which will start in March with Gerard Butler. Both Millennium and Butler had earlier teamed up with Eckhart on the lucrative 'Has Fallen' franchise. The film is set to be shot at Millennium's new Nu Boyana studios in Greece and Bulgaria.

Commenting on the development Renny Harlin told 'Deadline', "'The Bricklayer' screenplay has the rare combination of well-layered characters, intricate plotting and propulsive action. Having spent five years in China, I'm excited to be back making a high-calibre Hollywood action thriller."

Springsteen tops 'Rolling Stone' magazine's '10 Highest Paid Musicians' list

Los Angeles | Agencies

The pandemic may have Springsteen tops 'Rolling Stone' magazine's '10 Highest Paid Musicians' list completely up-ended the music industry's traditional business model, but artists found all kinds of ways to make many millions of dollars in 2021, according to 'Variety'.

And the big winners were nearly all white and male, if one goes by a '10 Highest Paid Musicians' list published by 'Rolling Stone' magazine on Friday (US Time).

Jay-Z, Kanye West and Taylor Swift are the three exceptions in the list that includes Paul Simon, Ryan Tedder, Red

Hot Chili Peppers, Lindsey Buckingham, Motley Crue and Blake Shelton.

Created by former Forbes correspondent Zack O'Malley Greenburg, the list features several artists who cashed in their song catalogues for nine-figure sums last year.

The leader of the pack, reports 'Variety', was Bruce Springsteen, who not only sold his publishing and recorded-music rights to Sony Music in December for a figure sources say was around \$550 million, but also was the rare performer to make a healthy sum from live performances, with his 'Springsteen on Broadway' summer reprise.

Seven of the 10 made the list based on catalogue sales, with the only exceptions being Jay-Z, Kanye West, and Taylor Swift, who had big years either with non-music ventures, such as West's Yeezy shoe empire, or Jay's sale of half of his champagne line.

'The King's Man': Robust narration and tone; will appeal to history buffs

FILM REVIEW

TROY RIBEIRO

(RUNNING IN THEATRES)

Creator: Matthew Vaughn

Cast: Ralph Fiennes, Gemma Arterton, Djimon Hounsou, Harris Dickinson, Rhys Ifans, Matthew Goode, Tom Hollander, Daniel Bruhl and Charles Dance.

Duration: 133 minutes.

Ratings: *** (three stars)



Wilhelm II of Germany and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia. They were cousins and grandsons of Queen Victoria. Tom is captivating and entertaining in each character that he portrays.

Rhys Ifans is entertaining as the villainous Russian monk Rasputin. He mesmerises the audience with his sunken kohl-laden eyes, bad table manners, and his skill of combining fighting moves with Russian dance spins.

Djimon Hounsou as Shola and Gemma Arterton as the plucky housekeeper-turned-spy have relatively little to do.

Ralph Fiennes, as the dashing super-hero Orlando Oxford, plays his character straight and plain. His stern and strict father performance cum deadly spy when need be, is conventional yet rousing.

Compared to the earlier two editions of the franchise, this film is much more robust in terms of narration and tone. Despite being stylishly mounted, the first two editions were satirical and comical in their outlook, and this one seems like a historical epic.

Like most origin stories, 'The King's Man', too, suffers from pacing issues. All the minor drawbacks, however, are compensated by marvellous production values, attention to historical details, and brilliantly choreographed action sequences.

Overall, 'The King's Man' is an entertaining film that will appeal to history buffs.

dering Britain's colonies and is now working for the Red Cross, promises his dying wife that he would protect their son Conrad and never let him see war again. But 12 years later, Europe is in turmoil. Against the backdrop of World War I and the Russian Revolution around the corner, the narrative focuses on Conrad, who is keen on joining the war against the wishes of his widowed father.

Orlando and his servants Polly Wilkins (Gemma Arterton) and Shola (Djimon Hounsou), with the blessings of King George V, meanwhile, are dragged into an espionage drama that may force the American President to enter the war, thereby strengthening their side. All this forms the crux of the narrative.

The plot is fascinating and relatable as it ingeniously weaves in real-life historical moments and figures. Tom Hollander plays three major monarchs -- King George V of Britain, Kaiser



Producers Guild to honour George Lucas, Kathleen Kennedy

Los Angeles | Agencies

Two living legends of Hollywood, George Lucas and Kathleen Kennedy, will be honoured by the Producers Guild of America with its 2022 Milestone Award at its annual awards night on March 19, reports 'Variety'.

Lucas and Kennedy are being recognised both as individuals and for their collective leadership of Lucasfilm, the crucible of the 'Star Wars' franchise that Lucas created in 1971.

Likening it to a "rebel base" outside Hollywood, Lucas led the Bay Area-based production banner

from its inception until October 2012, when he sold the studio and what 'Variety' calls the banner's golden vault of 'Star Wars' IP to Disney for \$4 billion.

A veteran who started her career as Steven Spielberg's associate in 'Raiders of the Lost Ark' (1981), Kennedy was a partner in Kennedy/Marshall Co. with producer (and her husband) Frank Marshall for 20 years before she became president of Lucasfilm. Before that, Kennedy and Marshall co-founded the Amblin production banner with Steven Spielberg.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Alessandra Ambrosio



INDIA OPEN 2022

LAKSHYA SEN TO MEET WORLD CHAMP IN FINAL; CHIRAG-SATWIK TOO REACH SUMMIT CLASH

- This is Sen's maiden entry in the final of a BWF World Tour Super 500 event.
- The top Indian doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also booked a place in the final, beating the French combine of Fabien Delrue and William Villeger in straight games, 21-10, 21-18 on Saturday.
- In the men's doubles final of the USD 400,000 event, Rankireddy/Shetty will meet top-seeded Indonesian pair Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan, who reached the summit clash by beating Malaysia's Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi, 21-18, 21-18.



of Thailand, 24-26, 9-21 in a hard-fought 52-minute encounter. In the men's singles semi-final against Tze Yong Ng, third seed Sen lost a close first game 19-21 in the semi-final but came back strongly to win the next two games 21-16, 21-12 to emerge victorious in just over one hour at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall here. In the first game, Sen came back from 1-4 down to level scores at 4-4 before opening up a small lead at 10-7. It was an up-and-down affair as Yong fought back to level scores at 14-14 and though Sen again caught up with his rival at 17-11, the Malaysian capitalised on some errors by the Indian shuttler and won the first game. The second game was a close affair ini-

tially as the lead changed hands repeatedly before Sen took control of the proceedings after 12-12 and went on to win the game at 21-16. In the decider, the Indian took an early lead and cruised to victory, always maintaining an upper hand as his Canadian rival wilted under pressure. In the final, Sen will meet reigning World Champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore, who progressed when his opponent Brian Yang of Canada pulled out complaining of sore throat and headache. Yang had tested negative in the mandatory Covid test but still decided to withdraw from the event. His will be the fifth encounter between Sen and Loh Kean. Both are tied 2-2 in head-to-head.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's Lakshya Sen has reached the final of the Yonex-Sunrise India Open 2022, coming back from a game down to beat Malaysia's Tze Yong Ng 19-21, 21-16, 21-12 and set up a clash with World Champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore in the summit clash.

India suffered a setback in the women's singles when young Aakarshi Kashyap lost in straight games to second seed Busanan Ongbamrunphan

BCCI thanks Virat Kohli for his admirable leadership as India's Test captain

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Saturday thanked Virat Kohli for his admirable leadership qualities after the star batter stepped down as the Test skipper of India with immediate effect.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The 33-year-old Kohli, who took over as full-time Test captain in early 2015 when MS Dhoni had announced retirement in Australia, steps down as India's most successful captain in the format, with 40 wins in 68 Tests.

The BCCI took to Twitter to thank Kohli for his contribution. "BCCI congratulates #TeamIndia captain



@imvirkohli for his admirable leadership qualities that took the Test team to unprecedented heights. He led India in 68 matches and has been the most suc-

cessful captain with 40 wins," said BCCI in a tweet. BCCI secretary Jay Shah also congratulated Kohli on a tremendous tenure as Team India captain.

Karatsev sets up title clash with Murray in Sydney



Sydney | Agencies

Top seed Aslan Karatsev of Russia set a first ATP Tour meeting with Great Britain's Andy Murray after fighting his way to a 6-3, 6-7(13), 6-3 win over world No. 26 Daniel Evans in the second Sydney Tennis Classic semifinal here. In a late Friday match, Karatsev demonstrated why he arrived in Australia as an established member of the world's top-20, blasting 49 winners to reach his fourth ATP Tour final. Eleven months ago, the Russian was world No. 114 before bursting onto the scene at the 2021 Australian Open by becoming the

first player in the Open Era to reach the semifinals on his Grand Slam main draw debut. He finally lost to Serbia's Novak Djokovic. Karatsev's only previous meeting with Evans was a 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 win during his run to the 2021 Dubai title, and the top seed struck the ball nicely in Sydney. Particularly strong off his backhand, he broke the Briton twice to surge to a 5-1 lead, and it was to Evans' credit that he fought back to 3-5 as he began to move his opponent around the court more effectively. Karatsev remained relentless, however, and he served out the first set, in which he won 81 per cent of points behind his first serve.

THE ASHES, 5TH TEST

Australian retain upper hand despite England's late fightback

Hobart | Agencies

Continuing their domination in the series, Australia retained the upper hand on the second day of the fifth and final Ashes Test, despite England's late fightback, here on Saturday. England were bowled out for 188 in their first innings, conceding a lead of 115 runs, but they picked up three Australian wickets -- David Warner (0), Usman Khawaja (11), Marnus Labuschagne (5) in the third session to pull things back. Steven Smith (17 not out) and night-watchman Scott Boland (3 not out) were at the crease as Australia finished Day 2 at 37-3 in their second innings, leading England by 152 runs.

As many as 17 wickets fell in the day at the Bellerive Oval in Hobart as Australia and England wrestled for control. Australia didn't have a good start in their second innings as Stuart Broad sent back David Warner for his second duck in the ongoing Test. Chris Woakes and



Mark Wood too got into the act, the former dismissing Marnus Labuschagne and the latter getting the better of Usman Khawaja with a snorter to leave Australia reeling at 37/3. Earlier, resuming the day at 241/6, Mark Wood gave England their first breakthrough of the day. The pacer bowled a short ball to dismiss Mitchell Starc (3), who top-edged the ball, giving a catch to Rory Burns at square leg. Australia skipper Cummins

(2) was the next one to get out and it was again a short ball, which brought a wicket for Wood and England. Australia were eight down for 252 but Nathan Lyon played a counter-attacking knock to revive the hosts' innings. The Australian No 10 took on Wood's short-ball and pulled him away, in front of and behind square, for three sixes, quickly pushing the total to 280, when Chris Woakes removed Alex Carey (24). Lyon finished with 31 off 27 and added another 23 for the final wicket with Scott Boland (10 not out) to take Australia to 303 in their first innings.

Brief scores

Brief scores: Australia 303 & 37/3 in 19 overs (Steven Smith 17 not out, Usman Khawaja 11; Mark Wood 1-9) vs England 188 (Chris Woakes 6, Joe Root 34; Pat Cummins 4-54, Mitchell Starc 3-53) lead by 152 runs.

Premier League: City beat Chelsea to go 13 points clear at the top

Manchester | Agencies

Kevin De Bruyne scored a stunning goal to help Manchester City beat Chelsea on Saturday and strengthen their position at the top of the Premier League table.

The Belgian curled a stunning effort into the bottom right corner from 25-yards in the 70th minute to send City 13 points clear of the second-placed Chelsea. This was Manchester City's 12th consecutive league victory this season and helped them open a big gap at the top of the standings. De Bruyne's goal sealed a deserved win for Pep Guardiola's men, who controlled a tight contest from the first minute and might have



won by a bigger margin but for a brilliant save by Chelsea custodian Kepa Arrizabalaga to deny Jack Grealish in the first half. Romelu Lukaku forced a superb save from Ederson at the other end with the scores goalless, but the Belgian striker cut an isolated figure for much of the afternoon as

Chelsea set up to contain and rarely troubled the hosts on the counter-attack. The stoic defense put up by Thomas Tuchel's men frustrated the defending champions for long periods, but their efforts were undone by De Bruyne's brilliance. The Belgian midfielder rode N'Golo Kante's effort before arcing a sumptuous strike beyond Kepa to provide a significant boost to Manchester City's Premier League title aspirations. After 70 minutes of goalless action and with Chelsea's well-organized, stubborn defence continuing to keep City at bay, it felt as if Guardiola's side needed a moment of inspiration.

De Bruyne duly obliged to reinforce his status as a world-class

match-winner. Chelsea had chances to take something from the game, with Ederson making a fine save from Romelu Lukaku and both Hakim Ziyech and Marcos Alonso later firing over, but ultimately City were too strong for Tuchel's Blues on what was the 50th Premier League meeting between the two sides.

The Blues started the day a point ahead of third-placed Liverpool but having played more games, with Jurgen Klopp's side looking to leapfrog up into the second when they face Brentford on Sunday.

Tuchel's side will be back in Premier League action on Tuesday when it travels to Brighton looking to quickly get back to winning ways.

BADOSA CLINCH SYDNEY CLASSIC TITLE

Sydney | Agencies

Sydney: World No.9 Paula Badosa of Spain overcame a strong challenge from world No.4 Barbora Krejickova, defeating the 26-year-old 2021 French Open champion 6-3, 4-6, 7-6(4) to claim the Sydney Tennis Classic title on Saturday.

This was the 24-year-old Badosa's third career WTA singles title, and the WTA 500 tournament triumph came in 2 hours and 22 minutes of closely-contested power tennis.

Badosa and Czech Republic's Krejickova were the two biggest movers into the top-10 during the last season. Krejickova started 2021 ranked No.65 and Badosa even lower at No.70. But both had career-best seasons



to finish the year in the elite and earn spots at the year-end WTA Finals.

Golfer Chikka third, Khalin fourth in Singapore International



Singapore | Agencies

India's S Chikkarangappa shot 2-under 70 and moved to third place while Khalin Joshi (75) was fourth at the Singapore International at Tanah Merah Country Club here on Saturday.

The 27-year-old Thailand's Rattanon Wannasrichan maintained his lead despite a round of 73 and was in contention for his second title on the Asian Tour. AT second spot was



Korean teenager Joohyung Kim, who returned a 69, on another day of strong winds. India's Chikkarangappa S, in with a 70, is in third place three behind the leader -- in the penultimate event of the 2020-21 season. Chikka had three birdies against one bogey. First-round leader, Khalin Joshi slipped to fourth. Rashid Khan had a round of 70 and rose to tied 14th (T-14), while Viraj Madappa was T-36 after dropping with a card of 78. Shubhankar Sharma (77)

and Ajeetesh Sandhu (80) dropped to T-45, while Shiv Kapur (75) and Abhijit Chadha (75) were T-55. Thailand's 14-year-old amateur star Rattanon Chantanuanuwat, who was two behind the leader at the start of the day, slipped back with a 76 and is five off the pace. Rattanon, the winner of the 2017 Thailand Open, overcame nerves over the opening holes to stay in front and set up one of the most important days of his career on Sunday.

U-19 CWC

Australia, Sri Lanka begin in style, crush West Indies and Scotland

Providence (Guyana) | Agencies

As patient unbeaten 86 by Australia's top-order batter Teague Wyllie helped them defeat hosts West Indies by six wickets with more than five overs remaining in the opening match of the U-19 ICC Cricket World Cup here on Saturday (IST). Set a target of 170 to win, Australia managed to win in just 44.5 overs for the loss of four wickets.

Sri Lanka also record an opening-day win with the Dunith Wellalage-led side thrashing Scotland by 40 runs. Wicketkeeper-batter Sakuna Nidarshana Liyanage's effort of 85 gave Sri Lanka U-19 a competitive 218. Their bowlers then restricted Scotland to 178 in 48.4 overs in a Group D match at Georgetown.

Australia delivered a dominant early statement of intent as the three-time champions breezed past West Indies by six wickets in a Group D match to get their tournament off to a flyer and inflict an early blow on the hosts in Guyana. The Cooper Connolly-led side required just 40.1



West Indies 169 in 40.1 overs (Ackeem Auguste 57; Tom Whitney 3/20, Nivethan Radhakrishnan 3/48, Cooper Connolly 3/17) lost to Australia 170/4 in 44.5 overs (Teague Wyllie 86 not out) by six wickets.

Sri Lanka 218 in 45.2 overs (Sakuna Nidarshana Liyanage 85; Sean Fischer-Keogh 3/56) beat Scotland 178 in 48.4 overs (Jack Jarvis 55; Dunith Wellalage 5/27, Shevon Daniel 2/16) by 40 runs.



overs to take all 10 West Indian wickets and spearheaded by opener Wyllie, chased down their target of 170 to win with ease. After Ackeem Auguste's side had been bowled out for just 169 -- with almost 10 overs to spare -- Wyllie's clinical 86 not out helped Australia complete the most impressive display of the day and win

within 45 overs. In the other game on the opening day, Wellalage's side posted a competitive first innings total of 218 before economical middle over spells from their versatile attack -- including five wickets for captain Wellalage -- skittled the Scots for just 178 inside 49 overs. Wellalage's left-arm spin saw him

rack up formidable figures of 5/27 from nine overs as Scotland were unable to ever get going in pursuit of their 219 target. Sakuna Nidarshana Liyanage was the hero with the bat for the Sri Lankans, striking a run-a-ball 85 to haul his side up to a total that left the game intriguingly poised at the halfway mark.



'Bigg Boss 15':

TEJASSWI PRAKASH ON THE RADAR OF GAUAHAR KHAN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In the upcoming 'Weekend Ka Vaar' episode of 'Bigg Boss 15', model and actress Gauahar Khan will enter the house as a celebrity guest. She will give a task to the contestants to name the person who they believe won't make it to the top three. During the task, only Tejasswi gets called out by Gauahar. The celebrity guest asks Tejasswi to come on the dais along with Nishant Bhat and Rashami Desai. Now, Tejasswi has to choose the one among the two who she feels does not deserve to be in the competition. Tejasswi says Nishant does not have any identity in the show, to which Nishant gives her a befitting reply by saying: "She keeps complaining and plays the victim card like a kid." Gauahar intervenes and in the meanwhile Tejasswi ends up saying: "Nishant she is asking you to shut up." Gauahar immediately retorts and says: "Don't put your words in my mouth", to which Tejasswi adds: "I said that." But Gauahar then again snaps back by saying: "I don't appreciate it."

Nishant and Tejasswi's friendship went haywire after the latter got defeated by Pratik in a recent task. Nishant, who is a good friend of Pratik, stuck by his side which later on disappointed Tejasswi.



Richa Chadha:
OTT has added years to the lives of accomplished actors

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Richa Chadha, who's now seen in the cricket drama 'Inside Edge 3', is happy that OTT platforms have changed the rules of the game for actors as they can now work across a diverse range of characters without any box-office pressure.

She said in a statement that nothing pleases her more than hearing actors say that all their fingers are in the pie because of the sheer volume of work enabled by the rise of OTT.

The 'Gang of Wasseypur' actor stated: "The advent of OTT and its exponential growth in the last three or four years has really added years to the lives of many, many accom-

plished actors such as Prateik Gandhi, Jaideep Ahlawat, Shefali Shah and Priyanka Bose, to name a few."

She added: "There are going to be a lot more and I feel delighted when I get to read the interviews of these actors when they say that they don't have dates, that they are unable to accommodate other shooting commitments because they are so busy."

Chadha concluded by saying that OTT platforms have raised the bar for the film industry in general. "I think this has injected new life into talent and raised the bar for performances," she said. "I hope that this trend continues and more talented and capable actors get their due in Bollywood."



Rohit Shetty set to make OTT debut

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmaker Rohit Shetty, who has entertained audiences with his comedic movies and action thrillers, and also hosted 'Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi', is all set to entertain viewer with his OTT debut.

Shetty will be seen in the show 'Mission Frontline', which peeps into the lives of armed forces posted on the borders. The show has earlier featured Rana Daggubatti and Sara Ali Khan.

He will step into the shoes of a Special Operations Group soldier and experience how the unit lives and trains in the difficult places they are posted at. The show has been shot at locations in and around Srinagar.

Kunal Kochhar, the show's director, said Rohit Shetty is synonymous with action, so no one else could be more qualified for the job than him. "Rohit Shetty's films reflect patriotism, courage and vigour and there couldn't be a better fit than him for 'Mission Frontline'," Kochhar said.

Sharing his experience, he added: "It was an absolutely surreal experience to shoot in the picturesque terrains of Srinagar with the special unit and Rohit's presence added so much energy to it. Super excited to see a completely different side of Rohit and we're sure the audience will enjoy watching the show."

'Mission Frontline' will premiere on January 20 on discovery+.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

2010 release Dhobi Ghat has shown us a phenomenal talent of director Kiran Rao, since then audience are waiting for her come back. Be it a matter of choice, it seems like she is adamant on her selection of a good script. But now Rao seems to be having selected one. After a long time, audience will again encounter another directorial wonder by Kiran Rao soon. A comedy-drama, backed by Aamir Khan Productions is currently in works, shooting of which will start in different parts of Maharashtra on January 8. It's an artist desire to unfold their experimental desire to offer something different with every upcoming projects. This was shared by a leading daily "Kiran's next is a massy entertainer which will be backed by Aamir". Written by Biplab Goswami with the screenplay of Sneha

Desai, the film is centred on three characters. "Rao has confirmed the lead to Jamtara: Sabka Number Ayeqa fame Sparsh Shrivastav, who have been a part of several serials, including Balika Vadhu. For another two leads Rao's search stopped at Pratibha Ranta, who was seen in Zee TV's Qurbana Hua, and Nitanishi Goel, earlier seen in Peshwa Bajirao and Karmaphal Daata Shani". Looking at the subject of the film, it will be shot in different towns in Maharashtra. The Sources adds "The first schedule conducted in adherence with COVID-19 guidelines, will go on till January 20. Post that, the unit will take a break as per COVID protocol and resumes after a few weeks in the next location. Kiran intend to wrap up the shoot by April. The film will also mark the return of composer Ram Sampath and lyricist Amitabh Bhattacharya to the banner after Delhi Belly (2011).



Dance is how Tamannaah Bhatia expresses herself

New Delhi: Tamannaah Bhatia, who has been garnering a lot of positive responses for her performance in the just-released special dance number 'Kodthe' from the Telugu sports drama 'Ghani', has said that more than art, dancing is a form of expression for her.

While sharing her excitement, the actress said: "For me, dancing is more than an art. It is a form of expression. I enjoyed the entire process of shooting Kodthe for Ghani because it has an upbeat and unique vibe to it. It gives a great commentary on the film."

Summing up her experience of working on the track, she said: "I had an incredible time bringing the vision of choreographers Piyush and Shazia alive on screen. I am sure the dance number will compel the audience to groove."

'Ghani' is a boxing drama written and directed by Kiran Korrapati and produced by Renaissance Pictures and Allu Bobby Company. The film also stars Varun Tej as the titular character alongside Saiee Manjrekar, Jagapathi Babu, Upendra, Suniel Shetty and Naveen Chandra. Tamannaah will also collaborate with Varun Tej for 'F3'. In addition, the actress also has 'Plan A Plan B' and 'Yaar Dost' in Bollywood. Apart from that she has 'Bhola Shankar' and 'Gurthundha Seethakalam' in Telugu.

VINAY JAIN: I FEEL ECSTATIC ABOUT WARM EMBRACE FROM AUDIENCE

Mumbai: Actor Vinay Jain, who plays Harsh Vardhan Birla in 'Yeh Rishita Kya Kehlata Hai', is happy that the audience has accepted the show's new track. "I feel ecstatic about this warm embrace from the audience. It's very reassuring when everyone's arduous efforts find acceptance and appreciation," he said. According to him, due to its longstanding popularity, the reach that 'YRKKH' has is immense. "The acknowledgement and love one is getting from the audience as a result of that is truly overwhelming. This show is definitely a significant milestone in my career," he said. He is also being showered with praises. By far the best compliment the actor has received is, "It just doesn't seem as though you are acting. Your performance is too real!" According to him, relationships are the core of this show. "The fact that the makers of this show handle the ever-changing equations so deftly and the audience can connect with it so closely, speaks volumes for the proficiency of the makers and the sensitivity of the audience," he said.



Nitibha Kaul