Sunday Special

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IPL 2022 to kick-off from March 27 in India

The Indian Premier League (IPL) 2022 will start in the last week of March and will run till the end of May, with efforts being made to host the cash-rich league in India, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on Saturday.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is contemplating to start the 2022 season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) from March 27, almost a week ahead of the planned start of the tournament, the organisers informed the franchises in a meeting on Saturday.

The BCCI secretary issued the statement after a virtual meeting with the owners of the IPL. The meeting was attended by all owners, including the Ambanis, N Srinivasan, Shah Rukh Khan, Preity Zinta, Parth Jindal among others, besides the promoters of the two new teams -- Ahmedabad and Lucknow.

The discussions started with the potential venues and the BCCI told the franchise owners that it wants to hold the tournament in Maharashtra and the first game is likely to be held in Mumbai. Thereafter, the owners were told that the tournament will start in the last week of March, and will finish in the last week of May.

The meeting also considered the options of UAE and South Africa as venues. Most owners seem to have preferred Mumbai. Eventually, the Greater Mumbai option with four grounds (including Pune) was zeroed in, with the main advantage being the fact that it would not require air travel.

Along with the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai also has two other grounds that have hosted international matches: the Brabourne Stadium and the DY Patil stadium. There is also the Mumbai Cricket Association-run ground in Bandra-Kurla Complex as well as a stadium in Pune, which has also organised the IPL matches in the past.

AHMEDABAD PICK HARDIK, RASHID, GILL; LUCKNOW SELECT RAHUL, BISHNOI, STOINIS VIA DRAFT

New Delhi: The two new franchises of the Indian Premier League (IPL) -- Ahmedabad and Lucknow -- on Friday officially revealed their draft picks ahead of the upcoming mega auction on February 12 and 13. The announcement was made by the owners and officials of the teams via Star Sports -- the official broadcaster of the league -- after the end of the second ODI match between India and South Africa in Paarl. The CVC Capital, owners of Ahmedabad picked Hardik Pandya (Rs 15 crore), Rashid Khan (Rs 15 crore), and Shubman Gill (Rs 8 crore) in their team. All-rounder Hardik will also lead the team in this IPL season. Vikram Solanki, who resigned as Surrey's head coach with immediate effect, earlier in the day, has joined the Ahmedabad team in the IPL as its Director of Cricket. Gary Kirsten will serve as the mentor of the franchise while Ashish Nehra has been appointed as the head coach. The trio have previously worked together with the Royal Challengers Bangalore in IPL 2019.

Meanwhile, Lucknow picked KL Rahul (Rs 17 crore), Marcus Stoinis (Rs 9.2 crore), and Ravi Bishnoi (Rs 4 crore) in their team. Rahul will be the captain of Lucknow side, which was bought for Rs 7,090 crore (USD 940 million approx.) last October by the RP Sanjiv Goenka Group. With both the new teams finalising their players, the focus now shifts to the mega auction, which is scheduled for February 12 and 13 in Bengaluru.

SOME BIG NAMES TO SKIP THE AUCTION

New Delhi: Some big names in international cricket -- Ben Stokes, Chris Gayle, Jofra Archer, Joe Root, Mitchell Starc, Chris Woakes and Sam Curran and a few other foreign players have decided to skip the Indian Premier League 2022 and subsequently didn't enroll for the mega-auction, to be held on February 12 and 13. Root had previously said that he would have to sacrifice IPL for England and Test cricket, but the absence of Stokes, Archer and Starc, Woakes and Gayle was a bit surprising. However, there are still very big international names who have made themselves available for the auction. Among the big foreign stars names on the list, the players are -- Pat Cummins (Australia, base price Rs 2 crore), David Warner (Australia, Rs 2 crore), Steve Smith (Australia, Rs 2 crore), Quinton de Kock (South Africa, Rs 2 crore), Faf du Plessis (South Africa, Rs 2 crore) and Mark Wood (England, Rs 2 crore), Trent Boult (New Zealand, Rs 2 crore), Shakib Al Hasan (Bangladesh, Rs 2 crore), Dwayne Bravo (West Indies Rs 2 crore) and others, as per ESPNcricinfo. Overall, a total of 1214 cricketers, including 270 capped players, 312 uncapped players and 41 from associate nations like Nepal, UAE, Oman, Scotland and the Netherlands, have registered for the auction, and the list was sent to the ten IPL franchises on Friday night.

16 MARCHING CONTINGENTS, 17 MILITARY BANDS, 25 TABLEAUX ON R-DAY PARADE

EXHIBITION OF VALOUR

One marching contingent each of the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy will also participate in RDP-2022. Besides, a special flypast by 75 aircraft of the IAF will also take place to celebrate the day.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

There will be 16 marching contingents, 17 military bands and 25 tableaux of various states, departments and armed forces in the 73rd Republic Day, the Indian Army said in a statement on Saturday.

"The Army will be represented by a mounted column of cavalry, 14 mechanised columns, six marching contingents and a flypast by advanced light helicopters of its aviation wing at the Republic Day parade-2022 (RDP-2022)," it said.

The statement further mentioned that the mechanised columns of the Army will show one PT-76 tank, one Centurion tank, two MBT Arjun MK-I tanks, one APC TOPAS armoured personnel carriers, one BMP-I infantry fighting vehicle and two BMP-II infantry fighting vehicles.

One 75/24 Pack howitzer, two Dhanush howitzers, one PMS bridge-laying system, two Sarvatra bridge-laying systems, one HT-16 electronic warfare system, two Taran Shakti electronic warfare systems, one Tiger Cat missile system and two Akash missile systems will also be part of the mechanised columns.

From the central paramilitary forces, five marching contingents of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Central Industrial Police Force (CISF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Border Security Force (BSF) will participate in RDP-2022, it stated. Two Param Vir Chakra and one Ashok Chakra awardees will also participate in this year's parade. RDP-2022 will begin at 10.30 a.m. from Vijay Chowk to the National Stadium through the traditional route of Rajpath, and will end at 12 noon with 25 tableaux of various states, departments and armed forces participating, it said.

PRIYANKA, NICK JONAS BRING HOME A CHILD

New York: Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas have taken the surrogacy route to have a baby. PC made the surprise announcement at Friday/Saturday midnight. Taking to Instagram, Priyanka said: "We are overjoyed to confirm that we have welcomed a baby via surrogate." She added: "We respectfully ask for privacy during this special time as we focus on our family." Immediately after the announcement, more than 1.73 million of Priyanka's followers shared her joy on Instagram, showering her with heart emojis. They celebrities who celebrated included the late basketball star Kobe Bryant's wife and philanthropist, Vanessa, Kal Penn, Shefalee Shah, Katrina Kaif, Lara Datta, Sania Mirza, Bhumi Pednekar and Radhika Jones, editor of 'Vanity Fair', where Priyanka is on the cover of the February 2022 edition.

Haryana groom prints 1,500 marriage cards demanding MSP law guarantee

- Pradeep Kaliramana, a resident of Haryana's Bhiwani district, is getting married on February 14. He has printed 1500 wedding cards in which it is written, "Jang Abhi Jaari Hai, MSP Ki Baari Hai (which means "The battle is still on, it's MSP's turn"). Apart from this, a signboard depicting a 'tractor' and 'No Farmers, No Food' have also been displayed on the marriage cards.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After over a month since the farmer protests against the three contentious farm laws across various borders of the nationl capital was called off, a man from Haryana has chosen a unique way of protest against the Union government by printing 1,500 marriage cards

demanding a law guaranteeing Minimum Support Price (MSP) on crop produce.

Pradeep told reporter, "During the farmer protests, I visited the borders of Delhi and also extended his support to all other farmers sitting at various protest sites. This is the reason I got printed 1500 wedding cards demanding legal guarantee on MSP." The farmers' protest against the three central farms laws lasted for nearly 13 months following which the Central government withdrew the laws after which the government agreed to several other demands raised by the farmers.

MILITANT OUTFITS WOULD BE ALLOWED TO VOTE UNDER CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT IN MANIPUR: EC

Imphal: The Election Commission has allowed the cadres of the pro-talks militant outfits of Manipur, who are currently residing at various designated camps, to cast their votes using postal ballots in the two-phase Assembly elections scheduled on February 27 and March 3, top officials said on Saturday.

Manipur Chief Electoral Officer Rajesh Agrawal said that the EC has allowed the cadres of the pro-talks militant outfits which are under ceasefire agreements with the government and those who are currently residing at various designated camps in the state to cast their votes. However, the names of the cadres of the extremist outfits should be in the electoral roll of Manipur, the CEO said. The poll panel has taken the decision in consultation with the Central and state governments.

Indian-origin scientist creates 1st molecular structure of Omicron protein

- The spike protein, which is located on the outside of a coronavirus, enables SARS-CoV-2 to enter human cells.
- The Omicron variant has an unprecedented 36 mutations on its spike protein -- three to five times more than previous variants.

Toronto | Agencies

An Indian-origin researcher at University of British Columbia (UBC) has created the world's first molecular-level structural analysis of the Omicron variant spike protein. Published in the Science journal, the analysis which is done at near atomic resolution using cryo-electron microscopy, reveals how the heavily mutated Omicron variant attaches to and infects human cells. The structural analysis revealed that several mutations create new salt bridges and hydrogen bonds between the spike protein and the human cell receptor known as ACE2. The Omicron spike protein exhibits increased antibody evasion. In contrast to previous variants, Omicron showed measurable evasion from all six monoclonal antibodies tested, with complete escape from five.

> *"Understanding the molecular structure of the viral spike protein is important as it will allow us to develop more effective treatments against Omicron and related variants in the future. By analysing the mechanisms by which the virus infects human cells, we can develop better treatments that disrupt that process and neutralise the virus."*
>
> *Dr Sriram Subramaniam, Prof.UBC's department of biochemistry and molecular biology.*

'Spirit of Innovation'

THE WORLD'S FASTEST ALL-ELECTRIC VEHICLE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rolls Royce has announced that its all-electric 'Spirit of Innovation' aircraft is officially the world's fastest all-electric aircraft, having set two new world records which have now been independently confirmed. On 16 November 2021, the aircraft reached a top speed of 555.9 km/h (345.4 mph) over 3 kilometres, smashing the existing record by 213.04 km/h (132mph). In further runs at the UK Ministry of Defence's Boscombe Down experimental aircraft testing site, the aircraft achieved 532.1km/h (330 mph) over 15 kilometres - 292.8km/h (182 mph) faster than the previous record. Both records have been officially verified by the FÃ©dÃ©ration AÃ©ronautique Internationale (FAI), the World Air Sports Federation that controls and certifies world aeronautical and astronautical records. During its record-breaking runs, the aircraft, which is

part of the UK Government-backed ACCEL or 'Accelerating the Electrification of Flight' project, also clocked up a maximum top speed of 623km/h (387.4mph) making it the world's fastest all-electric vehicle.

Half of the ACCEL project's funding is provided by the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI), in partnership with the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and Innovate UK.

PLEA IN SC SAYS FREEBIES BY POLITICAL PARTIES SIMILAR TO BRIBERY, UNDUE INFLUENCE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A PIL has been moved in the Supreme Court claiming that the promise or distribution of irrational freebies using public funds before polls shakes the roots of free and fair elections, and vitiates the purity of the entire election process.

The plea filed by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay sought a direction from the top court to declare that the promise of irrational freebies, which are not for public purposes, from public funds before elections violates Articles 14, 162, 266(3) and 282 of the Constitution.

The plea contended that political parties' promises to lure voters in their favour are analogous to bribery and undue influences.

The plea cited that in poll-bound Punjab, the Aam Aadmi Party promised Rs 1,000 per month to every woman aged 18 and above, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) promised Rs 2,000 to each woman, while the Congress also promised Rs 2,000 per month and eight gas cylinders per year to every housewife.

The plea submitted that the fulcrum of democracy is the electoral process and if the integrity of the electoral process is compromised, the notion of representation becomes vacuous.

"Distribution of money and promise of freebies has reached alarming levels with elections countermanded several times. In this scenario, the danger to the system of parliamentary democracy and Indian Republic cannot be gainsaid," added the plea.

The plea pointed out that Punjab needs Rs 12,000 crore per month to fulfil the political promises if AAP comes to power, Rs 25,000 crore per month if SAD comes to power, and Rs 30,000 crore if the Congress comes to power. The petitioner added that the GST collection of the state is only Rs 1,400 crore.

The plea claimed, "In fact, after debt repayment, Punjab government is not able to pay even salaries-pensions, then how will it provide freebies? The bitter truth is that Punjab's debt is increasing every subsequent year. The state's outstanding debt has increased to Rs 77,000 crore, with Rs 30,000 crore accumulating in the present financial year itself."

Day after Utpal resigns from BJP, party urges him to reconsider decision

PANAJI | Agencies

A day after former Chief Minister late Manohar Parrikar's son Utpal stirred controversy by resigning from the BJP and stated that he would contest the upcoming elections as an independent candidate from Panaji, the BJP in Goa on Saturday urged him to reconsider his decision.

"The party also had discussions and had given him many solutions, suggestions and even now we would like him to reconsider his decision. The BJP is a family and in a family we all need to come together and work," state BJP spokesperson Narendra Sawaikar told a press conference in Panaji.

Utpal resigned from the party, days after he was denied a ticket to contest from the Panaji seat, which was represented by his father Manohar Parrikar since 1994. Parrikar died in 2019.

The ticket has been allotted to sitting BJP MLA Atanasio Monserrate, who has been accused of raping minor girl in 2018.

"The BJP leadership has taken a decision (on dropping Utpal) after thinking about it, after taking feedback from the local situation. Our party works in a systematic way and whatever decisions the party takes, everyone should abide by them," Sawaikar said.

Bulli Bai App case: Court denies anticipatory bail to Vishal Jha

New Delhi: The Patiala Session Court here on Saturday refused to grant anticipatory bail to accused Vishal Jha, in connection with the Bulli Bai App case after observing that the allegations against him are grave in nature as it is a direct onslaught upon the dignity and modesty of the women of a particular community.

Additional Sessions Judge Dharmender Rana while rejecting his bail plea said: "I concur with the Ld.Addl.PP that to unravel the obscure and undetected aspects of the crime, sustained custodial interrogation of the applicant is desirable. Considering the totality of circumstances, I do not find any merits in the application at hand and the same is accordingly dismissed," the order read.The court noted that other accused Neeraj Bishnoi in cahoots with Jha and other co-accused persons has developed the scandalous Bulli bai app.

DHARMA SANSAD CASE

PLEA IN SC SEEKS SIT PROBE INTO HATE SPEECHES AGAINST HINDUS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

New Delhi: The Hindu Front for Justice through its president and others has moved an intervention plea before the Supreme Court in the hate speech case related to the recent Dharma Sansad in Haridwar.

The plea claimed that since the top court has agreed to examine hate speeches against Muslims, it should also examine hate speeches against Hindus, citing over two dozen alleged instances involving political leaders like Akbaruddin Owaisi and AAP leader from Delhi, Amanatullah Khan.

"The applicants herein through the present application are praying to this court to direct an SIT to investigate the hate speeches given against the members of the Hindu community, their gods and goddesses," read the plea.It further urged the court to direct a probe into the incident of hate speech given against the Constitutional spirit as well as the unity and integrity of India.

The plea pointed out that some leaders and preachers of the Muslim community have been propagating against Hindu religion and against the sovereignty and integrity of India.

The application sought directions to the state governments to register an FIR against Asaduddin Owaisi, Tauqeer Raza, Sajid Rashidi, Amanatullah Khan, and Waris Pathan for allegedly making hate speeches.

Channi had share in mining mafia, alleges Amarinder

CHANDIGARH | Agencies

Dismissing Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi's denial of involvement in illegal sand mining as a 'lie, Punjab Lok Congress chief Amarinder Singh on Saturday said that as a chief minister, he had received specific inputs that Channi had a share in the mafia, along with several other Congress leaders and MLAs in the state.

"From top to bottom, right up to the level of senior ministers, many people were involved, as I had told Sonia Gandhi while I was the chief minister (of Punjab). She asked me what action I was taking in the matter, and I told her I will have to start from the top. The one and only mistake I made during my entire tenure was that I did not take any action then, out of my sense of loyalty to the Congress, since I did not get a go-ahead from Sonia Gandhi," Amarinder Singh said.In an interview to a TV channel, Amarinder Singh spoke in detail about Channi's 'Me Too' case, which he said was not pursued by the woman in question as she accepted the then minister's apology.

"Had she wanted to pursue the case, I would have taken action against Channi," he said, adding that his only role in the matter was to ask Channi to apologise to the woman officer, which he did and the apology was duly accepted by the woman.

SIX KILLED, SEVERAL HURT IN A BUS MISHAP IN ODISHA

BHUBANESWAR | Agencies

At least six persons were killed and several others sustained critical injuries in a bus accident at Bidu Chhak on NH-16 under Soro police limits in Balasore district of Odisha on Saturday.

A private bus named Shantilata met with an accident when the bus was en route to Bhubaneswar from Udala in Mayurbhanj district. According to eyewitnesses, when the bus stopped at the Bidu Chhak to deboard some passengers, a coal-laden truck hit it from the behind.

Following the collision, both the bus and the truck swerved off the road leading to the death of six passengers including an infant, they said. The identities of the deceased are yet to be ascertained.One of the locals, who was waiting for a bus opposite to the accident spot, said, "The coal laden truck suddenly hit the bus from behind when some passengers were stepping down. One of our local girls died while her parents were closely saved as they deboarded from the bus at the stoppage."On receiving information, the local police and fire personnel rushed to the spot for rescue operation with the help of locals. The injured were later rushed to Soro hospital while six critical patients have been shifted to the Balasore district headquarters hospital (DHH) for treatment, sources said.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed grief over the death of six persons in the mishap and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh for the families of each victim. He also directed concerned officials for better treatment of the injured passengers.

Jewellery shop looted in broad daylight in Patna

PATNA | Agencies

Four armed men wearing face masks on Friday barged into a jewellery shop in Patna's Bakarganj market and looted gold, silver and diamond jewelleries worth more than Rs 1 crore.

Shocked by the broad daylight robbery, Vijay Prasad, the shop owner, had lost his consciousness for a while.

Patna has the oldest bullion market in Bakarganj having more than 50 shops of wholesale-cum-retail shops. The shop owners claimed that this was the first time such an incident took place in the market.

"The men, wearing face masks, posed as normal customers, came to the shop and took everyone at gunpoint. They asked the employees to put all the jewellery in the cotton bags. After executing the robbery, they ran away towards their bikes to flee from the spot," Vijay Prasad, the owner of SS Jewellers said after regaining consciousness.

"Following the robbery, my employees screamed for help. The other shop owners pelted stones and bricks on. One of the robbers was overpowered by shop owners and the local traders after he was hit by stones," said a trader of Bakarganj market, requesting anonymity.

"The police personnel came to the spot 45 minutes after the incident. We have handed over one of the thieves to the police. A cotton bag was also recovered from his having some jewellery," he said.

Following the incident, the shop owners shut their outlets and went on a strike for an "indefinite period".

They have demanded the arrest of the persons involved in the incident, along with the recovery of the stolen jewellery.

One of the traders claimed that even as of them made several calls to Patna SSP MS Dhillon, he did not respond.

A police officer said that one of the arrested robbers has provided some details about the hideouts of the other robbers.

Govt officer, village head found drunk in Bihar

PATNA | Agencies

Government officials and public representatives of Bihar who have taken oath not to consume liquor in their entire life, are found in drunken state these days.

One incident has been reported in Arwal district when an official of Bihar agriculture department, traveling on the car, rammed a Paan vend at Jay Bigha village under Mehandia police station on Friday evening. The Paan vendor, who was inside the shop, was injured in this accident.

Following the accident, a large number of local vendors present at the spot, overpowered the alleged driver and handed him over to local police.

"The errant driver of the car is identified as Pintu Singh alias Om Singh, an agriculture officer in Buxar and a native of Arrah. He was driving the car in a drunken state. During breath analysis, we found 151 points which confirms that he was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the accident," said Amit Kumar, SHO of Mehandia police station.

Pintu was returning from Dhanbad to his native place Arrah via NH 139 connecting Aurangabad and Arwal.

The second incident took place in Katihar district when a newly elected Mukhiya (village head) was found in rash and negligent driving on Friday night.

He was on the way to his native village.

Experts from India, US discuss combating climate change though CCUS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Experts from India and the US on Saturday discussed various technologies to tackle climate change through Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS), saying they clearly align with five of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely, climate action; clean energy; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; responsible consumption and production; and partnerships to achieve the goals.

"Under a strict climatic regime, we can realise the identification and adoption of a right balance of portfolio of emission curtailment technologies. At the recently concluded COP-26 in Glasgow, Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought forth the country's remarkable performance as well as ambitions to meet the climate goals despite being one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. "The PM has given a mandate for all of us to become a net-zero emissions nation by 2070," said S. Chandrasekhar, Secretary, Department of Science & Technology (DST), in his opening remarks at the first workshop on thematic of Carbon Capture.

He also briefed about the recent initiatives of the Department of Science and Technology towards technology-led RD&D in the area of CCUS.

He informed that DST became part of transnational multilateral platforms such as Mission Innovation and Accelerating CCUS Technologies (ACT) along with other member countries, including the US for collaborative RD&D in the area of CCUS.

Jennifer Wilcox, Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management (FECM), US Department of Energy (USDOE), said that India is a valuable partner in developing new technologies to help combat climate change and attain clean energy goals.

Wilcox gave an overview of the US initiatives regarding clean energy and said it is a global crisis and requires a global response in clean energy technologies and an international partnership to achieve carbon net-zero status.

DELIMITATION HAS STARTED, ELECTIONS SOON IN J&K: AMIT SHAH

Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Saturday that elections will soon be held in J&K since the delimitation process has already started. Speaking at the virtual launch of the district good governance index in Jammu and Kashmir, Shah said, "Delimitation has started and elections will soon be held."

He reiterated that he has given assurance in the Lok Sabha that as soon as the situation becomes normal in Jammu and Kashmir, statehood will be given back.He slammed some leaders for spreading false propaganda and alleged that they are doing so for their own political benefits."Many leaders have been doing false propaganda.

I want the youth to ask them, crores of investment have been coming, tourists have been coming and they are doing propaganda for their own political benefits. Democracy has reached grassroots level and that is why they do this propaganda and youth should not listen to them."

For Generation Ace

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Jealousy is the fear or apprehension of superiority: envy our uneasiness under it.

William Shenstone

RELIEF TO INDIVIDUALS EXPECTED TO MITIGATE INFLATION, UNEMPLOYMENT

EYE ON BUDGET

It expects increase in tax benefit on home loan interest and principal repayment by Rs 50,000 each, higher from the current level of Rs 2 lakh and Rs 1.5 lakh, respectively. The government may provide interest subsidy of 3-4 per cent on home loan for three years. The government may announce asset monetisation of public sector undertakings (PSUs) under the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP). It can also monetise the housing and commercial real estate it owns by floating REITs.

- *The disinvestment plan is likely to become clearer with the Budget. The government is trying to narrow the gap via its disinvestment plan.*
- *The LIC IPO, which is expected to hit the market in March-end, may help the government in a big way by raising over Rs 1 lakh crore.*
- *The total disinvestment target of the government is Rs 1.75 lakh crore for the current fiscal.*
- *The expectation is that this Budget will incentivise both the rental housing market and the affordable housing sector. A single-window clearance mechanism has remained a demand for many years now.*

Sanjeev Sharma | New Delhi

In an environment of high inflation due to higher input cost and high unemployment caused due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the government is expected to provide relief to individuals and increase disposable income to boost consumption in the Union Budget FY23, to be tabled in the Parliament on February 1.

The government may increase the limits on standard deduction from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh, SMC Global Securities said in a report.

It is expected that the budget allocation for the Railways is set to hit a record level next fiscal as the government gears up to support a major makeover for the national transporter.Besides, there is a possibility of excise duty reduction on petroleum products. The market is also looking for support measures for sectors such as housing, auto, and auto ancillaries, and PLI-related measures in multiple sectors.

The pending big-ticket divestments apart from the LIC IPO include IDBI Bank, Bharat Petroleum Corporation, Pawan Hans, Shipping Corporation of India, BEML, and Container Corporation of India, among others, the report said.

Globally, the price of fertilisers surged significantly, adversely affecting India which depends on import. The price of urea, which is most commonly used, tripled to $990/tonne while DAP price doubled to $700-800 per tonne, as compared to prices that existed one-and-a-half year ago.

Besides, the recent spurt in natural gas, which accounts for 80 per cent cost of urea production, is expected to continue to raise the production cost of urea.Currently, the farmers are facing shortage of fertiliser and the agriculture department has urgent intervention of the Centre to ensure adequate supply of fertiliser.

In the last few Budgets, the government has raised the budgetary allocation towards fertiliser subsidy and in the forthcoming Budget, we expect fertiliser subsidy of Rs. 1.3 lakh crore, the report said.

Besides, the government may also raise farm credit to Rs 18 lakh crore, up from Rs 16.5 lakh crore for the current year, continuing with the same policy adopted earlier, to support the farmer to recover from the pandemic, the report said.

ECLGS (Emergency Credit Linked Guarantee Scheme) was introduced by the government in March 2020 to provide financial support to the pandemic-hit MSME sector, which was later extended to other stressed industries along with enhancing the credit limit from Rs 3 lakh crore to Rs 4.5 lakh crore.

6 dead, 23 injured in Mumbai building blaze

The fire was noticed at the top part of the 20-storied Kamla Building at around 7.30 a.m. with people in neighbouring buildings and morning walkers alerting the fire brigade. The Mumbai Fire Brigade (MFB) rushed with 13 fire tenders as the flames quickly spread to the two upper floors sparking panic among the building residents.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

At least 6 persons have been killed and 23 others injured when a major blaze engulfed the 18th floor of a building in Tardeo, South Mumbai at dawn on Saturday, the BMC Disaster Control said.

The MFB managed to rescue at least 23 injured persons from the inferno that raged in the top three floors, and the firemen continued to battle the blaze in the afternoon.

The injured persons were rushed to various private and public hospitals and 7 were given first aid and allowed to go.

The remaining 16 with grievous burns of various degrees, have been admitted to different hospitals.

Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar and other top BMC officials rushed to the spot to supervise the rescue and relief operations, and the cause of the fire is being probed. After the two fatalities earlier, another 4 critically injured persons succumbed to their burns in the next few hours, and another 5 are still critical, said the BMC Disaster Control.

The dead victims have been identified as Purushottam Chopdekar, Manju Kantharia, Hitesh Mistry and the identity of 3 including 2 women is yet to be ascertained.

A majority of the casualties have been taken to the nearby Bhatia Hospital, others to BMC's Nair Hospital and Kasturba Hospital, and the others to Masina Hospital, Reliance Hospital and Wockhardt Hospital. The BMC has ordered a probe into the causes of the fire catching many in the building unawares, whether the society had adequate fire warning/fighting facilities, etc, said an official.

EC allows physical meetings with curbs; ban on rallies extended till Jan 31

The Commission has enhanced the door-to-door campaign limit from 5 persons to 10 persons, excluding security personnel.

"Since contesting candidates for Phase 1 elections will be finalised on January 27, the Commission has decided to allow physical meetings of concerned political parties or contesting candidates in designated open spaces with a maximum of 500 persons or 50 per cent of the capacity of the ground or the prescribed limit set by SDMA, whichever is lesser, from January 28 till February 8, excluding the silence period."

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Election Commission of India on Saturday allowed physical meetings of political parties or candidates contesting the upcoming Assembly elections in five states in designated open spaces with some restrictions after holding a review meeting with the Health Ministry and concerned officials of the poll-bound states. However, the ban on rallies, road shows and padyatras has been extended till January 31.

Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra along with Election Commissioners Rajiv Kumar and Anup Chandra Pandey held a comprehensive review of the present Covid situation and projected trends in the poll-bound states.

The Commission also reviewed the vaccination status and action plan for expeditiously completing vaccination for first, second and booster dose for the eligible persons among the polling staff.

After considering the ongoing Covid situation, the Commission extended the ban on road shows and padyatras till January 31.

The Commission has also allowed for physical meetings with same restrictions for Phase 2 of the elections from February 1 to February 12, excluding during the silence period.

Among other relaxations, the Commission has allowed video vans for publicity with usual Covid restrictions at designated open spaces with a maximum of 500 viewers or 50 per cent of the capacity or the limit set by the SDMA. The EC had already granted relaxation for indoor meetings with a maximum of 300 persons or 50 per cent of the capacity of the hall or the prescribed limit set by the SDMA.

The poll panel added that it will be the district election officer's responsibility to identify and to notify the designated spaces in advance for the purposes.

TIHAR JAIL TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST 82 STAFF WHO HELPED CONMAN SUKESH

New Delhi: The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police have reportedly written to Tihar Jail authorities to take action against 82 jail officials who allegedly helped multimillionaire conman Sukesh Chandrashekhar by providing him luxury facilities inside the prison.

"During investigation conducted by the EOW, seven jail officials were arrested in the case as they were found involved in facilitating the organized crime syndicate run by the kingpin Sukesh V. Chandrashekhar operating from the Barrack No 204, Ward No 3, Jail No 10 of Rohini jail," said the police official quoting the letter. The official said further, during the course of investigation, the CCTV footage of ten cameras of Rohini Jail was collected and examined during which it was found that the view of CCTV cameras installed in the Barrack of accused Sukesh was completely blocked by using curtains and putting mineral water bottles box in front of the camera.

The EOW has mentioned in the letter that no action was taken to remove the object from the view of the camera and for this jail officials got hefty amount from Sukesh and his associates.

KERALA NUN RAPE CASE

Prosecution to appeal against acquittal of Mulakkal

Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

The prosecution which was in a state of shock when it heard a lower court acquitting Catholic Bishop Franco Mulakkal in the nun rape case, on Saturday decided to appeal the verdict at the Kerala High Court.The special prosecutor in the case Jithesh Babu submitted the legal advice to this effect to the Kottayam SP, who will go forward in the appeal, as the time period for it is 90 days, from the date of the verdict which came from the Kottayam Additional district court judge G. Gopakumar on January 14, whose verdict enabled Franco to walk out free.Incidentally, soon after the verdict came, the former Kottayam SP Harisankar, who oversaw the probe, said he was supremely confident that the verdict would be against the accused."This was the least expected as the witnesses did a very clean job. An appeal should be filed," said Harisankar, then.The trial in the case extended over 105 days with 39 witnesses being examined and 122 documents produced before the court.

While serving as Bishop of the Jalandhar Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, he was accused of raping a nun, who belonged to the Missionaries of Jesus congregation.

During his visits between 2014 and 2016 to Kerala, he was accused of raping the 43-year old nun on 13 occasions. Later, he was removed from the charge of the Jalandhar diocese.

A complaint was filed against him in June 2018 in Kerala and Mulakkal was arrested on September 21, 2018 on rape charges. He secured bail on October 16, 2018. The charge sheet names 83 witnesses. Of the 83 witnesses, 39 were called and they were heard.

LEWD REMARKS AGAINST WOMEN: 6 PART OF CLUBHOUSE APP IDENTIFIED

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Six persons who took part in the Clubhouse conversation where obscene and derogatory remarks were made against Muslim women have been identified, Delhi Police said on Saturday, adding all six individuals have joined the ongoing investigation into the case.

"All the six were made to join the investigation either at their place of stay or at office," Deputy Commissioner of Police (IFSO) KPS Malhotra told reporter.

Notably, the cyber cell of Mumbai police has also arrested three men from Haryana in the same case after a complaint was lodged in Mumbai by a woman.

On January 17, a video of a Clubhouse conversation on the topic 'Muslim gals are more beautiful than hindu gals' went viral on social media.

In the said conversation, the participants were allegedly heard making obscene, vulgar and derogatory remarks targeting Muslim women and girls.

Then next day on Tuesday, January 18, taking suo-moto cognizance over the issue, Delhi Commission for Women issued a notice to the Cyber Cell of the Delhi Police demanding immediate registration of an FIR and a punitive action against the alleged persons.

2 LET TERRORISTS KILLED IN J&K ENCOUNTER

Srinagar: Two Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists killed in an encounter between terrorists and security forces at Kilbal area in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district have been identified, officials said on Saturday.

They have been identified as Sameer Ahmad Shah and Rayees Ahmad Mir.

Police said based on a specific input generated by police regarding presence of terrorists in village Kilbal area of Shopian, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by the police, army and the CRPF. Incriminating materials, arms and ammunition were recovered from the site of the encounter. Police have registered a case and investigation has been initiated.

Defer vaccination, including boosters, by 3 months in Covid positive cases: Ministry

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Health Ministry has asked the states and UTs to defer vaccination, including the precaution dose, by three months if the beneficiary tests positive. "In case of individuals having lab test proven SARS-2 Covid-19 illness, all Covid vaccinations including precaution dose to be deferred by three months after recovery", said Vikas Sheel, Additional Secretary & Mission Director (NHM) in a letter to states and UTs.

The letter further reads that the requests had been made from various quarters for guidance with regard to the administration of precaution dose to the eligible persons having Covid illness. The guidance is based on scientific evidence and recommendation of National Technical Advisory Group (NTGAI), it adds further.

Meanwhile, India on Saturday reported 3,37,704 fresh Covid cases with 488 deaths in last 24 hrs. With the addition of 488 new deaths, the total deaths toll has climbed to 4,88,884.

The Omicron infection tally has risen to 10,050 across the nation, an increase of 3.69 per cent from yesterday.

WILL GIVE WINGS TO THE DREAMS OF DAUGHTERS: CM

- Record made by opening about 23 lakh accounts in Madhya Pradesh
- Congratulations to citizens on successful completion of 7 years of the scheme

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that it is the responsibility of all of us to fulfil the dreams of our daughters so that they can move ahead. Central government, state government and citizens together will give wings to the dreams of daughters. Today Madhya Pradesh has made an achievement by opening about 23 lakh accounts under Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana. It is developing the tendency of saving among the girls. Efforts for their empowerment will continue.Chouhan said that today Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the aim of empowering daughters and securing their future has successfully completed 7 years. The successful completion of 7 years of a meaningful scheme is also a matter of satisfaction for all of us. All cooperating citizens and families must be congratulated for the success of the scheme.

Chouhan said that according to the report of the implementation of Sukanya Samridhi Yojana that has come out recently, more than 22 lakh 94 thousand accounts have been opened in the state so far in this scheme for economic empowerment of daughters and making them self-dependent. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that it is very important for women to be empowered in order to strengthen the society. Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, run by the Government of India, has proved to be a milestone for the daughter born today so that she can play her role in empowering the society, state and nation tomorrow. Today daughters are progressing in every field. They are achieving every milestone. If all of us together will continue to encourage them to move forward, then there will definitely be empowerment of daughters in real sense.

JANPAD PANCHAYAT OFFICIAL SUSPENDED AFTER BRIBERY VIDEO GOES VIRAL

Bhopal:A Janpad Panchayat official in Sehore district was suspended after a purported video showing him taking money went viral on social media. Bhopal Divisional Commissioner Gulshan Bamra on Saturday evening suspended with immediate effect Janpad Panchayat Chief Executive Officer (CEO) DN Patel, who is posted in Ashta, some 80 kilo-emtres from the state capital, under Madhya Pradesh Civil Services Rules, 1966, an official said. In the clip going viral on social media, a man who is shooting the video is putting some money in a drawer and the official sitting on the chair asks how much and for what. In reply, the man says it is Rs 7,500 for signing a road related file.

Guna BJP MP's letter to Nadda accusing Scindia of sidelining him goes viral

- "Guna Lok Sabha has been Congress' dominated constituency for years and he (Yadav) defeated the Congress (Scindia) in 2019. It could have happened because of party's dedicated workers and now they are facing negligence," the letter read.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The ongoing cold war between Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and Member of Parliament (MP) Krishnapal Yadav has yet again come to the fore after Yadav's "grievance" letter to the BJP president JP Nadda went viral on social media.

In his letter to Nadda, the MP has accused Scindia and his supporters of neglecting and sideling him even during party's programmes and rallies in Gwalior - Chambal division. The letter available with IANS, which was written on December 8, 2021 but now going viral on social media, revealed that he has been neglected by Scindia and his supporters.

Yadav alleged that Scindia group does not invite him for party's programmes, not even for inauguration of development works initiated by him.

Drawing Nadda's attention to the matter, he said that the continous negligence is leaving a bad imression on the party workers in Gwalior- Chambal division in Madhya Pradesh.

"Guna Lok Sabha has been Congress' dominated constituency for years and he defeated the Congress (Scindia) in 2019. It could have happened because of party's dedicated workers and now they are facing negligence," the letter read.

Yadav alleged that the Scindia group neither attend meetings called by him nor invite him to attend meetings or programmes. "Such things are not only demoralising hardworking party workers but also portraying the party in a bad light. It can be verified by the party," he added.

Yadav gained popularity after he defeated Scindia from Guna Lok Sabha constituency in 2019. Sources in BJP said that cold war between Yadav and Scindia had started soon after the latter joined the party. Sources said that the main conflict between the two have emerged for receiving credits for development works in the region.

MP HC junks plea against renaming Habibganj station, imposes fine

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has dismissed a petition challenging the government's decision to rename Habibganj railway station after Gond queen Rani Kamlapati and imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on the petitioner.

A division bench of Justices Sheel Nagu and Sunita Yadav dismissed the petition, terming it as 'frivolous' and 'vexatious' piece of litigation which has consumed precious time of the court.

The court dismissed the plea observing that it does not perceive any public cause involved in the petition, which appears to have been filed to gain cheap publicity.

"This court fails to comprehend as to how the name of a particular Railway Station would lead to furtherance of public cause," it said.

The court further noted that a cause of public is served by quality and quantity of amenities and facilities available at a railway station and in facilitating ease of travelling by train. This act of facilitation has nothing to do with the name of a particular Railway Station.

"The present petition stands dismissed with cost of Rs 10,000 which shall be paid by the petitioner in the Registry to be utilised for purchasing necessary articles and equipment for dealing with the crisis arising out of the third wave of Covid-19 pandemic," the court said.

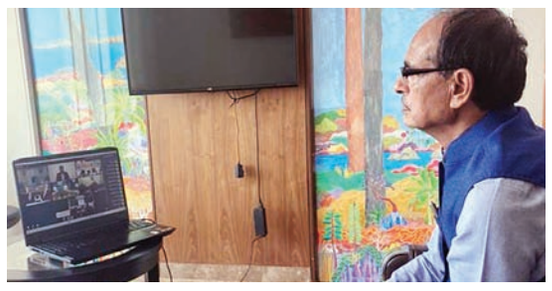
The petition was filed by a Seoni-based lawyer, A.S. Qureshi on the ground that in 1973 one Guru Habeeb Miyan had donated his land to the Railways on which the station was constructed. Therefore, the station's old name (Habibganj) should be restored.The Habibganj railway station which has been renovated and facilitated with world class amenities for the passengers has been renamed after Gond queen Rani Kamalapati during a visit of Prime Narendra Modi's visit in Bhopal on November 15, 2021.

CM PLANTS SAPLING AT CHINNA JEEYAR SWAMI ASHRAM

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday planted saplings at Chinna Jeeyar Swami Ashram during his stay in Hyderabad (Telangana) in the morning. Chouhan planted Bakula plant. His wife Sadhna Singh Chouhan also planted a sapling.

PM Modi praises Chhatarpur district at national level

- Registration of pregnant women increases from 37 to 97 percent in Chhatarpur
- PM Modi interacts with officials of 112 aspirational districts
- CM Chouhan expresses gratitude to PM



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Madhya Pradesh is determined to achieve the goals as per the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The guidance of PMModi for the inspirational districts is very inspiring and useful. Chief Minister has thanked Prime Minister Shri Modi for bringing backward and deprived areas together on the path of development on the occasion of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav. It may be noted here that Chouhan took part in the interaction of PM Modi with District Magistrates (DMs) of 112 aspirational districts today through video conferencing from Hyderabad.

During this interaction the Prime Minister, while addressing the District Magistrates and Divisional Commissioners, praised Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh. The Prime Minister said that the registration of pregnant women in Chhatarpur has increased from 375 to 975. This is a great achievement. Other districts must learn from this.

State Government Finalizes Outline for Republic Day Programmes

Instructions Given to Make Arrangements at the Venues for Prevention of Covid-19

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Republic Day will be celebrated in a dignified manner on January 26 in all the districts including the capital Bhopal. This year the state government has outlined the programmes in view of the novel corona virus (Covid-19) infection. In this regard, instructions have been issued by the General Administration Department to all the Head of Departments, Divisional Commissioners, Collectors and Chief Executive Officers of Zila Panchayats.

On Republic Day, the national flag will be hoisted at all the important government buildings and historical places of the state. The Republic Day celebrations will be organised in the capital at Lal Parade Ground, Bhopal. The programme will start at 9 am, in which the chief guest will take the salute of the parade and address the public meeting. The parade will be conducted like last year in which contingents of Police, Home Guards, Special Armed Forces, Jail Warden, CISF, RAF and senior NCC students will take part. NSS, Scout-Guide and Shaurya Dal will not participate in the parade. After the parade, there will be a horse riding demonstration. After that the tableaux will be taken out.

On Republic Day, the flag hoisting and reading of the message of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will be done by the chief guest in the district headquarters as per last year. The parade will be organised only at the district headquarters. Flag hoisting, national anthem will be organised by the head of the office in educational institutions, in which children from class 1st to 10th will not participate. In District Panchayat, Janpad Panchayat and Gram Panchayat offices, the national flag will be hoisted by the head of the administrative committee and the national anthem will be recited. In such District Panchayat, Janpad Panchayat and Gram Panchayat where the head of the administrative committee is not available, the flag will be hoisted by the head of the office.

The National Flag will be hoisted by the Mayor/President (where the elected Mayor and President are working) in the Municipal Corporation, Municipality and Municipal Council office. In the remaining urban bodies, the commissioner / chief municipal officer will hoist the flag. Instructions have also been given to ensure the accountability of the concerned officers at each level to ensure that the flag code is followed. Along with ensuring strict compliance to the guidelines related to novel corona virus (Covid-19) infection it has been told to mandatorily make necessary arrangements for first aid and health at the venues and take special care of hand sanitizers, masks and social distancing etc.

NEW PILGRIMAGE IN STATE ON THE LINES OF ANDAMAN IN MEMORY OF MARTYRS

- Madhya Pradesh government accords special respect to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose
- Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Memorial Museum in Jabalpur and statue in Bhopal initiated
- Chief Minister Chouhan had named Jabalpur Jail after Netaji

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's announcement regarding development of museum in the memory of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in Central Jail Jabalpur and opening of Netaji's barracks for public viewing on 23 January 2021 will be implemented on Sunday, 23 January 2022 on his 125th birth anniversary. For this, necessary preparations have been completed in Jabalpur. On two days a week, the general public will be able to see the chamber of Subhash Chandra Bose, where he was imprisoned. It may be mentioned that in the year 2007, Chouhan had named Jabalpur Jail after Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Along with this, the initiative of construction and development of the monument was also started here.

Just as the Cellular Jail in Andaman and Nicobar has been developed as Veer Savarkar Memorial, similarly many works have been done under a concrete initiative to develop Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Jail of Jabalpur as a Prerak Sthal. Among these, items such as Netaji's clothes, shackles worn by him, his handwritten letters and inscriptions related to his jail visit have been given the form of a museum. A passage has been constructed to reach the barracks of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The facility to access this room has been developed by making a new route other than the main gate in the prison. In this passage, colourful flowers have been planted on both sides. In this regard, with the initiative of the Madhya Pradesh government, this will be the first Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose museum in the state and the second in the country. Citizens will not have to pay any charges to visit the museum and the prison cell of Netaji. A museum has been established in New Delhi in the memory of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose since 2019.Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's statue has been installed near the newly constructed Subhash Nagar Railway Over Bridge in Bhopal. Along with this, the play 'I am Subhash' is also being staged in Shaheed Bhawan in collaboration with the Department of Culture in Bhopal.

This initiative also assumes significance for Madhya Pradesh because Prime Minister Modi has announced the installation of a statue of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose near India Gate in New Delhi. Many steps have been taken in the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, paying obeisance to the heroes of the Indian freedom struggle. In this series, the work of installing statues by the nation that is grateful to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and development of Subhash Ward in Jabalpur Jail will prove to be historic.Subhash Ward located in Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Central Jail Jabalpur is being developed as a Prerana Sthal for patriotism and is being opened for the general public. A separate passage and entrance has been made here. There will also be a reception room for visitors in the Subhash Ward. The jail administration has prepared a documentary film, which focuses on Netaji's sacrifice and life's struggle. In collaboration with the Public Works Department, the artists and laborers in the prison have done the renovation work of Subhash Ward and the decoration of the premises. Subhash Ward will be open for visitors every Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 2.30 pm. At present, in view of Covid infection, the visitors have been instructed to bring their IDs along with following the necessary protocol. Along with this, they have been requested to follow the necessary safety rules.

MP GOVT'S PLAN TO RELOCATE BIG CATS TO GUJARAT DRAWS FLAK FROM WILDLIFE ACTIVISTS

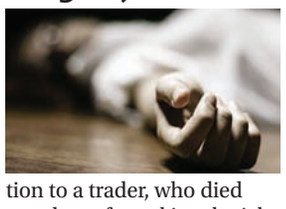
Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has sought New Delhi-based Central Zoo Authority's (CZA) approval for relocating two rescued tigers and four leopards to the neighbouring state of Gujarat, a move being strongly opposed by the wildlife activists.

As per the officials in Madhya Pradesh wildlife department, the decision has been taken considering the availability of adequate space for rescued animals in the state in future.The officials said that wildlife department often rescues wild animals from different parts of the state, and since they are not supposed to be released in open forests, they need be kept under close observation. Rajneesh Singh, a senior official in the wildlife department in Bhopal, said that rescued animals are not put on display at any zoo or national park."Decision to send tigers or other rescued wild animals to other places are sometimes taken as per future planning, including to provide adequate space to the animals. It happens when we have wild animals in surplus numbers," Singh said. The recused big cats will be handed over to the Greens Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (GZRRC) located in Jamnagar, Gujarat. Currently, they have been kept at the Maharaja Martand Singh Judeo White Tiger Safari and Zoo in Rewa district.The decision came after GZRRC in December last year wrote to Madhya Pradesh's wildlife department and requested for acquisition of rescued wild animals housed in zoological parks, rescue centres, and transit facilities in the state. Therefore, the department has written to the Central Zoo Authority seeking its approval. However, when the department initiated the process to send these animals to Jamnagar, wildlife activists in Madhya Pradesh raised questions on this issue.Bhopal-based wildlife activist Ajay Dube has written to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Central Zoo Authority, and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouan seeking their intervention on the matter. Dubey has come up with several points as to why the felines should not be relocated. Talking to IANS, Dube said: "I have not objected the decision but have sought attention on legal grounds. First and foremost, why would MP want to send its tigers and leopards to Gujarat when it already has two rescue centres in the state?"Secondly, the forest department wrote to the Central Zoo Authority to seek its consent without taking the Chief Minister's permission. The Chief Minister is the head of the state wildlife board and if the department has already got his approval in the matter, why it has not mentioned it in its letter?"MP government is planning make tiger safaris in Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Pachmarhi by spending crores of rupees. It has been proposed that rescued wild animals will be released in the tiger sarafis.

Patient dies after Homeopathy doctor gives wrong injection

Team Absolute | Khandwa



A doctor of homeopathy has been arrested for allegedly administering wrong injection to a man, which led to his death, in Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa district, police said on Saturday.

Deepak Vishwakarma, who runs a clinic in Sindhi Colony, was arrested on Friday under the relevant provisions of the IPC and MP Ayurvigyan Parishad Adhiniyam, city superintendent of police (CSP) Lalit Gathre said.

The doctor's clinic was also sealed after a complaint was lodged against him for administering a wrong injection to a trader, who died two days after taking the jab four months ago, the official told a news agency. During the probe, the police found that Vishwakarma, a practitioner of homeopathy, had given allopathy medicines to his patient Deepak Aartani, said Ishwar Singh Chouhan of Moghat Road police station.

The patient had contracted an infection and died two days after he was allegedly administered a wrong injection by the doctor, he said.

GOVT TO SOON TAKE DECISION ON COLLEGE REOPENING: SAMANT

Maharashtra Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday Samant on Friday hinted that colleges may reopen for physical classes soon. The minister in a tweet said that he will discuss the issue with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and send the proposal for his final approval.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

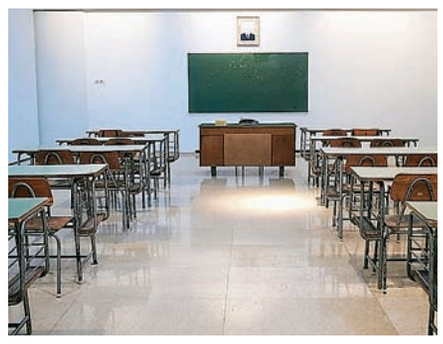
Days after Maharashtra government's announcement to reopen schools for classes 1-12 in State, it is likely that the colleges in the state might also. The speculations come as Maharashtra Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday Samant on Friday hinted that colleges may reopen for physical classes soon. The minister in a tweet said that he will discuss the issue with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and send the proposal for his final approval. He tweeted, "Regarding starting colleges in the state, will discuss with Chief Minister Uddhav Saheb...and will send it to him for final approval of the proposal." As of now the schools in Maharashtra have remained shut, however as per the new announcement it will reopen soon. The Maharashtra government has accepted the proposal submitted by the School Education Department to reopen schools. Classes from primary to higher secondary will be allowed to attend physical schools from January 24. The schools, however, will only reopen in areas with a low Covid count. Maharashtra School Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad said that schools will reopen for classes 1 to 12 amid strict Covid-19 protocols from January 24. "CM has agreed to our proposal," Gaikwad added.

As reported by New18 earlier, Maharashtra has adopted a decentralised approach where the local administrations will have the right to take a call on basis of the covid-19 situation in their area.

Schools in Maharashtra were closed in the first week of January, Maharashtra government then announced to shut schools till February 15. However, the state government then took a u-turn on its earlier decision, after demand from parents and students for reopening.

Pune schools to remain closed amid high Covid-19 surge, says Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar

The Maharashtra government has announced reopening of schools for students of Classes 1-12 for offline classes from January 24.



Team Absolute | Pune

As Maharashtra gears up to reopen schools on January 24, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Saturday (January 22) said the government has decided not to reopen schools in the Pune district for another week in view of high Covid-19 cases.

Pawar said the coronavirus cases in the Pune district are not expected to fall for the next 8 days. "More than 16,000 COVID cases reported in Pune yesterday. So, we've decided not to reopen schools in the Pune district for the next one week. COVID numbers are not likely to come down in Pune, for at least the next 8 days," Pawar said. Earlier, the Maharashtra government had announced reopening of schools for students of Classes 1-12 for offline classes from January 24. Maharashtra schools were closed in the first week of January amid rise in coronavirus cases and in the wake of the emergence of the Omicron variant. Meanwhile, the deputy CM informed at least 51 per cent children in the age group of 15 to 18 years have taken the first jab of the Covid-19 vaccine in Pune district and 75 per cent have taken the first dose in rural Pune. Further, he said that although the coronavirus infections were increasing, only 1.5 per cent patients are being treated at hospitals. "The number of people getting treated in hospitals are very less. The government hospital has plenty of space available and even the jumbo hospital is ready. Most patients are taking treatment at home," Pawar said. Pune on Friday logged 16,618 new coronavirus cases, the highest single-day addition so far, which pushed the caseload in the district to 13,13,016. With 10 deaths, the fatality toll climbed to 19,343.

Prez, PM condole deaths in Mumbai building fire

Team Absolute | New Delhi

President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday condoled the death of three persons in the huge fire in Mumbai.

Taking to Twitter in Hindi, President Kovind said he is saddened by the fire incident and expressed deepest sympathies with the families who lost their near and dear ones in the fire. He also prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured. A tweet from the PMO handle said: "Saddened by the building fire at Tardeo in Mumbai. Condolences to the bereaved families and prayers with the injured for the speedy recovery: PM @narendramodi." The Prime Minister also announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each from the PMNRF for the next of kin of those who lost their lives while the injured would be paid Rs 50,000 each. At least 6 persons have been killed and 23 others injured when a major blaze engulfed the 18th floor of a building in Tardeo, South Mumbai at dawn on Saturday. The fire was noticed at the top part of the 20-storied Kamla Building at around 7.30 am with people in neighbouring buildings and morning walkers alerting the fire brigade. The Mumbai Fire Brigade (MFB) rushed with 13 fire tenders as the flames quickly spread to the two upper floors sparking panic among the building residents. The MFB managed to rescue at least 23 injured persons from the inferno that raged in the top three floors, and the firemen continued to battle the blaze in the afternoon.

Maharashtra BJP asks governor to take action against MVA ministers for waiver of Shiv Sena MLA's fine

The state cabinet last week decided to waive the penalty imposed on MLA Pratap Sarnaik for illegal construction at a residential project in Thane. The ministers violated their oath of office, accused a delegation led by Maharashtra BJP president Chandrakant Patil.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A delegation led by Maharashtra BJP president Chandrakant Patil met Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari at Raj Bhavan on Saturday demanding stern action against the entire council of ministers in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government for waiving a Rs 4.30-crore fine imposed on Shiv Sena's Thane MLA Pratap Sarnaik and thereby "violating their oath of office."

The state cabinet last week decided to waive the penalty imposed on Sarnaik for illegal construction at a residential project in Thane.

The BJP delegates presented the details of the case to the governor and submitted a memorandum demanding that criminal offences should be registered against the entire cabinet.

Speaking to the media outside Raj Bhavan after the meeting Patil said: "During the swearing-in, the ministers take the oath they will not indulge in any act of favouritism or wrongdoing. Shockingly, the entire MVA cabinet took the unanimous decision to waive the Rs 4.30 crore penalty slapped against Sarnaik for illegal floor construction in a project at Thane. What is more appalling is that. The finance department had recommended the imposition of a double penalty to set an example for others not to violate rules. But the cabinet overruled the finance department's objections to favour the Sena MLA. Since the governor administers the oath to ministers, we have taken up the matter with him," he said.

"On Monday we will take up the same matter with the Lokayukta and Upalokayukta office. We will also file public interest litigation in court against the cabinet." Years ago, two 13-storeyed buildings under the Chhabhaiya Vihang Garden project developed by Sarnaik's companies in Thane landed in trouble for illegal construction and violation of rules. In 2008, the Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) permitted construction up to the ninth floor. Sarnaik, who had built a school for the TMC free of cost, in the bargain, got additional TDR (transfer of development rights) and extended construction to 13 floors. But he had not taken the mandatory permission from the corporation. Following objections, Sarnaik applied for regularisation of the illegal floors. In 2013, he received clearance with a penalty of Rs 3.3 crore. It was to be paid within six months failing which it would invite an interest of 18 per cent. Though Sarnaik paid Rs 25 lakh to the corporation, the total sum of penalties and interest added up to approximately Rs 4.30 crore. In the present MVA government, the urban development portfolio is with the Shiv Sena and it mooted the proposal to waive the entire amount of Rs 4.30 crore in the cabinet. The decision was unanimously approved without any discussion. "A cabinet cannot take decisions for an individual. If it has decided to regularise all illegal construction and give a penalty waiver it should extend for the entire state. There should be a uniform policy," Patil said.

Mumbai Police arrests Nigerian national in drug peddling case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Anti Narcotic Cell (ANC) of Mumbai Police on Saturday said that its Kandivali unit has arrested a Nigerian national for allegedly supplying drugs in the city.

The ANC said that they have recovered 970 grams of Methaqualone from him which is valued at Rs 97 lakh in the international market. The accused was arrested following a tip off from Goregaon, a senior ANC official said.

The police have lodged a case under relevant sections of the NDPS Act against him. During probe, officials found that he had earlier been involved in two cases registered against him by ANC Worli. He was taken to a nearby government hospital where he was made to undergo medical checkup. The police after getting his negative Covid report produced him before the concerned court.As he was not required for further questioning, the police requested the court to send him to judicial custody. The court heard the contention of the prosecution and allowed their move. The accused has been remanded to fourteen days judicial custody. The police will inform the Nigerian Embassy and the concerned Central Ministry Department regarding his arrest.urther probe in the matter is underway.

LATA MANGESHKAR SHOWS 'SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT,'

Mumbai: The health of legendary singer Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar was showing "signs of improvement" on Saturday and she continues to remain under treatment in the ICU of a leading private hospital, said a close family friend. "Her condition is improving compared with before and she is under the care of the amazing team of medicos headed by Dr. P. Samdani," Anusha Srinivasan Iyer told IANS. She said all are praying and eagerly looking forward to Lata Didi's speedy recovery and returning home soon.Mangeshkar, 92, was admitted to Breach Candy Hospital near her home in south Mumbai with Covid-19 and related health issues.

ELDERLY COUPLE STABBED TO DEATH

Thane | Agencies

An elderly couple was stabbed to death by unidentified persons in their house on a farm in Ganeshpuri town of Thane district, police said on Saturday. Jagannath Kalu (Balu) Patil (78) and his wife Satyabhama (70) were found brutally killed at their house in Pendharipada of Akloli on the outskirts of the town in the early hours of the day, an official said. The killings came to light when the couple's maid arrived for work around 7.30 and when no one answered the door despite repeated knocking, the door was broken down and the duo was found lying in a pool of blood, he said.

According to the police, the murders may have taken place in the intervening night of Friday and Saturday.

Some unidentified persons broke into the house and stabbed the duo several times and killed them, the official said. An offence under section 302 (murder) of the IPC has been registered with the Ganeshpuri police station, and the bodies have been sent for post-mortem, he said. The police suspect that property dispute may be the motive behind the killings, as no valuables were stolen from the house, the official said. As per preliminary reports, the television in the house had been left on throughout the night, and the couple may have been watching TV at the time of murder. Patil was handicapped and had lost a leg to gangrene, he said, adding that gold ornaments on the deceased woman were intact, while objects had been scattered in the entire house.

Fake SIM card racket busted; two held

Thane | Agencies

Two persons have been arrested and a minor detained in connection with a racket involved in generating fake SIM cards in Thane district, police said on Saturday.

A huge stock of activated black SIM cards and fabricated identity cards were seized from the accused, said Yogesh Chavan, deputy commissioner of police Zone-II Bhiwandi.

Based on a tip-off, a team from the police station raided a locality in Nagaon of Bhiwandi and nabbed the accused selling SIM cards to customers on Thursday, he said. The police have arrested Mohammad Irfan Islam Ansari (23) and (24), while a minor has also been detained in the case, he said. The police have recovered 111 fake SIM cards, different Aadhar cards having the photo of one and the same person, person, a printer, KYC machine, three mobile phones and 250 SIM cards of various service providers, the official said.

The seized goods were valued at Rs 2.23 lakh, he said.

An offence under section 420 (cheating) and other relevant provisions of the IPC has been registered, the official said, adding that further probe is underway to trace people who have been sold the SIM cards.

MAN THROWS ACID ON WIFE

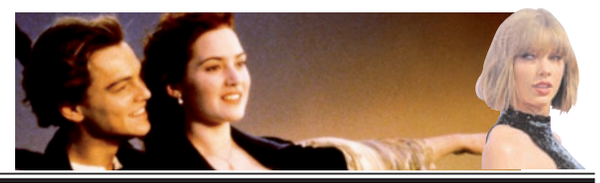
Nagpur: A 42-year-old man allegedly threw acid on his wife and injured her over a quarrel in Maharashtra's Nagpur city on Saturday, police said. The incident took place in Rameshwari area under Ajni police station limits around 9.30 am, an official said. The accused Suresh Zhengte (42) intercepted his wife, who was riding a bicycle to work, and threw a glass of acid on her face and fled the scene on his two-wheeler, the official said. People in the area rushed the woman to a hospital, where her condition is said to be stable, he said. Preliminary probe has revealed that the couple, who have two children, had frequent disagreements, the official said. An offence has been registered in this regard and further probe is underway, he added.

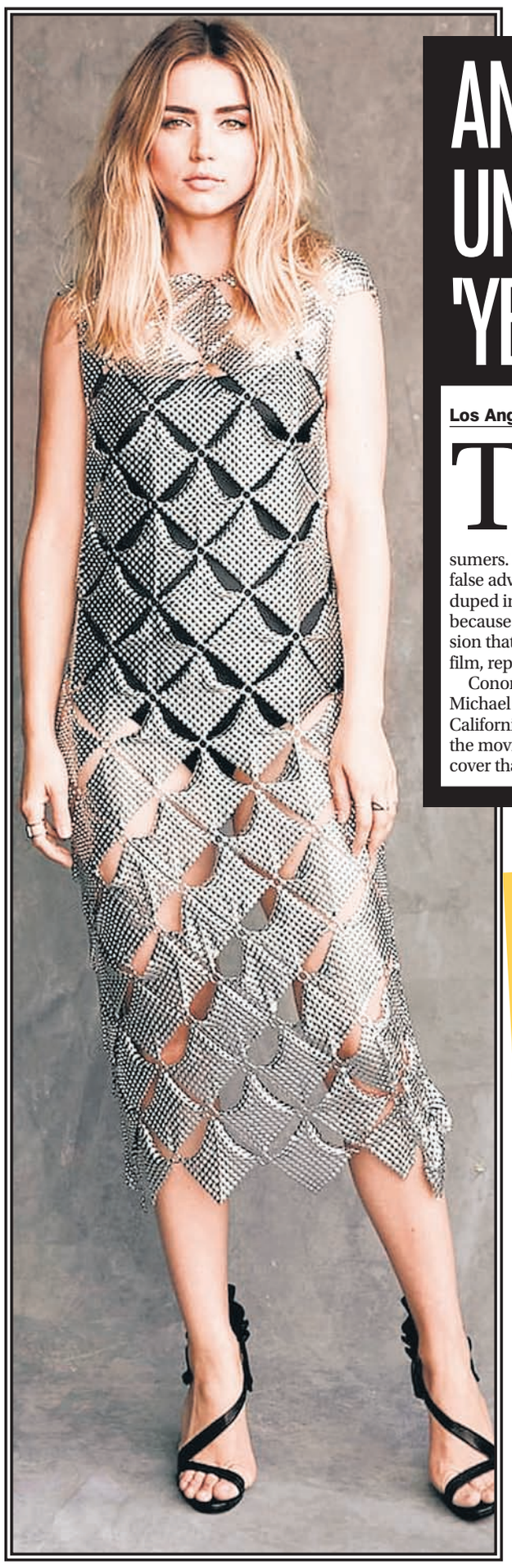
Majority of parents unwilling to send children to school from Jan 24: Survey

The findings were based on a survey conducted by online community platform LocalCircle across tier-I, tier-II/III and tier-IV cities of the state that received 4,976 responses. Of the total, 67 per cent respondents were men and the remaining 33 per cent women, the survey showed.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

About 62 per cent of surveyed parents in Maharashtra are unwilling to send their children to school from January 24, amid the state government's decision to allow reopening of schools from Monday. The findings were based on a survey conducted by online community platform LocalCircle across tier-I, tier-II/III and tier-IV cities of the state that received 4,976 responses. Of the total, 67 per cent respondents were men and the remaining 33 per cent women, the survey showed. Immediately after the onset of the Omicron-led third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maharashtra government had on January 8 ordered closure of all schools and colleges in the state till February 15 to contain the spread of the virus. However, on January 20, the state education minister, contrary to earlier decision, announced that schools in the state for 1st-12th standard will reopen from January 24. While the BMC has allowed schools to reopen in Mumbai, the Maharashtra government has allowed local bodies to take the decision on reopening schools after assessing the COVID-19 situation in their respective areas. However, students will not be forced to attend physical classes where schools reopen. In cities like Pune and Aurangabad, it has been decided to keep schools shut while classes continue in the online mode. LocalCircles has been closely tracking parents' willingness to send their children to attend in-person classes in school at a national and state level since the pandemic started. Amid Maharashtra's announcement to reopen schools, LocalCircles has once again gone back to parents to understand their willingness to send their ward to attend classes at school from January 24, it said. In response, the majority -- 62 per cent of surveyed parents of school children in aharashtra -- said that they are unwilling to send their children to school from January 24. "However, 11 per cent of citizens said, Yes (will send from January 24) and 16 per cent said they are already sending their children (to school)," LocalCircles said.At the same time, it said, 11 per cent did not offer any opinion. In summary, 62 per cent of the parents of school-going children surveyed in Maharashtra are unwilling to send their children to school from January 24 amid a surge of COVID cases and high test positivity rate between 20-25 per cent in the state, it stated. On Friday, Maharashtra reported 48,270 COVID cases from 2,05,938 tests conducted and there were 37 related deaths, as per the LocalCircles. Test Positivity Rate (TPR) in the state continues to remain high at 23.4 per cent, it said, adding with children under the age of 15 years being unvaccinated and 15-18 age group only partially vaccinated and the highly transmissible nature of Omicron, many parents are concerned about sending children for in-person school. In the community discussions, many of them have highlighted long-term implications of COVID and the need for in-person schools to only start when TPR falls to 5 per cent or lower, it stated.





ANA DE ARMAS FANS SUE UNIVERSAL STUDIOS FOR 'YESTERDAY' PROMO

Los Angeles | Agencies

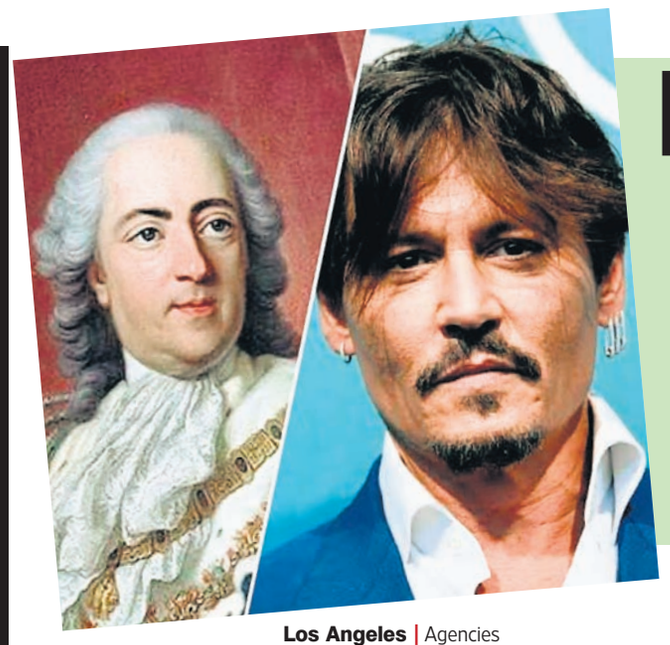
Two fans of the Cuban-Spanish actress Ana de Armas, have filed a lawsuit against Universal Studios seeking a settlement of at least $5 million on behalf of affected consumers. The lawsuit has been filed over false advertising, alleging that the fans were duped into renting the 2019 film 'Yesterday' because the trailer gave them the impression that the actress would appear in the film, reports 'Variety'.

Conor Woulfe, 38, of Maryland, and Peter Michael Rosza, 44, of San Diego County, California, say they each paid $3.99 to rent the movie on Amazon Prime, only to discover that de Armas had been removed from the final cut of the film.

The lawsuit accessed by 'Variety' states: "Because consumers were promised a movie with Ana De Armas by the trailer for 'Yesterday', but did not receive a movie with any appearance of Ana de Armas at all, such consumers were not provided with any value for their rental or purchase."

'Yesterday' stars Himesh Patel (most recently seen in 'Don't Look Up') as Jack Malik, a singer-songwriter who becomes the only person on Earth to remember 'The Beatles' after a supernatural occurrence.

He rockets to stardom after he claims the credit for the English rock band's songs. Ana de Armas was to appear in the film as Jack's love interest, but her part was removed on the edit table.



Depp to play Louis XV in upcoming film

Los Angeles | Agencies

Johnny Depp will star as French king Louis XV in the next film directed by French Cesar-winning actress and director Maiwenn. The shoot will begin this summer, 'Variety' has confirmed. Filming for the movie, whose title and exact plot are being kept under wraps, will take place for three months on location across Parisian landmarks, mainly at the Versailles Palace.

Maiwenn will star as Jeanne du Barry, a countess who was Louis XV's last mistress.

Louis XV, who was nicknamed 'the beloved' and reigned for 59 years, the longest in the history of France after that of Louis XIV. He died, paradoxically, as an unpopular king after being accused of corruption and debauchery. Depp, who has been accused by his ex-wife Amber Heard of domestic violence, as a result, hasn't made a film since Andrew Levitas's 'Minamata' (2020), a film about war photographer W. Eugene Smith, notes 'Variety'. Although he has fallen from Hollywood's good graces since the accusations and his libel case against UK tabloid 'The Sun', Depp hasn't faced much backlash in Europe, 'Variety' adds.

KIRSTEN DUNST JOINS 'CIVIL WAR' CAST

Los Angeles | Agencies

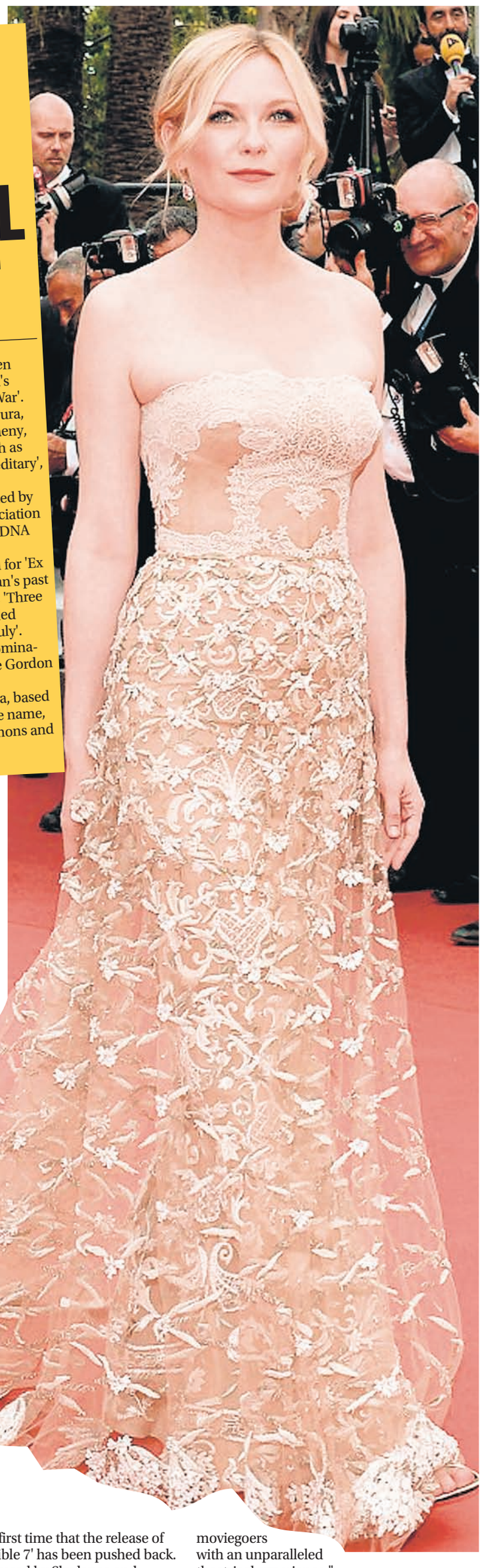
Hollywood actress Kirsten Dunst has been signed for writer-director Alex Garland's upcoming futuristic action film 'Civil War'.

The movie, which also features Wagner Moura, Stephen McKinley Henderson and Cailee Spaeny, will be produced by A24, known for films such as 'The Florida Project', 'Midsommar' and 'Hereditary', reports 'Variety'.

The global release of the film will be handled by A24, which will also produce the film in association with Andrew Macdonald and Allon Reich of DNA and Gregory Goodman.

DNA had previously worked with Garland for 'Ex Machina', 'Annihilation' and 'Men'. Goodman's past producing credits include George Clooney's 'Three Kings', Eminem-starrer '8 Mile', Tom Hank-led 'Captain Phillips' and the crime drama '22 July'.

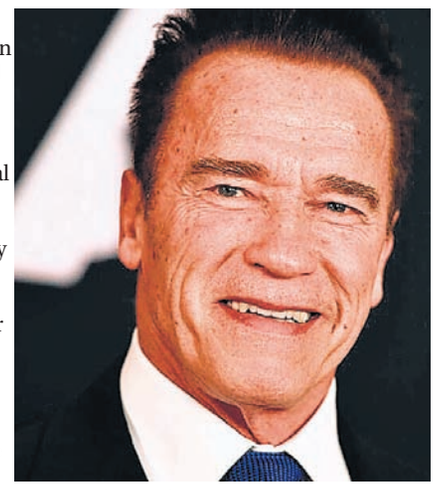
Kirsten recently received a SAG award nomination for her acclaimed performance as Rose Gordon in 'The Power of the Dog' directed by Jane Campion. The western psychological drama, based on Thomas Savage's 1967 novel of the same name, features Benedict Cumberbatch, Jesse Plemons and Kodi Smit-McPhee.



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER UNHARMED, WOMAN INJURED IN CAR CRASH

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood action star and former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger escaped unhurt from an auto accident in Brentwood, a Los Angeles suburb.



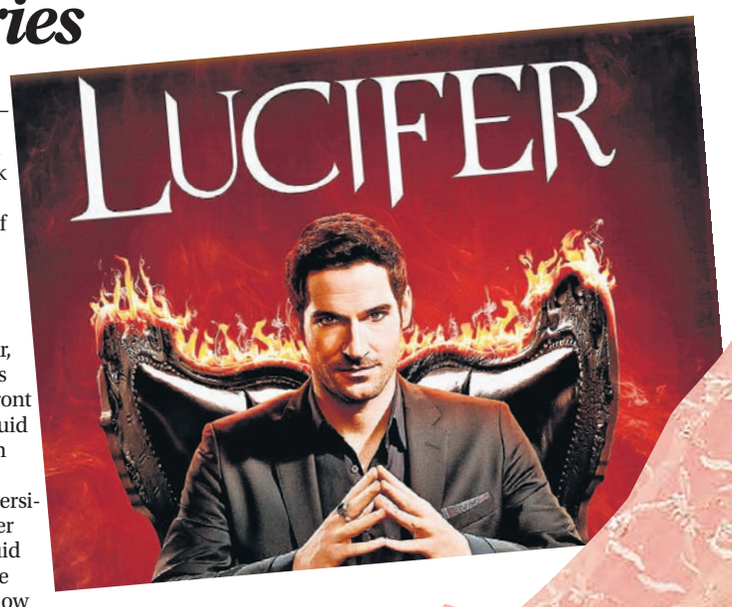
A woman is reported to have been rushed to the hospital after she suffered a head injury in the crash, but with minor bleeding, reports 'Variety'.

At the time of the crash, Schwarzenegger was driving his mega-SUV GMC Yukon, which rammed into a Toyota Prius at the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Allenford Avenue, near the Riviera Country Club.

Two other cars at the intersection were also struck as a result of the collision.

A spokesperson for the actor confirmed that he was unhurt and was only concerned about the woman who was injured. There were no indications of drugs or alcohol being responsible for the crash, but an investigation is still under way, the Los Angeles Police Department said, according to KCAL-TV Los Angeles.

'Lucifer' tops Nielsen's U.S. list of 2021's most streamed original series



Los Angeles | Agencies

'Lucifer', a drama that debuted on the Fox broadcast network before becoming a Netflix show in 2018, topped Nielsen's list of the most-streamed original series of 2021 in the United States, reports 'Deadline'. The 93 episodes of the series netted more than 18.3 billion minutes of streaming during the year, according to the measurement firm's year-end report. That put it well in front of the 16.4 billion notched up by 'Squid Game', but the Korean phenomenon had only nine episodes on Netflix in 2021. Interestingly, reflecting the diversity of the U.S. audience, roughly 15 per cent of the American viewers of 'Squid Game' watched the Korean-language original of the series.In saving the show after it was cancelled by Fox, according to 'Deadline', Netflix established a precedent that it has occasionally followed with other acquired properties that become popular on its platform. (A recent example was the former NBC series 'Manifest', which racked up almost 20 billion viewing minutes last year with just 42 episodes.)Three non-Netflix shows made the originals chart: 'The Handmaid's Tale' on Hulu, 'Ted Lasso' on Apple TV+ and 'Wandavision' on Disney+.On the movie chart, 'Luca' recorded a decisive win, gathering about 10.6 billion minutes of viewing. The winsome, well-reviewed Pixar feature, says 'Deadline', did not have a theatrical run last summer and was instead released directly on Disney+.

Release of 'Mission: Impossible' 7 and 8' postponed to 2023, 2024

Los Angeles | Agencies

The release dates of two films from the Tom Cruise-starrer spy action series: 'Mission: Impossible 7' and 'Mission: Impossible 8' have been pushed in view of the Covid surge in the US and across Europe.

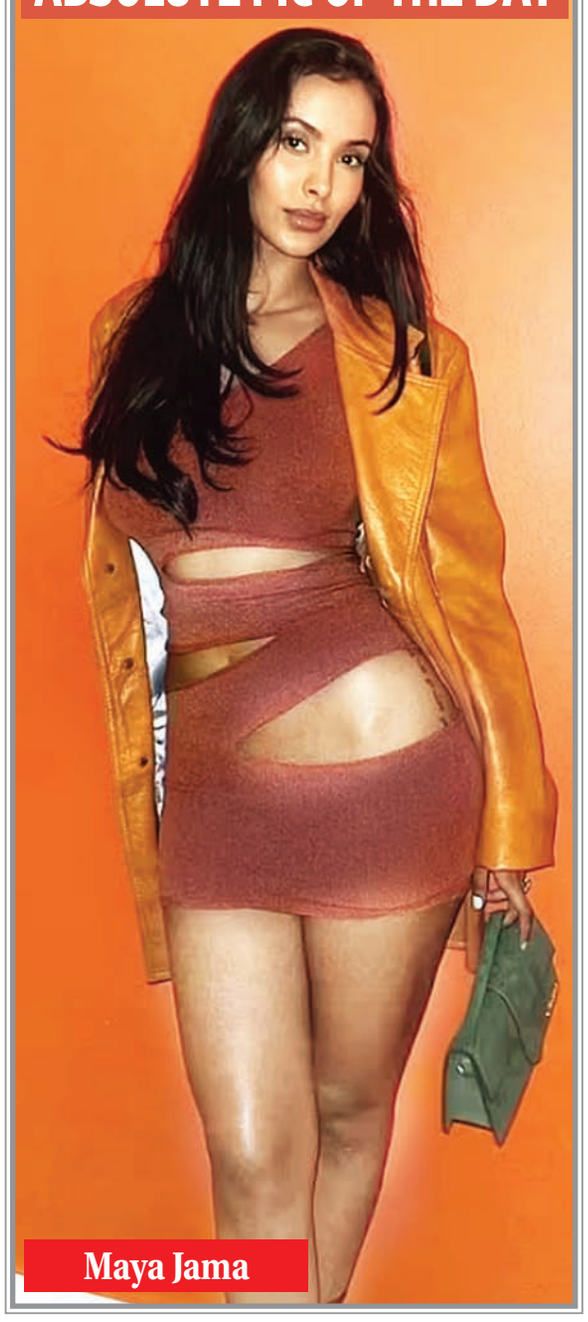
'Mission: Impossible 7', which was earlier supposed to make its debut on September 30, will now premiere on July 14, 2023, reports 'Variety'. 'Mission: Impossible 8', which was slated for a July 7, 2023, release, will instead open on June 28, 2024.

This is not the first time that the release of 'Mission: Impossible 7' has been pushed back. The film, co-produced by Skydance and Paramount Pictures, was originally scheduled to open on July 23, 2021, but has been postponed multiple times.

The production companies said in a joint statement quoted by 'Variety': "After thoughtful consideration, Paramount Pictures and Skydance have decided to postpone the release dates for 'Mission: Impossible 7 & 8' in response to delays due to the ongoing pandemic. ... We look forward to providing moviegoers with an unparalleled theatrical experience."

'Mission: Impossible' films involve complex shoots as they are replete with stunts and effects, with the filmmaking team relying very less on the 'green screen'. The team also jets from one foreign port of call to another (the latest films, for instance, have been shot in the U.K., Italy and Poland, to name a few locations), an exercise which seems to have been severely affected in the post-pandemic world, according to 'Variety'.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Maya Jama

SYED MODI INTERNATIONA

PV SINDHU STORMS INTO FINAL, TO FACE MALVIKA BANSOD

Lucknow | Agencies

Ace Indian shuttler PV Sindhu stormed into the final of the 2022 Syed Modi International after her opponent Evgeniya Kosetskaya withdrew midway through their women's singles semi-final match, here on Saturday.

Sindhu began the match strongly and took just 12 minutes to win the first game 21-11 against Evgeniya Kosetskaya of the National Badminton Federation of Russia.

The world No. 28 Kosetskaya decided to withdraw before the start of the second game and gave the Indian shuttler an easy passage to the final on Sunday. With this win, the two-time Olympic medallist remained on course for her first BWF title since winning the world championships in 2019. The world No. 7 Sindhu will face upcoming Indian youngster Malvika Bansod, who defeated Anupama Upadhyaya 19-21, 21-19, 21-7 in the other semi-final, in the final on Sunday. The 20-year-old Bansod had knocked out London 2012 bronze medallist Saina Nehwal from last week's India Open and will be relishing the opportunity to add another high-profile scalp to her name by beating PV Sindhu in Sunday's final. Meanwhile, India's final challenge in the men's singles ended with Mithun Manjunath losing to Arnaud Merkle of France 21-19, 17-21, 21-9 in an 84-minute-long contest. The mixed doubles finals on Sunday will see seventh seeds Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto taking on T Hema Nagendra Babu and Srivedya Gurazada for the title.

3rd ODI : India look to avoid whitewash against South Africa

Cape Town | Agencies

Having already lost the ongoing ODI series against South Africa, India will look to adjust to the tempo of 50-over cricket and win the third and final match here on Sunday to avoid a white-wash.

KL Rahul-led side lost the first ODI by 31 runs while they suffered a seven-wicket defeat in the second match of the three-match series on Friday. Having learned the lessons from the hosts' batting, India will have to alter their plans to find solutions to their middle-over woes. The batting lost its way in the middle overs in both matches despite promising starts and there could be potential changes to the Indian playing XI. The likes of Shikhar Dhawan, KL Rahul, Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant have shown their glimpses of brilliance, but they need to fire collectively and score big if Team India wants to win. Venkatesh Iyer and Shreyas Iyer have failed to impress with the bat so the team management will try Suryakumar Yadav in the final ODI.

The bowling, on the other hand, also hasn't really troubled South Africa much. India's bowlers have struggled to make inroads in the Powerplay in the last couple of years, and it is something the team will want to rectify in Cape Town, on what is expected to be a spicier pitch compared to the sluggish surface in Paarl. Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who has looked ordinary in the first two ODIs is likely to be replaced by Mohammed Siraj or Deepak Chahar. Jasprit Bumrah, who has played a lot of cricket consistently in the last few months, could be rested to manage his workload.

Spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal have bowled well but they have failed to pick wickets at crucial junctures.

On the other hand, South Africans don't have as many concerns to address. Each of the top five batters have made significant contributions in at least one of the two matches while the spinners have done their job with the ball, bringing South Africa back into the contest in both matches. Since 2016, South Africa have completed seven ODI series whitewashes at home, blanking five different opponents . India is in line to be the sixth team if everything goes to plan for the hosts on Sunday in Cape Town.

PKL 8: Mohit Goyat stars in Puneri Paltan's big win against Bengaluru Bulls

Bengaluru | Agencies

Mohit Goyat was the star for Puneri Paltan as they beat Bengaluru Bulls 37-35 in Match 70 of Pro Kabaddi League Season 8 at The Sheraton Grand, Whitefield, here on Saturday. The raider scored 13 points (including three tackle points) as Pune stopped Pawan Sehrawat and the Bulls from jumping to the top of the points table. Bengaluru never really controlled the match and their lack of all-outs proved costly in the end. Coach Anup Kumar's team had three successful reviews which played a crucial role in ensuring the two-point victory.

Pune started the match on the front foot with their raider Mohit Goyat picking up crucial raid points. He was ably backed by his defence marshalled by Sanket Sawant in the cover position. Coach Anup Kumar also changed his proven corner combination of Baldev Singh and Vishal Bhardwaj for Sombir and Karamvir for the match. Mohit's two-point raid in the 10th minute reduced the Bulls to just two men on the mat. That shifted the balance in their favour and the Pune team eventually got their all-out in the 13th minute to open a three-point lead. But Pawan Sehrawat quickly found errors in the Pune defence to reduce the margin. The first half ended 16-15 with the Bulls trailing by one point. Mohit Goyat's two-point raid early in the second half paved way for another all-out. Pune opened a five-point lead and sustained the pressure on the Bulls who looked disorganised in defence. Pawan Sehrawat, their lead raider, was seen playing right corner and the confusion allowed Paltan to make it a six-point gap with 10 minutes remaining. Right corner Sombir picked up a High 5 for Paltan but their raiders made silly errors in the closing stages to allow the Bulls back into the match. With under a minute remaining, Pune had a two-point lead and substitute Shubham Shelke produced an important touch point to help them win.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

HALEP, MERTENS ADVANCE TO ROUND 4 WITH EASY WINS

Melbourne | Agencies

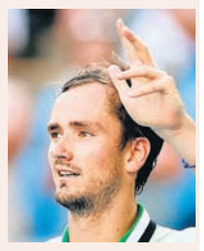
Former Australian Open finalist Simona Halep of Romania advanced to the fourth round of the opening Grand Slam of the year for the fifth straight year with a 6-2, 6-1 victory over Danka Kovinic of Montenegro, at the Melbourne Park on Saturday.

Also former semifinalist Elise Mertens of Belgium advanced to the last-16 with a 6-2, 6-2 win over Zhang Shuai of China. With Saturday's victory over Montenegrin Kovinic, Halep bettered her season's record to 8-0 and her record in the third round of Grand Slams to 21-3. The Romanian has won all six sets she's played at the Australian Open so far and has only lost 12 games. Against Kovinic, Halep won eight straight games from 2-2 in the first set to take command of the match. Kovinic, a three-set winner against qualifier Jang Su-jeong of South Korea and US Open champion

Emma Raducanu to become the first player from her country to reach the third round at a Grand Slam, held from 30-30 to stop the streak, and Halep denied her an opportunity to break for 2-2 before winning the last four games. Elise Mertens has never lost before the third round of a Grand Slam since reaching the semi-finals of the 2018 Australian Open. On Saturday, the Belgian reached the fourth round or better eight times with here easy win over Zhang Shuai. Collins and birthday girl Alize Cornet of France won three-set thrillers to reach the round of 16. 2019 Australian Open semifinalist Collins, the No.27 seed, outlasted 19-year-old Tauson, 4-6, 6-4, 7-5 in two hours and 35 minutes. Cornet defeated Tamara Zidansek of Slovenia 4-6, 6-4, 6-2.

Seventh seed Iga Swiatek advanced to the fourth round of 2022 Australian Open after beating No 25 seed Daria Kasatkina, here on Saturday. The 20-year-old Swiatek wrapped up an impressive first week at the Australian Open with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Kasatkina, though the scoreline does not reflect the toughness of the 1-hour, 34-minute battle. She will now meet Sorana Cirstea, who upset No 10 seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in three sets.

MEDVEDEV MARCHES ON



Melbourne: World No.2 Daniil Medvedev of Russia showed no signs of fatigue after the gruelling match against Nick Kyrgios, as he crushed Dutchman Botic van de Zandschulp 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 on the Margaret Court Arena to cruise into Round 4 of the Australian Open here on Saturday.The 2021 US Open champion, who battled past home favourite Kyrgios in four sets on Januar10y 20, produced a commanding performance against van de Zandschulp, as he advanced after a one-hour-and-55-minute contest.

India's football great Subhas Bhowmick passes away at 71

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian football great Subhas Bhowmick, who was a member of the side that won bronze at the 1970 Asian Games in Bangkok, passed away in Kolkata on Saturday at the age of 71.

Born on October 2, 1950, Bhowmick made his international debut for India on July 30, 1970 in the Merdeka Cup against Farmosa. He represented India in 24 international matches and scored nine goals in the process -- including a hat-trick against the Philippines in the Merdeka Cup in 1971 -- a match which India won 5-1.

Besides winning the bronze medal at the Asian Games, Bhowmick was also a triumphant member of the Indian team which finished joint winners at Pesta Sukan Cup against South Vietnam in Singapore (1971), and a bronze medal in the Merdeka Cup in 1970. He was also a member of the Indian team which toured the USSR in 1971.

INDIA VS WEST INDIES ODIS

1ST MATCH ON FEB 6 IN AHMEDABAD

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Saturday announced a change in venues for the upcoming West Indies Tour of India. The West Indies will arrive here for a white-ball series comprising three ODIs and as many T20Is.

The three ODIs will now be played at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad and three T20Is will be held at the Eden Gardens, Kolkata.

The decision to limit the series to two venues instead of six as originally announced has been done to mitigate bio-security risks by cutting down on travel and movement of the teams, match officials, broadcasters, and other stakeholders.

REVISED SCHEDULE

1st ODI: February 6, Ahmedabad
2nd ODI: February 9, Ahmedabad
3rd ODI: February 11, Ahmedabad
1st T20I: February 16, Kolkata
2nd T20I: February 18, Kolkata
3rd T20I: February 20, Kolkata

WOMEN'S ASIA CUP HOCKEY

India thrash Malaysia 9-0 in opening match

Muscat | Agencies

Forward Vandana Katariya, Navneet Kaur and Sharmila Devi scored a brace of goals each as India thrashed Malaysia 9-0 in their opening match of the Women's Asia Cup hockey tournament here on Friday. India, looking to win the tournament and grab a place in the World Cup to be held later in the year, came up with a dominant display and scored thrice in the first quarter and once in the second to go 4-0 up by half-time. They were more successful in the second half as the Id scored thrice in the third quarter and a goal towards the start and end of the fourth and final quarter to seal and comprehensive victory at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex here. Vandana Katariya scored in 8th and 34th minute, Navneet in 15th and 27th minute and Sharmila in 46th and 59th minute while seasoned Deep Grace Ekka (10th min), Lalremsiami (38th min), and Monica (40th min) scored a goal apiece to complete the tally for India. The Indians enjoyed total domination of their opponents and parked themselves in the opponent's half for most of the game. Malaysia did make a few attacks in the first half, skipper Savita was not troubled much by their forwards

U-19 CWC

SOUTH AFRICA SECURE QUARTERFINAL BERTH

Tarouba (Trinidad) | Agencies

South Africa skipper George Van Heerden led from the front, smashing a 93-ball 111 as he helped his team secure a Super League quarterfinal berth with a 153-run win over Ireland in a Group B match at the Brian Lara Stadium here on Saturday (IST). Van Heerden's 111 and Dewald Brevis's 96 helped the Proteas score a mammoth 315/7 from their rain-reduced 47 overs before bowling out Ireland for 158 in 33 overs. Matthew Boast (3/26) and Liam Alder (3/20) were the standout bowlers for South Africa as they secured the second spot in Group B and, with it, a Super League berth. The two sides started their winner-takes-all final Group B game level on points, with South Africa having a slight net run-rate (NRR) advantage. With India all but assured of their place in the Super League last-eight ahead of their final game against Uganda, South Africa and Ireland faced a shootout for second place.

Brief scores

South Africa 315/7 in 47 overs (Dewald Brevis 96, George Van Heerden 111, Michael Copeland 43) beat Ireland 158 in 33 overs (Nathan McGuire 42, Matthew Humphreys 38; Matthew Boast 3/26, Liam Alder 3/20) by 153 runs D/L Method.

Brief scores

West Indies 250/9 in 50 overs (Teddy Bishop 45, Kevin Wickham 56, Jordan Johnson 47, Rivaldo Clarke 45; Dunith Wellalage 3/39, Matheesha Pathirana 2/67) lost to Sri Lanka 251/7 in 48.2 overs (Sadisha Rajapaksa 76, Anjala Bandara 40; McKenny Clarke 2/38)

SRI LANKA INTO SUPER LEAGUE STAGE

Basseterre (St Kitts): Sri Lanka opener Sadisha Rajapaksa scored a patient 76 and skipper Dunith Wellalage grabbed three wickets as they scored a dramatic three-wicket win over hosts West Indies to seal their qualification for the Super League stage from Group D at the Conaree Sports Club here on Saturday (IST). Wellalage and Matheesha Pathirana both took three wickets each as Sri Lanka restricted the hosts to 250 before Rajapaksa, Anjala Bandara (40) and Ranuda Somarathna's unbeaten 28 guided Sri Lanka to a win, which was achieved in the 49th over. The hosts went into the game knowing they needed a big win to stand a chance to qualify for the Super League quarterfinals, with Sri Lanka and Australia ahead of them in Group D. A cameo from McKenny Clarke of 21 from 13 balls saw West Indies finish all out for 250, with Wellalage (3/39) and Pathirana (3/67) both taking three wickets. In response, Rajapaksa (76) powered on regardless and reached his fifty in the 25th over with support from new partner Anjala Bandara at the crease. Bandara contributed 40 from 52 balls before his wicket was taken by Isai Thorne Sri Lanka reached 200 for five. With 51 still needed off 60 balls for victory, 28 from 27 balls from Somarathna saw Sri Lanka home as they secured a three-wicket victory with 10 balls to spare.

Shruti

Haasan to conduct live Instagram sessions on social issues

Team Absolute | Chennai

Actress and singer Shruti Haasan will conduct a series of live Instagram sessions on various social issues as part of her birthday celebrations this year. Sources close to Shruti, whose birthday falls on January 28, said the actress has been overwhelmed with all the love pouring in from her fans who have begun celebrating the month as her birthday month.

A source said: "This year, on her birthday, Shruti has decided to address issues pertaining to society. She will be doing a series of live sessions, starting January 27 on topics such as mental health, women in films and media, and sustainability in fashion. "On January 27, the session will be on mental health, while on January 28, which happens to be her birthday, the session will be on Women in Films and Media. On January 29, the topic will be Sustainability in Fashion. "Through these live sessions, Shruti wants to draw attention towards topics that are usually brushed under the carpet or aren't discussed as often as they should be. All of the live sessions will have Shruti along with various influencers and hosts discussing these topics at length in an attempt to normalise these conversations in our day-to-day life." Commenting on the same, Shruti said: "The idea behind the live sessions is to open up a discussion on these topics. There are many ways to celebrate one's birthday but my idea of a celebration is to open honest discussions, especially about the things I care about and believe need more talking.

"My aim is to let more people in on these topics, get varied perspectives from others during the live and open up these issues for others to think, discuss, share and debate."

Sonu Nigam: I can never say no to Subhash Ghai

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Celebrated singer Sonu Nigam, who reunited with veteran filmmaker Subhash Ghai for '36 Farmhouse', expressed his gratitude to the filmmaker and said he helped shape his musical career in the initial stages.

Nigam lent his voice to the song 'Mohabbat' in the film. The song has been composed by Ghai, who makes his debut as music director in the film.

The acclaimed singer had earlier worked with Ghai and delivered superhit songs in films such as 'Taal' and 'Pardes', so lending his voice to '36 Farmhouse' was special to him.

"I can never say 'no' to anything that Subhashji asks for," Nigam said. "This time around, he composed the song too, besides writing it. I did recommend to him Meghdeep Bose as the music producer to further embellish his song and he listened to me because he trusts me."

He added: "It goes without saying that Subhashji has always had a knack for music. Even earlier, every time he gave his two cents to a song, added a word, or a line, that became the central point, and I am sure it will be no different for this one too."

Nigam concluded by saying: "Subhashji is like family to me. I always feel the warmth and love of a father from him when he is around me. He has been a part of my life since 'Pardes' and I can feel that he's internally proud of me and of the fact that he has played a very important role in shaping up my initial musical life."

Samantha wows fans, friends with her skiing skills

Team Absolute | Chennai

Actress Samantha, who is holidaying in Verbier, Switzerland, seems to be having the time of her life, impressing her fans with news skills that she seems to have acquired in a short span of time.

Yes, the actress, it seems, has not just learnt but also mastered the art of skiing within a very short period of time, much to the delight of all her fans and well wishers, who are filled with admiration for her.

The actress, who commands a huge fan base all across south India, posted a picture of herself in skiing gear and later, a video clip of herself skiing on Instagram.

She said, "Day 4 is when the magic happens", adding a hashtag, "Skiing ain't easy but it sure is fun."

Shortly, she posted a video of herself skiing a considerably long distance, and said, "Leave your ego at home they said... no truer words have been spoken."

It was not just her fans who were bowled by her skiing skills, celebrities like Priya Atlee, the wife of director Atlee, her close friend and stylist Neeraja Kona and actress Pragya Jaiswal were also among those who were impressed.

TAHIR RAJ BHASIN HAPPY PLAYING ROMANTIC HERO

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Tahir Raj Bhasin, who is gearing up for the release of 'Looop Lapeta', is happy with the positive response to his work as a romantic hero in two of his recent releases, 'Yeh Kaali Kaali Aankhein' and 'Ranjish Hi Sahi'.

The actor, who made his foray into Bollywood with his portrayal of an antagonist in 'Mardaani', now feels confident having received praises to his work both as a villain and a romantic hero.

Talking about the appreciation, Tahir said, "When I started out in the industry as an anti-hero I got overwhelming love from critics and audiences and now as I put myself out there to be judged as a romantic hero, I'm thrilled that the acceptance is even higher than what it was for 'Mardaani'."He mentioned that the audience appreciation translates into his confidence as an actor, "It gives me so much confidence as an actor because every artiste wants his work to be appreciated. I'm thankful to the audience for showering so much love on the projects and me. I wish they continue to do so throughout my career because it's hugely motivating."

He added, "It is overwhelming and exciting to receive the kind of love that I have been getting as a romantic hero in 'Yeh Kaali Kaali Aankhen' and 'Ranjish Hi Sahi'. Both these shows are doing well in their own right and are amongst the highest rated digital shows ever made in India! I'm ecstatic to know this because I have given these projects my everything."

'Unpaused: Naya Safar': Powerful stories that touch your heart

FILM REVIEW

BY TROY RIBEIRO

(Streaming on Zee5)

Direction: Shikha Makan, Ruchir Arun, Nupur Asthana, Ayappa KM and Nagraj Manjule.

Cast: Shreya Dhanwanthary, Priyanshu Painyuli, Geetanjali Kulkarni, Saqib Saleem, Ashish Verma, Sam Mohan, Neena Kulkarni, Darshana Rajendran, Lakshvir Singh Saran, Nagraj Manjule, Arjun Karche and Hanumant Bhandari.

Duration: 108 minutes

Ratings: **** (four stars)

'Unpaused: Naya Safar' is an anthology of five powerful short films that leave their imprints on the mind of the viewer much after you binge-watch the series. Set in the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, these five unique stories give us a glimpse of how the situation has made lives complex and affected people -- emotionally, financially, and psychologically. Despite the scenario being grim, each story ends on a positive note, and that is what makes the series stand out.

The first episode, titled 'The Couple', written and directed by Nupur Asthana, tells us the story of an upbeat couple Akruti and Dippy who, due to the prevailing situation, are working from home. Akruti is an engineer who developed a ground-breaking product and is expecting a raise or a promotion. Dippy, on the other hand, is a marketing maverick.

On their personal front, there is nothing to complain about, but when one of their professional lives gets unhinged, the drama begins and you wonder how this episode will end.

Shreya Dhanwanthary and Priyanshu Painyuli essay the young couple effortlessly. Their on-screen chemistry is palpable, and that's what keeps you glued to their story.

The second episode, titled 'Covid War Room', directed by Ayappa KM, narrates the grim, poignant tale of Sangeeta Waghmare, a widowed government school teacher deputed to work as a telephone operator at the Covid Helpline Centre in Mumbai. How fate intervenes and twists destinies forms the crux of this story.

Apart from the setting, the episode squarely rests on Geetanjali Kulkarni's histrionics. She efficiently expresses Sangeeta's pathos, anguish, angst, fear, nervousness, and forgiveness with equal aplomb.

The third episode is Ruchir Arun's 'Teen Tigadaa', which loosely means three musketeers or comrades. It tells us the story of three labourers -- Chandan, Dimple and Ajeet -- who take up an assignment to deliver a consignment in a far-off location and get stuck there because of the lockdown forced by the pandemic. How the three stranded acquaintances then bond together, despite their different personalities, forms the crux of this story.

The performances of the trio are noteworthy. Saqib Saleem as Chandan, Ashish Verma as Dimple and Sam Mohan as Ajeet are relatable. Apart from their regular squabbles, it is their backstories that add heft to their narrative.

'Gond Ke Ladoo', written and directed by Shikha Makan, is the fourth episode in the anthology and tells us two slice-of-life stories in one narrative. One is the story of a concerned mother living in a town in North India, and the other is that of a conscientious courier delivery boy based in Mumbai.

Neena Kulkarni essays the concerned mother who, despite all odds, sends 'Gond ke Ladoo' to her daughter, who has just given birth to a child. Lakshvir Singh Saran plays the delivery boy assigned to deliver the courier. Darshana Rajendran plays his supportive wife.

The last story is Actor-Director Nagraj Manjule's 'Vaikunth'. It is the best of the five films told matter-of-factly. Astutely mounted and effortlessly performed, it tells us about the travails of a crematorium worker.

Manjule plays Vikas Chavan, the labourer at the crematorium. Arjun Karche plays his young son and Hanumant Bhandari, Vikas's aged father.

Overall, every episode is well-constructed with a seamless narrative that is put together by the various departments of filmmaking. Each episode touches your heart at various points and thus makes this series work.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Kate Sharma

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