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INDIA REPORTS 12% SINGLE-DAY RISE IN COVID CASES

OVER 3,00,000

▶ A TOTAL 491 DEATHS WERE REPORTED IN THE LAST 24 HOURS ON THURSDAY TAKING THE TOLL TO 4,87,693.
▶ THE ACTIVE CASELOAD HAS JUMPED TO 19,24,051 WHICH CONSTITUTES 5.03 PER CENT OF THE COUNTRY'S TOTAL POSITIVE CASES.
▶ THE OMICRON INFECTION TALLY HAS RISEN TO 9,287 ACROSS THE NATION, AN INCREASE OF 3.63 PER CENT FROM WEDNESDAY.



CURRENT SURGE NOT LEADING TO SEVERE ILLNESS, DEATHS: ICMR CHIEF

New Delhi: The current upsurge in Covid cases is not causing severe illness and deaths following the high uptake of Covid vaccines, Indian Council of Medical Research chief Dr Balram Bhargava said on Thursday. Addressing the media on current Covid surge, he said that the vaccine remains beneficial and deaths have considerably reduced as compared to the second Covid surge. However, those with comorbidities must monitor their health and avoid any complications, he added.

'OMICRON PATIENTS BELOW 60 YEARS CAN TAKE PARACETAMOL'

BOOSTER DOSE PROVIDES GOOD ANTIBODY PROTECTION AGAINST OMICRON: LANCET

London: A third 'booster' dose of Covid-19 vaccine successfully raises antibody levels that neutralise the Omicron variant, according to laboratory findings. Published as a research letter in *The Lancet*, researchers including from the Francis Crick Institute and UCLH Biomedical Research, found that antibodies generated in people who had received only two doses of either the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine or the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine were less able to neutralise the Omicron variant as compared to the Alpha and Delta variants. They also found that antibody levels dropped off in the first three months following the second dose but a third 'booster' dose raised levels of antibodies that effectively neutralised the Omicron variant.

New Delhi: People below 60 years of age with no comorbidities, infected by the Omicron variant of Covid-19, can begin their treatment with paracetamol, Dr Shashank Joshi, member of Maharashtra's Covid task force, said. In the latest episode of online show Health4All by Heal Foundation, Joshi, an endocrinologist at Lilavati Hospital in Mumbai, said that doctors are likely to prescribe antivirals like Molnupiravir, if someone above the age of 50 has a consistent fever for two days alongside two or three comorbidities. But "Omicron patients below 60 years with no comorbidities can start symptomatic treatment with paracetamol", he said. However, paracetamol should not be prescribed to children below the age of 18 years, to pregnant women, or to patients who require hospitalisation, he added. Earlier, there were reports claiming that paracetamol 500 mg tablets were being given to children along with Covaxin -- the only approved Covid vaccine for teenagers in India.

daily positivity rate has declined to 16.41 per cent.

With the administration of over 73 lakhs vaccine doses in the last 24 hours, India's Covid inoculation coverage has reached 159.67 crore as of Thursday morning.

More than 12.72 crore balance and unutilised Covid vaccine doses are still available with the states and UTs to be administered, according to the health ministry as of Thursday morning.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India reported 3,17,532 fresh Covid cases in the last 24 hours, a substantial rise of around 12 per cent from the previous day, said the Union ministry of health and family welfare on Thursday. On Wednesday, India had reported 2,82,970 new Covid cases, a rise of over 18 per cent from the previous day's count, and on Tuesday, 2,38,018 new infections were registered. The recovery of 2,23,990 patients in the last 24 hours has increased the cumulative tally to 3,58,07,029. Consequently, India's recovery rate stands at 93.69 per cent.

Also in the same period, a total of 19,35,180 tests were conducted across the country. India has so far conducted over 70.93 crore cumulative tests.

Meanwhile, the weekly positivity rate has climbed to 16.06 per cent amid a sudden spike in cases. The

Amar Jawan Jyoti will be extinguished today

The eternal flame at the India Gate will be extinguished after 50 years on Friday and will be merged with the flame at the adjoining National War Memorial (NWM) in the run-up to the Republic Day.

▶ IT IS SPREAD OVER 40 ACRES IN THE INDIA GATE COMPLEX BEHIND THE CANOPY, AND IS DEDICATED TO SOLDIERS KILLED DURING THE INDO-CHINA WAR IN 1962, INDO-PAK WARS IN 1947, 1965 AND 1971, INDIAN PEACE KEEPING FORCE OPERATIONS IN SRI LANKA AND IN THE KARGIL CONFLICT OF 1999, BESIDES THOSE KILLED IN THE UN PEACE-KEEPING MISSIONS.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The eternal flame known as Amar Jawan Jyoti was built in 1972 underneath the India Gate arch to commemorate the soldiers martyred in the Indo-Pak War of 1971. It is a memorial symbolised by an inverted bayonet and soldier's helmet over it with an eternal flame burning beside it.

The existence of Amar Jawan Jyoti was questioned

two years ago after the National War Memorial came into being and the nation got a new eternal flame there.

Back then, the Indian Army had stated that Amar Jawan Jyoti will continue as it is an "inseparable" part of the country's history.

Earlier, tri-services chiefs and visiting delegates used to pay respect at the Amar Jawan Jyoti. Even on all important days like Republic Day and Independence Day, tri-services chiefs used to pay

respect at Amar Jawan Jyoti.

But with the new eternal flame at the National War Memorial and wreath-laying ceremony on all designated days being carried out at the memorial, the force will now merge the Amar Jawan Jyoti with the other.

The National War Memorial was built in memory of all soldiers and unsung heroes who laid down their lives defending the nation since Independence.

SC UPHOLDS OBC QUOTA, AGREES TO EXAMINE EWS QUOTA CRITERIA IN MARCH, IN MEDICAL COURSES

'Reservation is not at odds with merit'

Competitive exams do not reflect economic social advantage which is accrued to some classes. Merit should be socially contextualised. Reservation is not at odds with merit but furthers its distributive impact.



in the postgraduate courses. The top court emphasised that judicial intervention at this stage will further delay the admission process this year, and it would also trigger litigation. "We are still in midst of the pandemic and thus the nation needs doctors," the bench said.

The apex court also declared that Pradeep Jain judgement can't be read to mean no reservation in AIQ seats. In connection with the EWS quota, the top court said the petitioners' argument was not limited to the quota in AIQ, but it was also on the criteria adopted by the Central government. Emphasising that this aspect requires detailed hearing, the bench fixed it for further hearing in the third week of March this year.

graduate and postgraduate seats for the academic year 2021-2022, pending a detailed hearing. Citing that when a matter involves constitutional interpretation, the bench said the judicial propriety will not allow the court to stay the quota, in the backdrop that

counselling has not commenced. A group of petitioners led by Neil Aurelio Nunes moved the top court challenging Centre's July 29, 2021 notification to implement OBC and EWS reservation in NEET-All India Quota from the current academic session

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday permitted the Central government to implement 10 per cent economically weaker sections (EWS) reservation in All India Quota seats in NEET under-

PVC Aadhar Card obtained from open market is invalid

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Unique Identification Authority of India has issued a warning to Aadhaar cardholders about using PVC Aadhaar cards obtained from open markets. Such cards are not acceptable, according to the authority, and only UIDAI-issued cards would be accepted. UIDAI said in a tweet, "#AadhaarEssentials is a hashtag for all things Aadhaar. We highly advise against using open-market PVC Aadhaar clones because they lack security measures. You can order an Aadhaar PVC Card for Rs 50. (Inclusive of GST & Speed post charges). Aadhaar Cards bought from the open market, according to the UIDAI, are not secure, which is why cardholders should order the document through the UIDAI for a price of Rs 50, which includes GST and speed post charges.



STEPS TO GET PVC AADHAR CARD

- Step 1:** Go to the UIDAI's official website.
- Step 2:** Select 'Order Aadhaar PVC Card' from the My Aadhaar section.
- Step 3:** Type in your 12-digit Aadhaar card number, your 16-digit virtual ID, or your 28-digit EID.
- Step 4:** Use the OTP verification technique to double-check the information.
- Step 5:** Examine your Aadhaar PVC Card's preview.
- Step 6:** Pay Rs 50 to complete the order.

STOP AUCTION OF DEBT-RIDDEN FARMERS' LAND IN RAJASTHAN: CM

Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday instructed bank officials to stop the auction of lands of debt-ridden farmers in the state. Farmers' lands are being seized by bank officials on the grounds of non-payment of loan instalments in different parts of the state and hence, the opposition parties have been attacking the state government for making fake promises of loan waivers. Gehlot tweeted: "Due to non-payment of loans of commercial banks under the control of Reserve Bank in the state by farmers, the process of land attachment and auction is being done under the Removal of Difficulties Act. The state government has instructed the officials to stop it." He said that the state government has waived the loans of cooperative banks. Farm lands across Rajasthan are being auctioned due to non-payment of loan instalments.

Indian Army contacts Chinese PLA, seeks return of abducted Arunachal youth

Team Absolute | Itanagar

The Indian Army through hotline has contacted the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) and sought return of abducted Arunachal Pradesh teenager Miram Taron, defence sources said on Thursday. A defence PRO tweeted: "17-yr-old youth Miram Taron of Zido, Arunachal Pradesh, was reportedly captured by the PLA across the LAC. On receipt of info, Indian Army imdly contacted PLA through a hotline. Assistance from PLA has been sought to locate and return him as per protocol." The Chinese Army reportedly abducted Taron from the Indian territory where China had constructed 3-4 km road in 2018. The incident was reported from Upper Siang district on January 18. His friend, who managed to escape, reported the matter to the authorities and brought it to the notice of Tapir Gao, an MP from the Arunachal East parliamentary constituency.

CHINA DENIED

Beijing: China's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday that it was not aware of the incident in which the Chinese People's Liberation Army reportedly abducted a 17-year-old youth from Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district but said the PLA controls the borders and cracks down on "illegal entry and exit activities." The spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Beijing said, "I don't know the situation. The Chinese People's Liberation Army controls borders in accordance with the law and cracks down on illegal entry and exit activities," the spokesperson said.



GOLD PRICES MAY TOUCH \$2,000 PER OUNCE IN 12-15 MONTHS: MOFSL

New Delhi: Rising crude oil prices along with Covid-led supply chain disruptions as well as geo-political tensions and inflationary pressures are likely to lend support to gold, Motilal Oswal Financial Services said on Thursday. According to MOFSL, gold prices are expected to move towards \$2,000 per ounce (1 ounce is equivalent to around 31 gm) over the next 12-15 months. (Around Rs. 49600/10gms) Currently, gold futures are trading at around \$1,840 per ounce in New York Mercantile Exchange, which is considered the global benchmark. For the next quarter, gold prices are seen at \$1,915 followed by \$1,965. Support is pegged at around \$1,800 and \$1,745 zones, MOFSL said. "Inflation has been one of the main highlights for 2021 and it could continue to be in the limelight next year too. The rising inflationary expectations were increasing the distress in the market for a long time, although the panic in the market started once US Governor Powell also acknowledged the same and started to act on it," it said. Even if the major central banks take measures to calm inflation, rise in crude oil prices and continuing panic involving supply chain issues will continue to keep the pressure on infla-



SL Navy rams and sinks TN fishing boat, 7 fishermen rescued

Team Absolute | Chennai

A Sri Lankan Naval boat rammed into Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu damaging the boat that developed cracks and sank. Seven fishermen, who were on-board the sinking boat were rescued by other fishermen. The incident occurred on Wednesday late at night. The All Mechanised Boat Fishermen's association president, P. Sesuraja while speaking to media-persons said, "450 boats from Rameswaram area ventured into the sea after 4 p.m. on Wednesday. While they were fishing near Katchatheevu, a Sri Lankan Naval boat reached the spot and rammed it into a fishing boat creating a crack in the boat, and ultimately it sank in the waters. Sesuraja also said that the livelihood of the fishermen from Tamil Nadu has been badly hit as most of the fishermen are venturing to the sea from Rameswaram and



Ramanathapuram areas only twice a week and this has affected the financial situation and the livelihood. It is to be noted that several fishermen from Tamil Nadu were attacked by the Sri Lankan Navy and in 2021 alone five Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu lost their lives in

the sea. Around 55 Indian fishermen are still languishing in Sri Lankan jails after they were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy on charges of crossing the International Marine Boundary Line (IMBL). While 68 were arrested in December 2021 in three separate incidents on alternate days, 13 were released on bail.



INHERITED PROPERTY OF ISSUELESS HINDU FEMALE DYING INTESTATE GOES BACK TO SOURCE: SC



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday held that inherited property of a female Hindu dying issueless and intestate, will either go to the heirs of her parents or husband.

Explaining the provisions of the Hindu Succession Act, a bench of Justices S. Abdul Nazeer and Krishna Murari said: "The main scheme of this Act is to establish complete equality between male and female with regard to property rights and the rights of the female were declared absolute, completely abolishing all notions of a limited estate."

It further added that the Act brought about changes in the law of succession among Hindus and gave rights which were

still then unknown in relation to women's property. "The legislative intent of enacting Section 14 (1) of the Act was to remedy the limitation of a Hindu woman who could not claim absolute interest in the properties inherited by her but only had a life interest in the estate so inherited," said the bench.

The judgment came on an appeal filed by the legal heirs of Arunachala Gounder, as it set aside the verdicts passed by Madras High Court and the trial court. "Unfortunately, neither the trial court nor the High Court adverted itself to the settled legal propositions which are squarely applicable in the facts and circumstances of the case," said the top court.

"Since the succession of the suit properties opened in 1967 upon death of Kupayee Ammal, the 1956 Act shall apply and thereby

Ramasamy Gounder's daughter's being Class-I heirs of their father too shall also be heirs and entitled to 1/5th share in each of the suit properties," it said.

The bench noted that the right of a widow or daughter to inherit the self-acquired property or share received in partition of a coparcenary property of a Hindu male dying intestate is well recognised not only under the old customary Hindu law but also by various judicial pronouncements.

It said if a female Hindu dies intestate without leaving any issue, then the property inherited by her from her father or mother would go to the heirs of her father whereas the property inherited from her husband or father-in-law would go to the heirs of the husband. "The basic aim of the legislature in enacting Section 15(2) is to ensure that

inherited property of a female Hindu dying issueless and intestate, goes back to the source," said the bench.

It added that the Act lays down a uniform and comprehensive system of inheritance and applies, inter-alia, to persons governed by the Mitakshara and Dayabhaga Schools and also to those governed previously by the Murumakkattayam, Aliyasantana, and Nambudri Laws.

"The Act applies to every person, who is a Hindu by religion in any of its forms including a Virashaiva, a Lingayat or a follower of the Brahma Pararthana or Arya Samaj and even to any person who is Buddhist, Jain, or Sikh by religion excepting one who is Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion," it added.

Battle for UP: Akhilesh Yadav to contest from Karhal in Mainpuri

LUCKNOW | Agencies

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav will contest the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls from Karhal in Mainpuri district.

According to party sources, a decision was taken at a meeting here on Thursday.

Karhal is a Samajwadi bastion and Mulayam Singh Yadav represents the Mainpuri parliamentary constituency in the Lok Sabha. Karhal has over 1.44 lakh Yadav voters and is considered 'safe' for the Samajwadi leadership. This is the first time that Akhilesh will be



contesting the Assembly elections. SP spokesman Anurag Bhaduria said that with Akhilesh contesting the elections, the entire party cadre is excited and the people know that they will be electing not a legislator but a chief minister.

Chandra Shekhar to contest against Yogi

Lucknow: In a major development, Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Azad will contest from Gorakhpur as Azad Samaj Party (ASP) candidate against Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Chandra Shekhar had announced his decision to field candidates in around 33 seats in Uttar Pradesh after his alliance talks with Samajwadi Party failed. Though the battle between Yogi Adityanath and Chandra Shekhar will mainly be one of perception, the Bhim Army hopes that other

ANGRY CROWD DRIVES AWAY BJP MLA FROM CONSTITUENCY

Muzaffarnagar: A BJP MLA from Khatauli in Muzaffarnagar district, was chased away by villagers of his own constituency Muzaffarnagar while he was campaigning for the Assembly election. A video of the incident has gone viral on social media. The MLA, Vikram Singh Saini, had arrived for a meeting at a village here on Wednesday when he found himself facing angry residents. In the video, a group of villagers is seen following Saini to his car and shouting after him as he gets in. The villagers can be heard shouting slogans against the MLA. Saini is also heard lashing out and later seen folding his hands in resignation as he is driven away in his vehicle. Vikram Saini has been known to make inflammatory statements. In 2019, he threatened to 'bomb' those who felt unsafe in India. A year before that, he had said, "Our country is called Hindustan, which means a nation for Hindus". He has also threatened to 'break the limbs of those who kill cows'.

Cong poster girl joins BJP

Lucknow: Priyanka Maurya, the poster girl for the Congress campaign 'Ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon', on Thursday joined the BJP in Lucknow. Priyanka was upset over being denied a ticket from the Sarojini Nagar Assembly segment and she claimed that she was asked to pay a bribe by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's aide. Another leader who joined the BJP on Thursday is Pramod Gupta, a brother-in-law of Mulayam Singh Yadav. Meanwhile Aditi Singh, a rebel MLA of Congress from Rae Bareilly, resigned from the Congress while rebel SP MLA Nitin Agarwal also resigned from SP. He also resigned from the post of deputy speaker to which he had been elected in October last year.

ANDHRA WOMAN KILLS HUSBAND, CARRIES SEVERED HEAD TO POLICE STATION

Tirupati: In a horrific incident, a woman murdered her husband and carried his severed head to a police station in Andhra Pradesh's Chittoor district on Thursday.

The incident occurred at Renigunta near the temple town of Tirupati.

According to police, Vasundhara attacked her husband Ravi Chandran (53) with a knife and killed him during a quarrel at their home. She then cut his head and carried it in a bag to the police station where she surrendered. Police officers rushed to the scene and also brought the accused there to gather clues. The body was shifted to SV Medical College for autopsy.

A police officer said preliminary investigations show that Ravi Chandran and Vasundhara used to have frequent fights. The couple had an argument over some issue on Thursday morning and in a fit of rage the woman stabbed him to death. Not stopping at that, she cut his head and carried it to the police station. The couple has a 20-year-old son. Ravi Chandran is a native of Narasaraopet in Guntur district. Police have informed his relatives about the incident.

RAHUL AIDE HOLDS TWITTER POLL FOR PUNJAB CM, CHANNI COMES FIRST

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Though the Congress in Punjab has been maintaining that it will not go to polls with a CM face, but a Twitter poll by a

Rahul Gandhi's aide may stir a new controversy in the state. The Twitter poll was conducted by Rahul Gandhi's aide Nikhil Alva who in the poll asked who should be CM's face in Punjab. About 69 per cent respondents voted in favour of Charanjit Singh Channi, the incumbent Chief Minister, followed by Navjot Singh Sidhu getting 12 per cent and then Sunil Jakhar with 9 per cent votes. But they are way behind Channi.

The total votes polled were 1,283. Alva, who is with Rahul Gandhi and looks after his social media outreach, is son of Margret Alva. Reacting to it Alva said, "this is a good platform to take political feedback from people having political conscience, there is no harm in it."

He said there is nothing serious about it. It's about a feedback session and there should be no controversy on it.

The party has, however, categorically stated that it is unlikely to project anyone as the CM face and will go with collective leadership in the state. The issue will be settled after the results are out. In Punjab, state president Navjot Singh Sidhu asserting himself for the top post ahead of the polls, is trying to garner support among party colleagues. Chief Minister Channi too is trying to impress the party high command. The party is trying to balance the warring factions and pacify the leaders. In Punjab, the AAP has



made Bhagwant Mann a CM candidate after his name was cleared by Arvind Kejriwal after receiving over 21 lakh responses from the people, with 93 per cent of them favouring his name.

ED arrests man with Chinese links for cheating through mobile apps

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said that it has arrested one Anas Ahmed in connection with a prevention of money laundering case of Rs 84 crore.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The accused has alleged links with Chinese people and he allegedly committed fraud through Powerbank and other such fraud mobile applications.

The ED official said that presently, Anas Ahmed is in judicial custody and lodged in Puzhal Central Prison, Chennai, in the predicate offence booked by CB, CID, Chennai.

"On Thursday we got six days custody of Anas from the Hon'ble Principal City Civil & Sessions and Special Judge for PMLA Cases, Bengaluru. We have to record his statement, we will also confront him with documentary evidences," said



an ED official.

The ED official said that they initiated money laundering investigation into the operations of entities of the

accused. They allegedly induced people to invest certain amount of money through Powerbank and other such fraudulent apps by assuring to

remit interest on daily or weekly basis on the investment made.

The accused entities closed their purported business after collecting huge sum of money from innocent people and went uncommunicado.

"The accused entities neither paid interest nor returned the principal amount to anyone and withheld the investment made by public which has resulted in commission of cheating," said the ED official.

Anas Ahmed is a partner in two accused firms namely H&S Ventures Inc and Clifford Ventures.

The ED official said these two partnership firms are responsible for cheating people to the tune of Rs 84 crore.

Nearly 400 charging points across 170 location installed in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In line with becoming a green city with an eco-friendly and sustainable mode of transportation, Delhi now has 377 charging points across 170 locations, the Delhi government said.

The Delhi government on Monday launched its first electric bus and on Wednesday signed an agreement with the CESL for installation of charging and battery swapping stations for two, three and four-wheeler electric vehicles at cluster bus depots of its Transport Department. Each charging and battery swapping facilities will be installed at 14 locations. Each will include six charging points, three of which will be for two and



three-wheelers while three points will be meant for four-wheelers. In a bid to encourage commuters to switch to electric vehicles, the Delhi Government on Thursday launched a dedicated one-stop website for the promotion and adoption of Electric Vehicles in the city. Through this website, the AAP Government aims to provide the ultimate user-friendly experience to the public

along with giving all helpful information making it easier for the users to purchase an Electric vehicle.

India successfully test fires new version of Brahmos missile

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India on Thursday successfully carried out test fire of Brahmos missile with enhanced capabilities.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in a statement said that Brahmos supersonic cruise missile with increased indigenous content and improved performance was successfully test fired at 10.30 a.m. from Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the coast of Odisha.

The launch was conducted by Brahmos Aerospace in close coordination with DRDO teams. In this text book flight, the missile followed the predicted trajectory, meeting all mission objectives. The flight test is a major milestone in the way forward for Brahmos programme. The highly manoeuvrable missile cruised at supersonic speed for its maximum range and all mission objectives were met.



The missile was equipped with the advanced indigenous technologies and followed a modified optimal trajectory for enhanced efficiency and improved performance. The missile with the modified control system has been fine tuned to achieve an enhanced capability. This flight test was monitored by all the sensors of the range instrumentation including telemetry, radar and electro-optical tracking systems deployed across the eastern coast and the down range ships.

Rainfall in Delhi, NW India but not on Jan 26, dense fog likely: IMD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The India Meteorological Department (IMD), as part of its extended range forecast issued for the period January 20 to February 2, on Thursday predicted rainfall in the run up to January 26 but not on that Republic Day itself.

Isolated to scattered rainfall is predicted over east Rajasthan during January 20 to 23, east Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh during January 22 to 24 and Madhya Pradesh on January 22 and 23.

The IMD has also predicted strong surface winds (20-30 kmph) over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan, and west Uttar Pradesh on January 21 and 22. It also said fairly widespread to widespread rainfall very likely over northeast India during January 23-25.

Very dense fog is very likely in isolated pockets over Uttar Pradesh and dense fog in



isolated pockets over Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, west Rajasthan, north Madhya Pradesh, and sub-Himalayan West Bengal & Sikkim on January 21 morning. It is likely to persist over east Uttar Pradesh and Bihar during subsequent 24 hours i.e. till January 22 morning.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Harimati Devi is mother of Army No. 15664920H, Rank CHM, Name Ramayan Singh residing at : Raghuchak, PO - Katahara, Dist- Bhagalpur (Bihar) PIN 813213, have changed my name from Harimoti Devi to Harimati Devi and changed my date of birth from 01Jul 1946 to 01Jan 1953 as per affidavit No AB 819256 dated 27 Dec 2021 before Bhagalpur court.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Bijendra Prasad Singh is father of Army No. 15664920H, Rank CHM, Name Ramayan Singh residing at : Raghuchak, PO - Katahara, Dist- Bhagalpur (Bihar) PIN 813213, have changed my name from Bijay Narayan Singh to Bijendra Prasad Singh and changed my date of birth from 01 Jul 1942 to 01 Jan 1955 as per affidavit No AB 819255 dated 27 Dec 2021 before Bhagalpur court.



FIRST PRIORITY IS TO PROVIDE RELIEF TO THE PUBLIC BY CURBING CRIMINALS: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that providing relief to the general public by curbing criminal elements is the first priority of the government. Strictest action should be taken to stop the identified crimes, save women and girl child from crimes, search for missing children, control the illegal business of liquor and take illegal occupants of land.

Chouhan gave these instructions while reviewing the law and order at the beginning of the Collector-Commissioner conference by the VC from Mantralaya today. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that this conference is a medium for good governance. We have decided to work for 29 days and review the works for one day. Chief Minister Chouhan had held such a conference on November 29, 2021.

Chouhan received information about the cases of minor abducted and missing girls in the state during Operation Muskaan. He directed that the operation Muskaan should be reviewed regularly. It was told in the conference that in the year 2021, 13 thousand 108 boys and girls were searched. Urja Mahila Help Desk has been set up in 700 police stations in the state. While taking action against the accused of crime against women, 45 history-sheets/goons opened the file, 6 against NSA and 39 against District



extermments.

Chouhan said that some districts have performed well in the identified crimes. Other districts should also try to control such crimes. The average conviction in the identified crimes in the state has been 66 percent. In conviction cases, 303 were sentenced to life imprisonment, 149 to imprisonment and 3 to death.

Chouhan especially congratulated Raisen for controlling the identified crime. In Raisen district, criminals were punished by following up to the court level in various cases. Datia, Bhind, Shahdol and Indore districts are also ahead in crime control. These districts have done a better job in getting the criminals punished.

In serious cases like murder, attempt to murder, robbery, dacoity and rioting, 24 thousand 736 accused were arrested

within seven days of the commission of the crime. In the state, 3 thousand 925 criminals were made in the district. A total of 638 were arrested in Rasuka. 13 thousand 233 under the Arms Act, 32 thousand 281 in the Gambling Act and more than 9 lakh criminals were caught including other sections.

Chouhan received information about property related crimes in the state. The Director General of Police said that in the year 2021, in the cases of dacoity, robbery, theft and house-breaking, property worth Rs 190 crore of general public was grabbed by criminals, out of which property worth Rs 107 crore has been freed. In Rajgarh district, police have caught criminals using drones.

Chouhan said that zero tolerance policy should be adopted in all the districts on the issue of illicit liquor. Such criminals have to be crushed. Negligence at any level will not be tolerated. Chouhan said that making liquor with chemicals is a death sentence. It was informed in the conference that the Narcotics Wing organized 73 de-addiction and public awareness programs in the year 2021 in the state. Last year, 3958 offenses were registered in NDPS and 5 thousand 68 accused were arrested. Action was also taken to close the illegal financial sources of criminals. Last year, 323 vehicles engaged in illegal mining and transportation were confiscated.

CM WILL TRANSFER AMOUNT OF PMAY (RURAL) ON JAN 28TH



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will transfer the amount of newly approved houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana PMAY (Rural) to the beneficiary's account on January 28. The programme will be organized at the state, district and district panchayat level.

Director PMAY (Rural) Tanvi Sundriyal informed that against the total received target of 30 lakh 59 thousand under the scheme from the financial year 2016-17 to 2021-22, houses of more than 22 lakh 68 thousand beneficiaries have been completed. In the year 2021-22, 3.69 lakh houses have been approved in the state against the target of 4 lakh 20 thousand for different districts. Under the scheme, 31 lakh 52 thousand such families, whose names were not recorded in the Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011, have been added through Awas Plus App.

Quality power supply is the priority of the government: Pradyuman Singh Tomar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The State Government is committed for the welfare of the poor, common people, farmers and people. The first priority of the Energy Department is quality power supply. From Lineman to Energy Minister will pay attention to this. The situation has to be continuously improved. More attention will have to be paid on metering in villages. Wherever complaints are received, timely action has to be taken. With this, the consumer and the general public will be satisfied and the image of the department will improve.

Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar gave these instructions during the review of the works of Madhya Pradesh West Zone Electricity Distribution Company, Indore. He said that tripping should be reduced, failure rate of transformers should be reduced, there should be quality supply, so that the number of complaints should be reduced. He said that the per unit cash revenue collection (CRPU) of Indore and Ujjain should be increased further. The Energy Minister said that there is an urgent need to improve agriculture feeders in Alvasa, Khedi Khandwa, Takkarda Ujjain, Jasandi Burhanpur etc. of Depalpur. He said that wherever there is a need to increase the capacity of the transformer, the capacity should be increased by conducting tests immediately. Failure to do so will lead to tripping, unit loss and consumer complaints. The loss will be of the power company itself. He said that after winter and corona control, he would set up Jan-Choupal to interact with the consumers and the general public.

The Energy Minister spoke to all the superintending engineers outside Indore through video conference and instructed them to get salary on time to the outsourced employees.



He said that action should be taken against the outsourced company which is not paying the salary on time. In the villages where metering has taken place earlier, the bill for meter reading should be issued only.

The Energy Minister directed that all the complaints that come to the power minister's help desk in Bhopal should be resolved quickly so that the common man can get relief. In nine months, 9 hundred complaints had reached this desk in the West Zone, which have been resolved. Instructions were given for speedy resolution of complaints lodged in the month of January. Amit Tomar, Managing Director of MP Pakshivikam said that the failure rate of transformer has come down in one year. Earlier it was 4.62 percent, which is now 4.10 percent. He informed about the success achieved in reducing line loss, increasing revenue, speedy resolution of complaints and other works. The Energy Minister said that the situation in the western region is better than others. Chief General Manager Rinkesh Kumar Vaish and other officers were present.

CM planted Almond and Karanj saplings in Smart Garden

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday planted almond and Karanj saplings in the Smart City Garden Shyamla Hills. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, members of Awaaz Jan-Kalyan Samiti also planted saplings. Chouhan received the details of the activities of the organisation. Functionaries of the organisation Prashant Dubey, Gunjan and Subhash Garg were present.



Almond is useful in the treatment of high blood pressure and constipation, almond is a dry fruit. Technically, it is the seed of the fruit of the almond tree. The almond tree bears pink and white fragrant flowers. It flourishes more in moun-

tainous areas. In Asia, it occurs in greater numbers in Iran-Iraq. Almond is helpful in digestion due to the presence of fiber. Almonds are useful in the treatment of high blood pressure, consti-

pation and heart diseases. It is rich in potassium, magnesium, calcium and vitamin E. Karanj plant is considered important in Ayurvedic medicine. Karanj plant is also used in religious works.

Rights Body Slams Madhya Pradesh's Aid For Domestic Violence Victims

Madhya Pradesh Women's Commission chairperson said no amount of compensation will be sufficient for a woman who was a victim of mental and physical torture.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Women's Commission chairperson Shobha Oza on Thursday slammed the state government's decision to provide financial assistance to women suffering disability due to domestic violence, citing that it was "impractical" and "added salt to the injury of victims."

The Madhya Pradesh cabinet had on Tuesday approved a scheme for providing financial assistance to women who have become handicapped due to domestic violence.

"The Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led government's decision to provide financial assistance to women who turned divyaang (disabled) due to domestic violence, despite having empty coffers, is nothing but a jumla (false promise)," Oza said in a state-



ment. "It is a totally impractical decision and is like

adding salt to the injury of women," she said. The move also proves that the state government was trying to cover up for its failure of not being able to control the atrocities against women, she said. Oza further said that no amount of compensation will be sufficient for a woman who was a victim of mental and physical torture.

Instead, it would have been better if the state government had taken some concrete and effective measures to curb crimes against women, she added. Oza also criticised the state government for not allowing the women's commission to discharge its duties by getting it embroiled in a legal conflict since the state government changed in March 2020.

The Madhya Pradesh government had on Tuesday approved a scheme for providing financial assistance to women suffering disability due to domestic violence.

As per the scheme, women suffering 40 per cent disability will get financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh, while those whose disability is higher than 40 per cent will get Rs 4 lakh.

These women will also get residence-to-court transport expenses in case a legal process is underway, it was stated.

MP allows liquor sale at airports and supermarkets

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has decided to allow the sale of liquor at all airports in the state and select supermarkets under its amended excise policy for the next financial year 2022-23.

To increase its annual revenue from liquor, the BJP-led state government has also passed a proposal to issue home bar licenses to those who earn Rs one crore or more annually.

The policy was approved at a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday, the government said in a statement on Wednesday.

The government has also decided to slash retail prices of liquor by 20 per cent. The decision to reduce retail prices was taken so that they become competitive with neighbouring states, the statement added.

The cabinet has also approved the Madhya Pradesh Heritage (Traditional) liquor policy, which



will enable tribals to brew liquor from mahua (madhuca) flowers in the traditional way and sell it. An announcement to brew mahua liquor was made by the state government earlier last month. Also, the proposal was one of the points in the Chouhan government's Adivasi Mahasammelan held on

October 15. It has also decided to simplify the liquor import process. District-level committees that include the collector and MLAs will be empowered to change the locations of liquor shops, if needed, under the new excise policy. Besides, liquor prepared from grapes in the state will be made duty free.

The policy also has a provision of tetra-packing liquor and scanning the QR code to check the authenticity of the products.

Meanwhile, reacting to the BJP government's proposed new excise rules, the opposition Congress took a swipe saying the state government is unwilling to provide any relief to the common people, instead it has decided to sell liquor in homes. "Farmers in Madhya Pradesh are awaiting compensation for their crop damage since the last two years, diesel and petrol prices are surging and the government is planning to sell liquor at homes," former Chief Minister and state Congress president Kamal Nath said on Wednesday.

MP police initiates process to replace non-Hindi words from its use

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Nearly two months after the Madhya Pradesh government signalled to root out the Urdu and Persian words being used by the state police department to simplify the language, the process has been started.

Sources in state Home Department said the process has been started after the department recently issued an order to replace the words from other language which are not in use with its Hindi version in the police proceedings.

Madhya Police have issued a letter earlier on Tuesday



asking senior police officers from districts to submit suggestions within a week about replacing non-Hindi words in the official lexicon.

The state Home Minister Narottam Mishra last month had announced to replace the words from other lan-

guages which are not in use with Hindi words in the police proceedings.

According to sources in the police department, there are around 350 words which will be replaced with its Hindi version.

BHOPAL CYBER POLICE SETS UP NEW HELPLINE NUMBER TO PREVENT FRAUD

Bhopal: Immediate action would be taken against the fraudulent and the company associated with the incident would be alerted so that the act can be prevented.

Bhopal Police has issued helpline numbers in order to prevent incidents of cyber fraud through immediate intervention.

As per the police, immediate action would be taken against the fraudulent and the company associated with the incident would be alerted so that the act can be prevented.

DCP, cyber-crime, Amit Kumar released helpline numbers - (0755-2920664) or (9479990636), and ensured that immediate action will be taken against cyber-crime.

Amit was quoted by Times of India as saying, "In the cases of cyber-crime, the initial hours after the incident are very crucial. Once the cyber-criminal withdraws money from his bank account, it becomes difficult to recover the amount fraudulently transferred from someone else's account. In many cases, it was seen that the victims delayed in reaching out to the police, gave enough time to fraudsters to withdraw money from their bank accounts." Police urged people to use this helpline number and save themselves from getting into any kind of fraud.

Congress leader Noori Khan protests for purification of Shipra river

Noori Khan landed herself in four feet of water of the Shipra river to perform water satyagraha.

Team Absolute | Ujjain

Congress Vice President Noori Khan staged a protest for the purification of Shipra river in Ujjain on Thursday. According to reports, Noori Khan landed herself in four feet of water of the Shipra river to perform water satyagraha. She protested for about two and half hours in the water.

She claimed that the responsible had led a scam of about Rs 650 crores in the name of purification of the river. She demanded a reply from them. The water of the river was for everyone, she said.

On getting the information about it, the police also



reached the spot and they asked Noori to come out from the water but she did not do so.

Noori went into the deep water and she started drowning. The party worker present

there rescued her and admitted her to the district hospital. According to reports, the health condition of Noori was stable.

SDM Jagdish Mehar said that the officials of Irrigation Department had given the information regarding the purification of Kshipra river but she was not satisfied. Mehar also responded to the question of absence of ambulance at the spot. He said that she was taken to the hospital with the full protocol. The hospital was nearby so there was no need for an ambulance. All the demands of her would be conveyed to the higher officials and the government, Mehar added.

Poachers Kill Tigress, Dump Carcass In Well

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CARCASS, AROUND FIVE DAYS OLD, LYING IN THE AMJHOR FOREST RANGE OF THE DISTRICT WAS RECEIVED ON TUESDAY EVENING, DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER GAURAV CHOUDHARY SAID.

Team Absolute | Shahdol

The carcass of a tigress, aged 8 to 10 years, was found in a well in Shahdol district with officials claiming the big cat was killed by poachers, a forest department officer said on Wednesday.

Information about the carcass, around five days old,

lying in the Amjhor forest range of the district was received on Tuesday evening, Divisional Forest Officer Gaurav Choudhary said.

Choudhary said villagers informed officials about foul smell emanating from a well. The carcass was taken out on Wednesday from the well and disposed of as per National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines, he said. The tigress was trapped in electric wires laid by poachers. After the feline died by coming in contact with the wires, the poachers dumped the body into the well by tying stones in the wild cat's legs, the officer said. Choudhary said the poachers involved in killing of the tigress have been identified and they will be caught soon. A case under the Wildlife Protection Act has been registered, he added.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Top opposition leaders to campaign against BJP

Several top opposition leaders will be campaigning in Uttar Pradesh against the ruling BJP in the upcoming seven-phase Assembly elections. West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress (TMC) chief Mamata Banerjee, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar, Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD) leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejaswi Yadav, Shiv Sena minister Aditya Thackeray along with Sanjay Raut and will be seen in action in Uttar Pradesh, leading the opposition attack against the BJP. According to Samajwadi Party national vice-president Kiranmoy Nanda, Mamata Banerjee will campaign virtually for the SP in Lucknow on February 8 and she may also campaign digitally in Varanasi. NCP state unit spokesperson Vishal Nath Tiwari said Sharad Pawar will campaign for the Samajwadi Party in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav has already announced that NCP leader K. K. Sharma will contest as the joint candidate of the SP-NCP alliance from the Anupshahr Assembly seat in Bulandshahr district. Sharad Pawar may be present with TMC chief Mamata Banerjee during the virtual campaign in Lucknow on February 8, Tiwari said. RJD leader Tejaswi Yadav will campaign in support of the SP in the east UP Assembly constituencies bordering Bihar, as well as in other segments. RJD state president Ashok Singh will be the SP-RJD joint candidate from Sareni in Rae Bareilly district. Tejaswi Yadav will campaign in support of the Samajwadi Party across Uttar Pradesh. Shiv Sena state secretary Vishwajeet Singh said the party central leadership is in talks with the Congress, which is part of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA), for pre-poll alliance in UP. If the alliance talks fail, the Shiv Sena will field candidates for 80 Assembly seats in UP. Sources said that Jharkhand Chief Minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren may also campaign in support of the SP to help the Opposition give a united fight to the BJP.

TIME TO RESOLVE THE ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Lalit Garg

A global organization named Oxfam is working to reduce the imbalance between poverty & rich ratio. In its latest economic inequality report, has given a factually effective presentation of new attitudes growing in the name of prosperity, anomalous economic structure and the growing gap between rich and poor. Today the prosperity of the country and the world has been concentrated on a few people; in India too such a picture is being seen more intensely than in the world. Human values and economic equality have been marginalized in the country and earning wealth is becoming the biggest goal. Why did this happen? Has the seeds of this trend been in our traditions or is it the result of market pressure? Are the government systems giving incentives to the rich by giving the slogan of eradicating poverty? Where will this kind of mind-set take the nation? These few questions are important in the context of Oxfam's economic inequality report, before the general budget, it is necessary to come to this report and brainstorm on its facts.

The shocking facts of the latest report are that despite the Corona epidemic, the wealth of rich people has increased rapidly across the world. Although the income of 84 percent of the households in India has decreased due to the pandemic, the number of billionaires has increased from 102 to 142. Not only this, between March 2020 and November 30, 2021, the income of billionaires has increased by about Rs 30 lakh crore and has increased from Rs 23.14 lakh crore to Rs 53.16 lakh crore, while in 2020 more than 46 million.

This report clearly states that economic inequality is spreading very fast all over the world. The rich are getting richer very fast. Capitalism riding on the back of imperialism has increased the wealth on one hand and poverty has also increased on the other hand. This gap of rich and poverty is increasing instead of decreasing, as a result of which we can see terrorism, naxalism, communalism, provincialism, whose results are violence, hatred, malice, greed and unethical competition in the society it can be seen in the form of cracks in the relationship. The biggest impact has emerged in the form of environmental imbalance and pollution. Due to the prosperity confined in a few hands, not only the big and so-called rich people, but a large section of the country has become a victim of this unethical culture. The growing gap between the rich and the poor will not reduce until concrete steps are taken by the government in this regard. To remove inequality, the government has to implement special policies for the



poor. Oxfam wants to issue such a report around the annual conference of the World Economic Forum and the general budget of India, that although the World Economic Forum advocates the capitalists, its main objective should also be to remove the increasing economic inequality in the world. It is also necessary to bridge the growing gap between rich and poor because for the last two years we are going through an epidemic and it was expected that at least in the Corona period, more help would be given to the poor and their income would be kept safe. But it didn't happen. The figures are telling that the class which benefited the most in the epidemic is the wealthy class. Their wealth and income have increased, while the living of the poor has become more difficult. For this, the governments will have to try to increase the income of the lower class and collect fair tax from the rich.

The only way to reduce economic inequality is that the workers should get their fair wages, the cultivators should get the fair price for their produce, the laborers should get their blood and sweat, and no human being should take advantage of the system and fill his vault more than necessary. Due to this, a rebellion will develop in the society, which will lead to violent revolution. Government policies in India pretend to remove the poor. In reality, the government only benefits the rich. In the year 2019, the Central Government gave an exemption of two lakh crore rupees to the capitalist class of the country by giving tax exemption. Help was needed not for the rich, but for the poor. There were people in the

unorganized sector, which should have gotten help. The truth is that the real income of the people has not increased for the last five years. The wages of MGNREGA, which the government decides itself, are also less than the wages available in the market. Whereas against this the stock market has started showing new heights. Naturally, the gap between rich and poor is widening.

The need in our country is not that a lot of capital should be accumulated in the hands of a few people; the distribution of capital should be such that it is easily available to lakhs of villages of the vast country. But what is the reason that the leadership of the ruling leader who worships Mahatma Gandhi has cleverly kept his principle of trusteeship aside. This is the reason why on one hand there are high ceilings of the rich and on the other hand poverty creeps on the footpaths. On the one hand, splendor gave luxury to the person and luxury aroused cruelty in the person, on the other hand the tragedy of poverty and deprivation ignited the fire of rebellion within him. He started burning in vengeance, many evils came home uninvited. The blind race of meaning associated with the individual with collection, convenience, pleasure, luxury and selfishness. The new economic process was further strengthened after independence in two respects. For one, the goal of our nation remained economic development instead of overall human development. Second, the race for achieving a higher level of consumption has begun all over the country. In this process the whole society has become economic.

oriented, not self oriented. For this governments have to make plans for both the long term and short term. In short-term programs, where it is very important to support the unorganized sector, direct cash to it, it is also necessary to increase the budget of schemes like MGNREGA, so that cash reaches the working class. A large section of our villages is still based on agriculture. To increase the income of those people, it is necessary that their cost should be reduced and income should be increased. Long term plans need to be spent on education, health, nutrition and employment. Whereas governments are handing over these life-related services to the private sector instead of keeping them in their hands, due to which these services have now become a business. In this process, keeping all the social beliefs, human values, dignity and collecting money, whatever is considered the standard of success, due to which politics, literature, art, religion have all been weighed on the scales of money. There are dangerous consequences of this trend. The economic policies and development of the country so far have been aimed at adding to the prosperity of a few people. The dream of making India a superpower is also being seen by concentrating prosperity in the hands of a few people. Perhaps this is a so-called attempt to push us forward as a weak nation instead of making it a superpower.

(The author is Writer, Journalist, Columnist based in Delhi)

international

IED blast in busy Lahore market leaves two dead, several injured

Lahore | Agencies

A powerful blast in Pakistan's Punjab province's provincial capital Lahore has claimed at least two lives and injured dozens, in what is being seen as a targeted terror attack. The banned Baloch National Army has claimed responsibility for the attack. As per locals, Lahore's hub of wholesale markets, located around the Lohari Gate area, which is a congested and densely-populated vicinity, was rocked by a powerful blast, claiming lives of at least two, including one teenager, and injuring at least 25 others. Among the injured, 22 are men while three are women.



Muhammad Abid Khan.

"The blast was so powerful that we could see things flying in the air," said a local shopkeeper of the area. Officials are suspecting that the blast was of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) as a deep crater was formed at the site of the blast. "Investigation is in the initial stage and the nature of the blast can not be ascertained without a probe," said DIG Operations Lahore Dr.

Meo Hospital, the closest to the blast site, has received at least 27 people till now, out of which, at least two people were received dead, while 25 others are under treatment. Hospital authorities say that at least 5 more are in critical condition. The blast was so powerful that at least nine shops and establishments got damaged, including a private bank,

while dozens of motorbikes, stalls and other roadside selling points caught fire. Security forces cordoned off the area to carry out investigation into the tragic incident. Lohari gate area is part of Lahore's old city, with narrow streets and congested localities. The market is known to be frequented by lower class and poor people, who opt to buy cheap things for themselves.

WB APPROVES NEW FINANCING TO CAMBODIA FOR EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT

Phnom Penh: The World Bank announced that it has approved new financing to help Cambodia improve equitable access to basic education. In a statement, the World Bank said it will provide a \$60 million credit through its International Development Association to Cambodia, reports Xinhua news agency. The funding will support the five-year General Education Improvement Project, which seeks to establish and develop human resources to develop a knowledge-based society in the Southeast Asian country. "Cambodia has certainly made great achievements in expanding access to education, but equitable access to education for certain groups of children, such as those living in remote areas, coming from poor families or ethnic minority communities, and those living with disabilities, remains an issue," said World Bank country manager for Cambodia Maryam Salim.

UN envoy urges coordinated approach to address Israeli-Palestinian peace

United Nations | Agencies

Tor Wennesland, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, stressed the urgent need for a coordinated approach to address political, economic and institutional obstacles to Israeli-Palestinian peace.



Palestinian territory, including settler violence, leading to numerous Palestinian and Israeli casualties and increasing the risk of a broader escalation. Settlement activity, demolitions, and evictions also continued, feeding hopelessness and further diminishing prospects for a negotiated solution, Wennesland claimed. "We

must be frank about what is needed to reverse these trends and provide momentum toward a reinvigorated peace process. Piecemeal approaches and half measures will only ensure that the underlying issues perpetuating the conflict continue to fester and worsen over time," said the envoy. Unilateral steps and conflict drivers must stop, he said, adding that political and economic reforms must be implemented to ensure the Palestinian Authority's continued ability to function effectively, while boosting donor confidence and support. Above all, he said, efforts by the parties and the international community to stabilise and improve conditions on the ground should be linked to a political framework.

Guterres upbeat about peace prospects in Ethiopia

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was upbeat by the prospects of a peaceful settlement of the armed conflict in northern Ethiopia.



United Nations | Agencies

In a statement, Guterres said he held a telephone conversation with Ousegoun Obasanjo, the African Union (AU) high representative for the Horn of Africa, to exchange views on the conflict in Ethiopia following the latter's latest visit to Addis Ababa and Mekelle, the capital of the regional state of Tigray, reports Xinhua news agency. Obasanjo briefed him on the efforts being made by the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) to move toward a resolution of the violent conflict. Obasanjo expressed optimism that there is now a real opportunity for a political and diplomatic resolution of the conflict, said Guterres.

of Ethiopia remain a challenge to the peace process and sour the confidence-building measures that we hope are being taken by all parties in the conflict. "Let me reiterate my call on all parties to move rapidly toward cessation of hostilities as a critical step in the right direction for peace-making," said the UN chief. The UN stands ready to support an all-inclusive and nationally owned dialogue, peace, security, and reconciliation process in Ethiopia, Guterres said, adding that the international community must continue to emphasize the need for all parties to demonstrate sincerity and commitment to the peace process. While the AU-led peace process offers hope, the UN remains concerned about the humanitarian situation in various parts of Ethiopia affected by the war, he said, calling on all actors in the conflict to support and facilitate local and international efforts to provide humanitarian aid to those in need.

UNRWA launches special appeal to help Palestinian refugees in Lebanon

Beirut | Agencies

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has launched a special appeal to support Palestinian refugees in Lebanon suffering rising hardship and vulnerability.



The Special Appeal 2022 asks donors to support increased and regular cash assistance for food and other basic needs to the vulnerable Palestine refugees, as well as emergency funding for hospitalization, education, and camp services, including fuel for water supply and solid waste disposal. Xinhua news agency quoted a statement released by the UNRWA.

Cordone, Director of UNRWA Affairs in Lebanon. "They are struggling to survive and their needs have increased dramatically, with poverty rates reaching 87 percent among the Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon," he said. Cordone noted that the appeal today "outlines the need for an enhanced and sustained

program of assistance to ensure a dignified life for all Palestine refugees". According to the statement, the appeal is part of the overall budget of \$1.6 billion for 2022 that the agency needs to fulfil its mandate to provide millions of Palestine refugees' vital services, including education, health, and

food assistance. The humanitarian needs are expected to cover Gaza, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. UN estimates say that the number of Palestine refugees in Lebanon currently is approximately 192,000.



AS COVID-19 SUBSIDES, MAHA SCHOOLS TO REOPEN FROM MONDAY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

For the fourth time in two years of the Covid pandemic, all schools in Maharashtra are set to reopen for physical classes from January 24, just two days ahead of the Republic Day celebrations, officials said here on Thursday.

The classes were suspended in December 2021 - barring the crucial Class X and Class XII for board exams students - after the third wave of Covid-19 complicated by Omicron gripped the state.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray today gave the green signal for the proposal to reopen the schools from next Monday with full Covid protocols and SOPs, said School Education Minister Prof. Varsha Gaikwad.

"Schools located in areas where Coronavirus cases are fewer can restart physical classes for pre-primary and Std 1-12. We are committed to the safe resumption of schools in the state," said Prof. Gaikwad.

She emphasised that in this fourth phase of school



reopening plans, all must compulsorily adhere to the Covid protocols, and consent of parents would be essential. "I reiterate, improving learning outcomes in children through continued education in a safe environment is our goal. I wish to thank our schools and teachers for continuously ensuring a safe environment for our students," the minister added. She urged parents not to send their children to school if they are unwell and school management must ensure isolation facilities in case any student displays symptoms.

Besides wearing face-masks at all times, only one student would be allowed per bench and vaccination for the older students would be further ramped up, said Prof. Gaikwad.

The move comes after many children issued direct appeals on social media to the CM Thackeray and other officials on their desire to return to school besides a continuous dialogue between the government, the paediatric task force and education experts.

Fourth accused in Bulli Bai case arrested by Mumbai Police

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a latest update in the Bulli Bai app controversy, the Mumbai Police has arrested the fourth accused in the case from Odisha.

The accused has been identified as Neeraj Singh. "Neeraj was involved in the planning and execution of the plot through Bulli Bai app. We will produce him before the concern court and will seek his custodial remand," a Mumbai Police official said. Vishal Jha, Shweta Singh and Mayank Rawal were earlier arrested by the Mumbai Police from different states.

The Delhi Police has also arrested a few persons in connection with the Bulli Bai matter. Both the Mumbai and the Delhi Police are probing the matter. On January 4, the police arrested Shweta Singh, a resident of Uttarakhand. She was the second and Mayank Rawal was the third person arrested in connection with the controversy. Apart from the Mumbai Police, the Special Cell of the Delhi Police which was conduct-

ing a parallel probe, has also made two arrests.

The special cell arrested Neeraj Bishnoi, the main accused in the case and Aumkareshwar Thakur the main accused behind Sulli Deals. On January 1, the Bulli Bai app posted photos of several women of a particular religion including journalists, social workers, students and famous personalities. It happened six months after the controversy of Sulli Deals.

Jha was one of the followers of Bulli Bai which led the police to team. Github which provided space to Sulli Deals, hosted the Bulli Bai app too. However, Github had later removed the user from its hosting platform. But by then Bulli Bai had sparked a controversy nationwide.

The Bulli Bai app was also being promoted by a Twitter handle with the name @bullibai, with the display picture of a Khalistani supporter. This Twitter handle claimed that women can be booked from the app and was also promoting Khalistani content.

Bulli Bai case:

Mumbai court refuses bail to all three accused

Earlier this week, the cyber cell of the Mumbai Police had opposed the bail pleas of the three, stating that the investigation suggested the accused were also involved in the 'Sulli Deals' app case.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Mumbai court on Thursday rejected the bail applications of Vishal Kumar Jha, Shweta Singh, and Mayank Rawal - all three of who were accused in the controversial 'Bulli Bai' case and arrested by the Mumbai Police in connection with the matter. Earlier this week, the cyber cell of the Mumbai Police had opposed the bail pleas of the three, stating that the investigation suggested the accused were also involved in the 'Sulli Deals' app case.

The Bulli Bai app, which triggered an uproar across social media earlier this month for putting up photos of Muslim women online for a mock 'auction', is hosted on the code-sharing platform GitHub and is currently being investigated by the Mumbai Police. The app itself was named after derogatory references to the Muslim community and came one year after a similar fiasco involving another targeted harassment app, Sulli Deals, hit the headlines.

Hundreds of Muslim women, including vocal activists and top professionals, were listed for "auction" and had their photographs doctored and sourced without permission. While there was no actual "auc-

tion" or "sale", the purpose of the app seemed to be to humiliate and intimidate the targeted women, many of whom are active social media users.

The police investigating the case, have linked the creators of the contentious app to alt-right groups. They made four arrests in the matter - Vishal Kumar Jha (in Bengaluru), Shweta Singh (in Uttarakhand), Mayank Rawal (in Uttarakhand), and Niraj Bishnoi (in Assam's Jorhat), all of them being college students who allegedly came together to create the app.

A fifth person was also arrested from Odisha on Thursday, reports said. Identified as Neeraj Singh, the latest person to be accused in the case is said to be an MBA degree holder and was involved in the planning of the app with the main culprits.

Meanwhile, Niraj Bishnoi, the alleged mastermind of the Bulli Bai app, and his co-accused in the case Aumkareshwar Thakur, the alleged creator of the Sulli Deals app, have both been brought to Mumbai by the city's cyber police and were produced before the Bandra magistrate court, which remanded the two in police custody up to January 27.

LIC unions 'mute' opposition to IPO after 'quid pro quo', say bank staffers

▶ THE MUCH-ANTICIPATED DIVESTMENT OF THE LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA (LIC) HAS BEEN OPPOSED FROM VARIOUS QUARTERS BUT THE COMPANY'S UNIONS SEEM TO HAVE ONLY SHOWN TOKEN OPPOSITION TO THE MOVE, ACCORDING TO BANKING INDUSTRY PLAYERS.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The purported reason for this a veritable 'deal' struck with the LIC management and the government last year, giving the LIC staffers a significant pay-and-perks advantage over the banking industry, they claimed.

These included a hike in Dearness Allowance and a five-day working

week for LIC's 1,35,000 employees, compared with the rest of the industry that is saddled with a lower DA and alternate Saturdays off.

In the last wage revision (April 2021), the LIC staffers were given a 0.08 per cent hike for every 4-point rise in the DA calculation, although the banking industry is getting only 0.07 per cent for every 4-point rise.

Besides the 'higher pay', the LIC staffers also work less -- enjoying a five-day week with all Saturdays off -- compared with the industry norms of alternate Saturdays holiday.

"This move by the Centre has created an imbalance in the entire banking and insurance sector with the LIC staffers being given a favourable treatment, ostensibly to rush through the LIC IPO without much objections from its employees," said All India Bank Officers Association (AIBOA) General Secretary S Nagarajan.

Not only the AIBOA, but at least three MPs have recently written letters to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of State for Finance Dr. Bhagwat Karad and Department of Financial Services, drawing their attention to the discrepancy and demanding that there should be parity.

They are: Lok Sabha MP Communist Party of India's K.

Subbarayan (Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu), Rajya Sabha MPs of Congress Kumar Ketkar and Shiv Sena's Anil Desai.

"There is an exceptionally glaring disparity with regard to the calculation of the Dearness Allowance," said Subbarayan, referring to the bipartite settlement between the banking unions and the Indian Banks Association and the Wage Settlement for the LIC.

The CPI MP pointed out that while the merger of points of DA with the Base Pay for the banks and insurance sectors, there is a difference in the calculations, and though the difference is of only 0.01 per cent, it has a cumulative effect and add up to create a 'gulf of disparity'.

"The disparity in pay scale and calculations of DA between banking sector and insurance sector should be revisited and revised in order to bring parity between these two financial sectors," urged Desai.

The MPs have also pointed out how the banking sector has been clamouring for a five-day week since 2006, but after 10 years, got only two Saturdays off each month, while the Government has already granted LIC staffers a 5-day week since the agreement in April 2021.

"There cannot be a tangible justification to reject a five-day week for the banks while the international

banking system, the Reserve Bank of India, Central and State government offices and undertakings have all implemented five-day week," Subbarayan said.

"The LIC unions, claiming to be pro-worker, seem to have quietly accepted the government's move as they have benefitted in the latest wage revision... Thus, all their 'fiery opposition' to the divestment plans is now mere tokenism," Trade Union Joint Action Committee Joint-Convenor Vishwas Utagi said sharply.

Nagarajan said that LIC -- founded in 1956 after merging 245 insurance companies and PF societies in those days -- is headquartered in Mumbai, with 8 Zonal offices, 113 Divisional Offices, manned by 1,35,000 officers-staffers all over India.

"The Centre is planning to dilute the LIC capital by 5-10 per cent to mop up around Rs 1,00,000-crore against total target set to achieve the disinvestment of Rs 1,75,000 crore, as per the budget proposals," Nagarajan said.

He said the AIBOA has also written to the Centre to correct the DA calculation anomaly and also extend the five-day week to the banking sector to par with the insurance sector.

Pregnant forest guard pulled by hair, kicked

Woman was beaten up by couple in, duo held; minister promises strict action

Team Absolute | Pune

A former sarpanch and his wife allegedly thrashed a woman forest guard, who is three months pregnant, along with her husband at a village in Satara district of Maharashtra, following which the accused couple has been arrested, police said on Thursday.

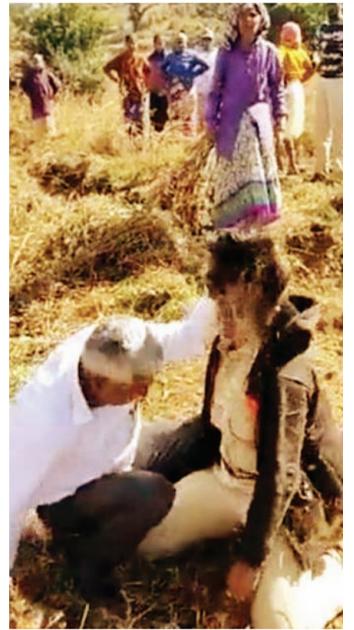
The incident took place on Wednesday at Palsawade village in the western Maharashtra district, located around 120 kms from here, they said.

According to police, the accused man, who is a member of the local forest management committee, was angry with the woman forest guard for taking the contractual forest labourers along with her "without his permission."

Sharing the video on his Twitter handle on Thursday, Maharashtra Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray said, "The accused has been arrested this morning and will face the law at its strictest. Such acts will not be tolerated." Satara Superintendent of Police (SP) Ajay Kumar Bansal said the accused man is a former sarpanch of the village and a member of the local forest management committee.

"He and his wife allegedly beat up the woman forest guard, who is three months pregnant, as the accused was angry over the guard taking the contractual forest labourers along with her without his permission," he said. A case has been registered against the duo at Satara taluka police station, he said.

"Since the forest guard is pregnant, a medical examination of her foetus will be carried out. If any foetus is found harmed, then relevant sections will be slapped against the



accused," he said. Talking to reporters, the woman forest guard said that her husband, who is also a forest guard, was also beaten up by the couple.

Maha Nagar Panchayat polls: MVA bags 41, BJP 24 local bodies

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi allies trumped the Opposition

Bharatiya Janata Party by unitedly bagging a majority of the 1,649 seats in the crucial Nagar Panchayat held in 32 of the state's 36 districts, officials said here on Wednesday.

The BJP emerged as the single largest party bagging 384 seats against the MVA tally of 944 comprising Nationalist Congress Party's 344, Congress' 316 and Shiv Sena's 284 seats.

Besides the four major parties, the CPI(M) bagged 11 seats, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena and Bahujan Samaj Party got 4 each, other parties secured 85 seats and a chunk of 206 seats were won by independents.

With its seat tally of 384, the BJP has captured 24 NPs, while 41 are taken by the MVA comprising NCP (16), Congress (14) and Sena (11), of the total 97 local bodies results announced today.

The counting for 163 seats in 9 Nagar Panchayats of Gadchiroli district shall be held on Thursday - out of the total 106 NPs which went to the polls.

The election results evoked sharp reactions from both the MVA and the BJP as they could have ramifications in the upcoming local bodies



and major civic corporations.

The NCP termed the outcome as the BJP's "rejection" by the people of the state, Congress expressed immense "satisfaction" while the Sena also made "inroads into newer territories."

NCP National Spokesperson and Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik said that the "people of the state have rejected the BJP" and the MVA allies who fought separately, jointly or unitedly in different areas have been accepted by the masses. Congress state President Nana Patole said the party was extremely satisfied especially as it has bounced back massively in the Vidarbha region of eastern Maharashtra.

Shiv Sena Transport Minister Anil Parab said the results prove that the party has made inroads all over the state and has performed well even in its traditional bastions like coastal Konkan region. Farmers' leader Kishore Tiwari - accorded an MoS status - said the polls

results are an obvious indicator that the three parties unitedly can overthrow the BJP at any level.

"The framework has been prepared by the Nagar Panchayat election result... It will have serious repercussions for the Opposition parties in the other future local elections and the upcoming dozen-odd major civic corporations. Given the current trends, the BJP is all set to be decimated," Tiwari said.

State NCP President and Minister Jayant Patil expressed gratitude to the voters in the semi-urban centres for supporting the party with 344 seats.

BJP state President Chandrakant Patil said the party will analyse the Nagar Panchayat results carefully and review its strategy for the upcoming elections.

Slamming the Shiv Sena, Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis said that though the party has its own Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, it was relegated to the fourth position.

Tale of Mumbai's rising trend of air pollution

Every winter, smog-filled days and nights across entire north India are a common thing and by contrast, the western region looks much cleaner.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

However, a new analysis of regional air pollution levels by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has shown that proximity to the sea has not helped in containing the increasing air pollution in the financial capital, Mumbai.

Even though winter pollution levels in the western region are not as high as that seen in the Indo-Gangetic Plains due to its proximity to the sea and improved ventilation, the levels have been seen to be increasing despite the geographical advantages and favourable meteorology, the CSE analysis said.

In other words, increasing air pollution is not restricted to winters but is now an yearlong problem in Mumbai too. "The number of bad-air days in Mumbai have doubled between 2019 and 2021, while good days are down by 20 per cent. This underscores the urgency of scaling up action across all sectors to prevent further worsening and to arrest the trend in this region," executive director, research and advocacy, CSE, Anumita Roychowdhury said.

This new analysis, released on Wednesday, of real time pollution data is part of CSE's air quality tracker initiative and also has an assessment of annual and seasonal trends



in PM2.5 concentration for the period January 1, 2019, to January 9, 2022.

This analysis is based on the real time data available from the current working air quality monitoring stations. Review of data availability from the automated monitoring stations in the region under the continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations (CAAQMS) programme of Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) shows major data gaps.

When it comes to data availability calculated as number of days with adequate PM2.5 data for computation of a valid 24-hour average, among Mumbai stations, Kurla in east-central Mumbai had only 55 per cent data while Malady (West) in north Mumbai came up with 68 per cent. "It is not clear why these stations have such poor data availability despite minimal problems of elec-

tricity and internet connectivity in the region," said CSE's programme manager, Urban Data Analytics Lab, Avikal Somvanshi.

Like other cities in Maharashtra and Gujarat, studied as part of the same analysis by CSE, Mumbai too has indicated a rising trend in annual PM2.5 levels after an initial drop during 2020 (when there were lockdowns) with a rebound and a rising trend visible in 2021.

The CSE analysis to indicate that the number of bad-air quality days are increasing in Mumbai is supported with Air Quality Index (AQI) data. Daily AQI analysis based on 10 oldest stations shows a 20 per cent drop in the number of good AQI days in the city between 2019 and 2021 -- while days with poor or very poor AQI have doubled.

South Mumbai has the worst air within the city during winter: In

December 2021, the stations in south Mumbai reported significantly higher PM2.5 levels compared to the rest of the city. Mazgaon with a monthly average of 134 micrograms per cubic metres was the most polluted neighborhood of the city, followed by Navy Nagar, Colaba (124 micrograms per metre cube), Kurla (101 micrograms per metre cube), Vile Parle-West (101 micrograms per metre cube) and Worli (97 micrograms per metre cube). Khindipada, in north Mumbai, which is at the edge of Sanjay Gandhi National Park in the suburbs with a monthly average of 54 micrograms per metre cube was the least polluted neighborhood. Bandra and Malad (West) reported low numbers, but the values are not considered valid due to a significantly large amount of missing data from these two stations, the CSE analysis showed.



'Lord of the Rings' OTT series title revealed in dramatic promo

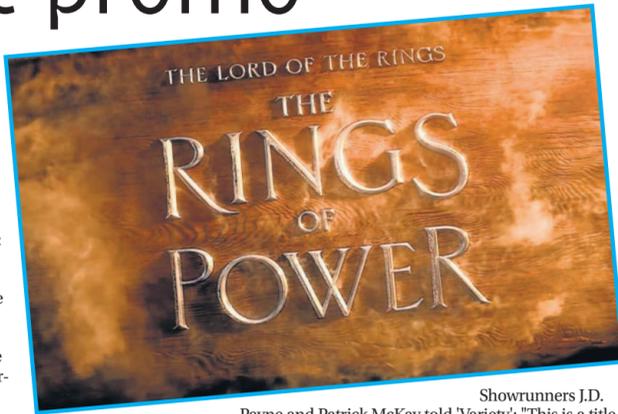
Los Angeles | Agencies

The makers of 'Lord of the Rings' series, which will be streaming on Amazon Prime Video, revealed its full title in a new video on Wednesday, reports 'Variety'.

The video, made using practical effects, shows molten metal filling up the grooves in a piece of wood even as a woman's voice narrates: "Three rings for the Elven kings under the sky. Seven for the dwarf lords in their halls of stone. Nine for mortal men, doomed to die. One for the dark lord on his dark throne in the land of Mordor where the shadows lie."

The narration leads to the full title reveal: 'The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power'. It was earlier confirmed, according to 'Variety', that the show would take place during the so-called Second Age, when the Rings of Power were forged by Sauron. The title now indicates that the rings will be a major part of the show.

The highly anticipated epic fantasy series will make its debut on Prime Video on September 2, 2022, post which new episodes will drop weekly.



Showrunners J.D.

Payne and Patrick McKay told 'Variety': "This is a title that we imagine could live on the spine of a book next to J.R.R. Tolkien's other classics. 'The Rings of Power' unites all the major stories of Middle Earth's Second Age: the forging of the rings, the rise of the Dark Lord Sauron, the epic tale of Númenor, and the Last Alliance of Elves and Men."

GINA RODRIGUEZ TO STAR IN 'WOMEN ON THE VERGE OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN' ADAPTATION

Los Angeles | Agencies

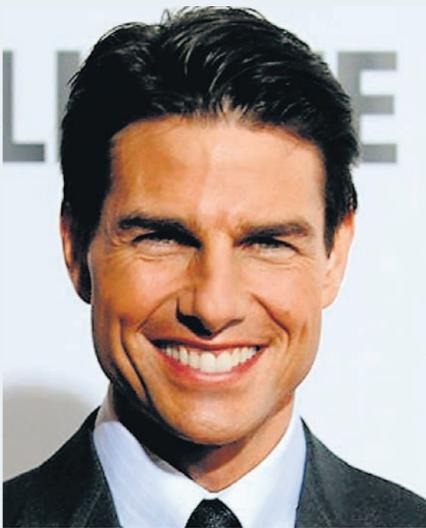
Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar's hit dark comedy 'Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown' will be adapted for an Apple TV Plus series. Actress Gina Rodriguez is attached to star as Pepa Marcos, Carmen Maura's original role in the 1988 film, and Almodóvar is slated to executive produce the show via his El Deseo banner, reports variety.com.

Rodriguez, in addition to being cast as a lead, will also executive produce via her I Can and I Will Productions banner alongside partner Molly Breeskin. The Hollywood Reporter was told by sources that the movie's adaptation will be bilingual - a mix of English and Spanish, reports variety.com. Currently, Almodóvar's first English-language movie, 'A Manual for Cleaning Women' starring Cate Blanchett, is in the early stages of development.

'Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown' ('Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios') is what elevated the Spanish film director to internationally recognized superstar after it earned five Goya Awards and a New York Film Awards win, as well as Academy Award, Golden Globes and BAFTA nominations. The feature also starred Antonio Banderas and Julieta Serrano. Lately, Almodóvar has been dipping his toes in the TV landscape for the first time in his career - not just with this Apple TV Plus series, but also with the forthcoming docuseries 'Not a Bride' for Paramount Plus, which he is producing with Penelope Cruz.



New film studio to be built in space by 2024



Los Angeles | Agencies

Space Entertainment Enterprise (S.E.E.), the company co-producing Tom Cruise's upcoming space movie, plans to launch a sports arena and production studio in space by 2024. S.E.E. has unveiled plans to build a space station module that contains a sports and entertainment arena as well as a content studio by December 2024, reports variety.com. Named SEE-1, the module is intended to host films, television, music and sports events as well as artists, producers and creatives who want to make content in the low orbit, micro-gravity environment. The facilities will enable development, production, recording, broadcasting and livestreaming of content.

S.E.E. intend to produce its own content and events in the module as well as making it available to third-parties. Axiom Space, who in January 2022 won NASA's approval to build a commercial component of the International Space Station (ISS), will undertake the construction of SEE-1. The module will dock on Axiom's commercial arm, named Axiom Station, which will also host other commercial ventures, including space tourism.

Axiom Station will then separate from the ISS in 2028. S.E.E., which was co-founded in the UK by entrepreneurs and producers Elena and Dmitry Lesnevsky, is currently planning a fundraising round.



'It's nothing nobody hasn't already seen'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Dakota Johnson made a funny quip about her raunchy screen past as she wore a red mini-dress for an appearance of Wednesday's edition of The Late Late Show with James Corden. The actress, 32, appeared a little self-conscious as she arrived on set wearing the sizzling scarlet number, crossing her legs and attempting to cover her thighs with her hands while sitting down opposite the British talk-show host, 43. Corden graciously offered the screen star his jacket to protect her modesty, asking: 'Are you okay? Are you alright? Do you want my jacket?' To which Dakota hilariously replied: 'I'm okay. It's nothing nobody hasn't already seen.'

The actress was presumably referring to her breakthrough role in the racy Fifty Shades erotic drama franchise, in which she portrayed Anastasia Steele opposite Jamie Dornan's Christian Grey from 2015 to 2018, reports daily-mail.co.uk.

Dakota also stripped off while filming semi-nude scenes for her 2021 drama The Lost Daughter, which is now on Netflix.

Dakota Johnson quips about her raunchy screen past as Late Late Show host James Corden offers her his jacket to cover her legs



Fra Fee joins 'Beauty and the Beast' prequel series

and LeFou (Louie) respectively from the 2017 live-action 'Beauty and the Beast' film.

In addition, newcomer Briana Middleton will play Tilly, Louie's stepsister.

Set in the iconic kingdom of 'Beauty and the Beast' years before the Beast and Belle's romance, the series will follow Gaston and LeFou as they set off with Tilly after a surprising revelation from her past comes to light, sending the trio off on an unexpected journey.

Fee will star as Prince Benoit Berlioz, a childhood friend of Tilly's who has grown into a handsome,

charismatic, confident prince.

Fee was most recently seen in the Marvel-Disney Plus series 'Hawkeye' in the role of Kazi Kazimierczak, a member of the Tracksuit Mafia and close friend of Maya Lopez, also known as Echo. He also recently appeared in the Acorn TV series 'Dalglish'.

On the big screen, Fee is known for his roles in the live-action 'Cinderella' starring Camila Cabello as well as the 2012 adaptation of 'Les Misérables', 'Pixie' opposite Olivia Cooke, and 'Animals' opposite Alia Shawkat among others.

HEATH LEDGER WAS A 'GIFT TO THE WORLD': ANDREW GARFIELD

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Andrew Garfield opens up about the death of his former co-star Heath Ledger, just days before the anniversary of his fatal drug overdose.

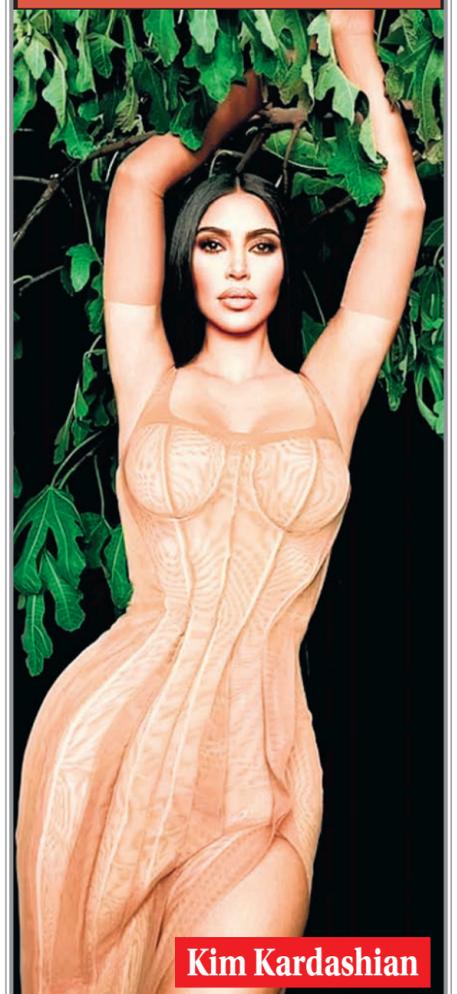
The 38-year-old actor was discussing the topic of mourning when he mentioned Ledger, who died of a drugs overdose in 2008 while the pair were in the middle of filming 'The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus' together, and is determined to "keep his spirit alive."

He said: "When anyone dies, we want the



beauty of keeping their memory alive by talking about them and by repeating stories over and over again. I think especially with someone who died so young - I remember feeling it with Heath. He died in the middle of a film that we were making together. And also he was just obviously such an incredible artiste and a gift to the world." Garfield played Anton in the Terry Gilliam-directed film alongside Ledger as Tony Shepard and following Heath's death other stars such as Johnny Depp, Jude Law and Colin Farrell joined the cast to film Heath's remaining scenes, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kim Kardashian





AUSTRALIA RISE TO TOP OF ICC TEST RANKINGS, INDIA SLIP DOWN TO THIRD SPOT

Dubai | Agencies

Australia climbed to the top spot in the latest ICC Test team rankings released on Thursday on the back of their 4-0 Ashes series victory against England while India slipped down to the third position after suffering a 2-1 away series defeat in South Africa.

This relentless display has seen Australia jump up two places to No 1 in the rankings, overtaking both New Zealand and India with 119 rating points.

On the other hand, India, who were ranked No 1 in the Test team rankings, slipped down to the third spot after their series loss against Proteas and have 116 points at present. After a brilliant victory in the first Test in Centurion, they were dealt back-to-back defeats in Johannesburg and Cape Town as their quest for a first Test series victory in South Africa continued.

South Africa after their series win have climbed up one spot to No 5 in the rankings chart with 101 rating points. Meanwhile, New Zealand, the inaugural World Test Championship winners, have retained their second position in the rankings with 117 rating points after their drawn home series against Bangladesh. After losing the first Test at the Bay Oval, the Kiwis bounced back with a comprehensive performance at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch.

Pakistan slipped down one spot to No 6 with 93 rating points. Sri Lanka, West Indies, Bangladesh,



Zimbabwe, Afghanistan and Ireland have managed to retain

their respective positions in the ranking charts.

SHARMA, PANT AND ASHWIN IN ICC MEN'S TEST TEAM

Dubai: India opener Rohit Sharma, wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant and off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin have been included in the ICC Men's Test team of the year for 2021. New Zealand captain Kane Williamson has been given the charge of captaining the eleven which also has his countryman and Player of the Match in the inaugural World Test Championship final, Kyle Jamieson, as well. It is Ashwin's fifth appearance and Pant's second time in the Test team of the year honours while it is the first time Sharma is in the coveted eleven of Test cricket. ICC Men's Test Team of the Year: Dimuth Karunaratne, Rohit Sharma, Marnus Labuschagne, Joe Root, Kane Williamson (captain), Fawad Alam, Rishabh Pant (wicket-keeper), Ravichandran Ashwin, Kyle Jamieson, Hasan Ali, and Shaheen Afridi



MITHALI, JHULAN NAMED IN ICC WOMEN'S ODI TEAM

Dubai:

Veteran Indian cricketers Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami on Thursday were named in ICC Women's ODI Team of the Year for 2021.

The ICC Team of the Year, led by England's Heather Knight, recognizes the achievements of some exceptional players in women's cricket who impressed one and all with their on-field exploits in a calendar year. India's ODI skipper Mithali Raj amassed 503 runs at an average of 62.87 in 2021. Her runs came at a time when the Indian team struggled as a unit, which makes her contribution even more important. Jhulan Goswami claimed a total of 15 wickets in 2021 and maintained an excellent economy rate of 3.77 as well. ICC Women's ODI Team of 2021: Lizelle Lee (South Africa), Alyssa Healy (wk) (Australia), Tammy Beaumont (England), Mithali Raj (India), Heather Knight (c) (England), Marizanne Kapp (South Africa), Hayley Matthews (West Indies), Fatima Sana (Pakistan), Jhulan Goswami (India), Shabnim Ismail (South Africa), Anisa Mohammed (West Indies)



Women's Asia Cup

Profligate India fail Iran test in goalless



Navi Mumbai | Agencies

The inexperience of playing in a top-level tournament exposed as India missed a bag full of chances and were held goalless by a lower-ranked Islamic Republic of Iran team in their opening match of the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022 at the DY Patil Stadium here on Thursday.

In the tournament's second match, India dominated the proceedings, created more than a dozen scoring opportunities off waves and waves of attacks but could not manage to score a goal in the match and trooped out

dejectedly. India, hoping to qualify for the knockout rounds for the first time since 1983 had to win this match as Iran were the only team ranked lower than them in Group A. A win would have put them in a good position to at least get into the playoffs for the third-placed teams. But that was not to be as the profligate Indians just could not find the back of the net.

Forward Manisha, midfielder Pyari Xaxa, Indumathi, Sandhiya and substitute Dangmei Grace all came close to scoring the goal but either shot erratically or were thwarted by the Iranian defence. Iran goal-

keeper Zohreh Koudaei pulled off three superb saves that looked like surebet goals. India settled down into a rhythm early and it was forward Manisha who created the first chance in the seventh minute.

India's next chance came in the 10th minute when off a tussle outside the Iranian box, the loose ball fell for Anju but she shot her first-time effort well over the crossbar. Pyari almost nudged India into the lead in the 51st minute. Manisha did the hard work as she advanced dangerously on the left wing and then put in a lovely cross for Pyari.

IND vs SA, 2nd ODI

INDIA HOPE TO PUT UP BETTER BATTING SHOW

Paarl | Agencies

With very little time to rest, India will be hoping to put up a better batting show and make a turnaround against South Africa in the second ODI at Boland Park on Friday.

In a short three-match series, where there's just a day's gap between the matches, India has to get the batting right, which was one of the main reasons for them losing the first match by 31 runs and being 1-0 behind in the series.

In a chase of 298, Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli were going along nicely till both fell in quick succession. On the slow and spin-aiding pitch at Paarl, where stroke-



play was difficult for fresh batters at the crease, India's middle-order failed to get the chase on track and fell without making any substantial contributions as the tourists fell to 188/6. When South Africa captain Temba Bavuma and Rassie van der Dussen were cruising along for their partnership of 204 and managing to neutralise

Ravichandran Ashwin, Yuzvendra Chahal and Shardul Thakur, not giving Venkatesh a go with his medium-pace was a big miss.

For South Africa, everything went well with the bat and ball. Tightening the screws after Dhawan and Kohli fell meant they managed to swing the match in their favour.

U19 CWC

Depleted India reach quarterfinals with 174-run win over Ireland

Trinidad | Agencies

Depleted India side, missing six players due to COVID-19 cases, progressed to the quarterfinals of the ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup with a 174-run win over Ireland at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy.

The four-time champions made 307/5 from their 50 overs, thanks to the batting unit coming to the party and then the bowlers did a good job of bowling out Ireland for 133 in 39 overs to be on top of Group B.

The win was majorly set up by opener Harnoor Singh making 88 off 101 balls with 12 boundaries and was involved in a 164-run partnership with Angkrish Raghuvanshi, who made a run-a-ball 79, at the top.

After stand-in captain Nishant Sandhu and Raj Bawa made 36 and



42 respectively, Rajvardhan Hangargekar played a blinder of a

cameo in the last two overs to help India go past 300.

In reply, Ireland were never in the reckoning to chase a mammoth score of 308. The powerplay proved tricky for Ireland to get a foothold in the match as they lost three wickets and never managed to keep up with the required run rate.

Ireland were eventually bowled out for 133, with Aneeshwar Gautam perhaps the pick of the Men in Blue attack with figures of two for 11 at an economy of 2.75 with Garv Sangwan and Kaushal Tambe taking two wickets each. India next face Uganda on January 22.

Brief scores:

India 307/5 in 50 overs (Harnoor Singh 88, Angkrish Raghuvanshi 79; Muzamil Sherzad 3/79) beat Ireland 133 all out in 39 overs (Scott MacBeth 32, Joshua Cox 28; Aneeshwar Gautam 2/11, Garv Sangwan 2/23) by 174 runs.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN: EMMA RADUCANU KNOCKED OUT

US Open champion Emma Raducanu was knocked out of the Australian Open after she lost to Danka Kovinic in the second round, here on Thursday.

Melbourne | Agencies

It was a painful defeat for Britain's Raducanu, who suffered from blisters on her racket hand throughout, making for a gripping and unusual contest packed with twists, turns and tactical adjustments and eventually fell to a 6-4 4-6 6-3 defeat on Margaret Court Arena.

This is the first time that the 19-year-old has lost a completed



match at a Grand Slam, with her only previous defeat coming when she pulled out with breathing difficulties against Ajla Tomljanovic in the fourth round of Wimbledon.

On the other hand, Kovinic became the first player from Montenegro to make it to the third round of a Grand Slam. She will now face Simona Halep, who dropped just two games against Beatriz Haddad Maia.

ANDY MURRAY ALSO CRASHES OUT

Melbourne: Andy Murray crashed out of the 2022 Australian Open after losing to Japan's Taro Daniel in the second round of men's singles event, here on Thursday.

Britain's Murray lost 6-4 6-4 6-4 to qualifier Daniel - ranked below him at 120 in the world - on John Cain Arena.

Former world number one Murray, now ranked 113th, had never lost to a player ranked outside the top 100 at a Grand Slam, with then world No 91 Arnaud Clement the previous lowest in the second round of the US Open back in 2005. With this win, the 28-year-old Daniel reached the third round of a major for the first time in his career. He will now face either Italian 11th seed Jannik Sinner or American Steve Johnson.

Syed Modi International

PV Sindhu, HS Prannoy enter quarter-finals

Lucknow | Agencies

Two Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and HS Prannoy advanced to the women's and men's singles quarter-finals of the 2022 Syed Modi International after winning their respective matches at the Babu Banarasi Das Indoor Stadium, here on Thursday.

Former world champion Sindhu defeated Lauren Lam of the US 21-16, 21-13 in a 33 minute clash.

Both players started the match strongly. However, Sindhu went into the break with a slender lead of 11-10. From there, Indian found her groove and won the first game in 15 minutes. The Indian badminton player kept control of the court in the second game and raced to an 11-6 lead. She then pocketed the match in straight games. Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, will now play her quarter-final clash against Thailand's Supanida Katethong on Friday. Katethong had defeated Sindhu in the India Open semi-finals last week. Meanwhile, HS Prannoy had to fight hard to overcome the



challenge from 19-year-old Indian Priyanshu Rajawat in the men's singles round of 16 match. He won the three-game thriller 21-11, 16-21, 21-18 in one hour and four minutes. The Asian Championships bronze medallist will be taking on Arnaud Merkle of France in the quarter-finals. Another Indian shuttler, Aakarshi Kashyap moved into the quarters with an easy straight games win against compatriot Sai Uttejitha Rao Chukka. The India Open semi-finalist won the match 21-9, 21-6 in 24 minutes and will now face fellow youngster Malvika Bansod on Friday. The fourth-seeded pair of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila also progressed after receiving a walkover in their round of 16 match.

TAHLIA MCGRATH SHINES AS AUSTRALIA THRASH ENGLAND

Adelaide: Superb all-round show by Tahlia McGrath helped Australia register a commanding nine-wicket win over England in the first T20I of the multi-format Women's Ashes here on Thursday.

Australia won the toss and chose to field first but England came out all guns blazing as their openers Tammy Beaumont and Danni Wyatt put on an opening stand of 82 runs. The visitors looked set for a total close to 200 but McGrath came up with a brilliant spell in the death overs. Wyatt was looking dangerous but she had to depart for a magnificent knock of 70 off just 54 deliveries after getting completely castled by McGrath. McGrath finished with excellent figures of 4-0-26-3. England managed a total of 169/4 in the end, which was still a challenging one for the hosts. England also got an early breakthrough in the form of Alyssa Healy, as she departed in the fifth over for seven off Sophie Ecclestone's bowling. But Australia made a complete mockery of the chase once McGrath joined Meg Lanning in the middle.

GANGULY WANTED TO ISSUE SHOW CAUSE NOTICE TO KOHLI AFTER HIS PRESS CONFERENCE OUTBURST: REPORT

New Delhi | Agencies

- Comments made by Kohli in front of the media didn't go down well with the BCCI as it eventually showed both board and Ganguly in poor light. And it is understood that a convinced Ganguly, in what could have been an unprecedented move in the history of Indian cricket, had prepared a draft letter and wanted to send a show cause notice to Kohli for his outburst.
- Ganguly had also discussed the matter with the BCCI members. However, the board eventually didn't find it appropriate to issue a notice to the Test captain days before the Test series in the Rainbow nation.

In a major revelation in the whole Sourav Ganguly and Virat Kohli saga, it has been now learnt that the BCCI president wanted to issue a show cause notice to the then India Test captain before the beginning of the series against South Africa in December 2021.

Ahead of the Indian team's departure for South Africa, Virat addressed the press-conference and made some strong comments. He claimed that no one from the board or the selection committee had asked him to



reconsider his decision to give up captaincy in the T20 cricket, contradicting Ganguly, who had said that he personally requested the star batter to not leave the

leadership role in the shortest format of the game.

The 33-year-old also complained about the lack of communication between him and the board before remov-

ing him as ODI captain.

Notably, Kohli had given up T20I captaincy after the 2021 T20 World Cup but BCCI's decision to replace him as India's ODI captain despite him wanting to continue in the post had led to controversy and the batter's relation with the board and president Ganguly became tense and things are still not great between the two. After losing the South Africa series, Kohli decided to quit as Test captain, and before announcing it, he even called the BCCI secretary Jay Shah. But, as per reports, he didn't bother to call Ganguly.



Sushmita Sen wins International Association of Working Women Award for 'Aarya 2'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress and former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen is elated on being conferred the International Association of Working Women Award for an outstanding performance by a female actor in a TV series for her show 'Aarya 2'. The award is presented by the DC South Asian Film Festival (DCSAFF), which is currently underway virtually starting from January 16 to January 30.

The actress credits the team of 'Aarya' for working tirelessly for the show that is now gaining global recognition. Sharing her excitement, the actress said in a statement, "I am overwhelmed with all the love and appreciation being showered on 'Aarya 2'. The entire team has worked strenuously to put together a work of art that would be loved by everyone."

"It's euphoric to win the International Association of Working Women Award for an outstanding performance by a female actor in a television series. I would like to thank the organisers of the DC South Asian Film Festival for bestowing this honour on me and the entire team. This is surreal!" the statement further said.

Talking about DCSAFF, the film fest which started in 2012 featuring Shyam Benegal's classic film 'Mammo' as the opening title, is currently in its 10th edition and will feature films from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Canada, and the US and many regional languages.

The 2022 edition of the film fest opened with a book discussion with writer, director, and actor Ananth Mahadevan about his new book 'Once Upon A Prime Time' and the Nepali feature film 'Mahanagar/One Night in Kathmandu', directed by Mohan Rai. Filmmaker Vishal Chaliha's Assamese film 'Sijou' will be the closing film of DCSAFF 2022 on January 30.



ARMAAN MALIK: FEELS AMAZING TO BE ABLE TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE THROUGH THEIR MOTHER TONGUE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Armaan Malik's discography in south Indian music just got richer with a peppy Tamil song titled 'Summa Surruru' from Suriya-starrer 'Etharkkum Thunindhavan'. He says it feels amazing to be able to connect with people through their mother tongue. Composed by maestro D. Imman and with lyrics by Tamil superstar Siva Karthikeyan, 'Summa Surruru' has been sung by Armaan Malik and Nikhita

Gandhi. Armaan says: "It's always such a pleasure to work with D.

Imman. It's been a while since our last collaboration (Year

Indha Muyalkutty) and I couldn't be more excited to sing yet another 'chartbuster

in the making' for him. "Summa Surruru" is an out and out massy dance track featuring the awesome Nikhita Gandhi. It's the kind of song that will compel you to put on your dancing shoes and groove! A big hug to all my fans and listeners in the South who eagerly await my new songs. It feels amazing to be able to connect with people through their mother tongue. "Etharkkum Thunindhavan", an upcoming

Tamil action thriller written and directed by Pandiraj and produced by Sun Pictures. The makers of the movie released the song's teaser on Pongal and set the Internet on fire way ahead of its release.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Swara Bhaskar: Post-Covid fatigue is a real thing

Actress Swara Bhaskar, who suffered from Covid, has recovered and is now back in the studio for the dubbing of her upcoming film 'Jahaan Chaar Yaar'. She says even though she feels happy to be back in work, her body requires more rest.

Swara said, "I was supposed to dub for this film earlier, but unfortunately, it got delayed due to COVID-19. I have been feeling very pressured about having to complete my work for the movie. As soon as I tested negative for COVID, I flew to Mumbai and headed for the dubbing straight from the airport. I am glad to be back at work and I am really enjoying dubbing as it is a process I enjoy in general too."

However, she also mentioned how she is still taking more time to deal with the fatigue that happens post-Covid.

"Covid fatigue is a real thing and I have realised that while being back at work; the weakness that it leaves is very real so I am trying to rest adequately and also ensuring that I continue working. I dub for 3-4 hours and rest for the entire day making sure I don't overwork myself," shared the actress.

The film 'Jahaan Chaar Yaar' is directed by Kamal Pandey, and it also features Meher Vij, Pooja Chopra and Shikha Talsania.



APARSHAKTI KHURANA EXCITED TO GRAB THE GUN AGAIN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Known for his comic timing in several films, actor Aparshakti Khurana says now that he has two thriller films back to back in his kitty, he has started enjoying this genre.

Recently Aparshakti finished shooting for a thriller film 'Dokha Round D Corner', now he is gearing up for 'Berlin', a film that is directed by Atul Sabharwal.

Talking about experimenting with genres, he said, "The best part about experimenting with this genre (in my case) is that I don't have to worry about the credibility of the final product. With veteran producers like Zee Studios and Manav Shrivastav along with such an experienced director like Atul Sir are on board for the project, all I have to do is make sure that I do my best in terms of the performance."

"After 'Dokha Round D Corner', this would be my second time grabbing the guns in a serious role, but I can safely say that I am equally excited (if not more) for this one as well. I am going to thoroughly enjoy myself while shooting for 'Berlin'; look forward to entertaining the audience with even more varied and diversified roles."

The actor is known for delivering some of the comical performances in films like 'Dangal', 'Badrinath Ki Dulhania', 'Stree', 'LuKa Chuppi', 'Pati Patni Aur Woh', and 'Helmet' among others.

'BHAUKAAL 2': AN INSPIRING WEB SERIES DESPITE OODLES OF VIOLENCE AND TRAGEDIES



BY TROY RIBEIRO

(Streaming on MX Player)

Direction: Jatin Wagle

Cast: Mohit Raina, Siddhanth Kapoor, Pradeep Nagar, Bidita Bag, Bikramjeet Kanwarpal, Ajay Singh Chaudhary, Rahul Gujjar, Priyanka Lulla, Anil Dhawan, Saanyam Srivastav

Duration: About 30 minutes per episode

Ratings: *** (three stars)

There is no pre-defined meaning to the title, 'Bhaukaal', but colloquially in the local North Indian lingo, it egoistically means "in one's own style, pride and honour" irrespective of the fact whether the person is really respected in the society or not. That said, 'Bhaukaal 2' is a rustic, cop-gangster based, crime-action drama created from the real-life incidents of Senior Superintendent of Police Navneet Sekera, whose name has been changed, to Naveen Sekera in the series.

Set in Uttar Pradesh's crime-ridden Muzaffarnagar during 2004, the story of 'Bhaukaal 2' takes off from where it left in its previous season.

Mohit Raina essays the role of the ace police inspector Naveen Sekera who makes it his life's mission to clean and eradicate the lawlessness that's plaguing the town and this



season focuses on him eliminating the gangs of Shaukeen Khan and the Dedha brothers.

How he does this against all odds, be it personal or professional, forms the crux of this season's tale.

With the gangs displaying their oneupmanship, the six-minute prologue of the season shows us the anarchy that's prevailing in the town. And the narrative begins - After Shaukeen Khan's death, the onus of the gang falls on the shoulders of his wife Nazneen (Bidita Bag) and his brother Ashfaq (Ajay Singh Chaudhary). They try to hold their own while doing their business of gun-running operations with the

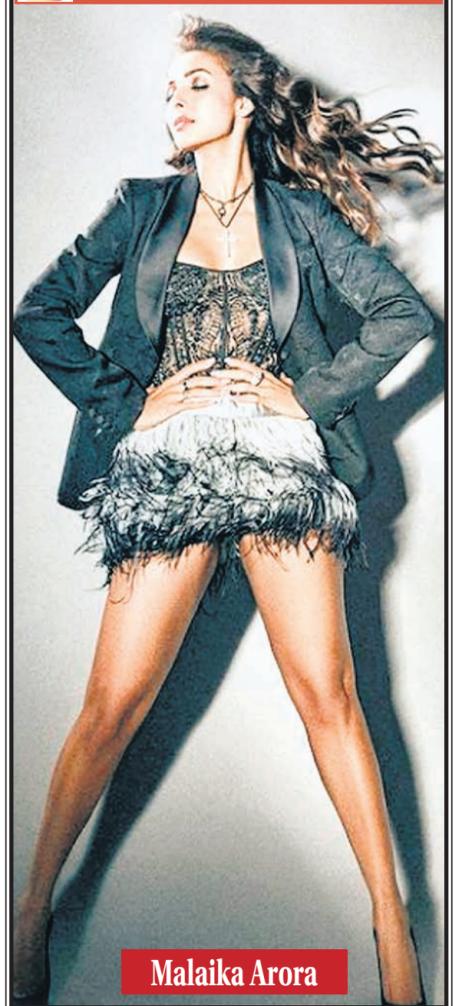
unpredictable Dedha brothers till the situation leads the events to go out of control and Pintu (Pradeep Nagar), the oldest of the Dedha brothers, lets out his war cry, "Bhaukaal".

The plots of the episodes contain oodles of abusive vocabulary, gangland culture, and violence that intersects between the world of politics, law enforcement, and the helpless citizens of the town. There is nothing new or unusual shown in the series that the viewer is not aware of. But there is focus and an element of honesty in the telling. Naveen Sekera is neither glorified nor made into a larger-than-life hero. He is portrayed as an earnest and duty-bound offi-

cer, and thus the tale is inspiring.

On the performance front, every actor worth his salt delivers earnestly. Mohit Raina slips into SSP Naveen's boots effortlessly. Similarly, Pradeep Nagar as the aggressive Pintu Pehlwan, Siddhanth Kapoor and Rahul Gujjar as his younger brothers, Chintu and Gurjan, are impressive with their on-screen idiosyncrasies. So is every other actor in the series. All of them are natural and simply brilliant. Technically the series is astutely crafted and mounted with ace production values. The action sequences too, are skillfully designed and brilliantly captured by the cinematography team.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Malaika Arora