

absolute india

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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM MUMBAI, BHOPAL AND NEW DELHI



NATION > 02

Hamid Ansari attends IAMC event which had tried to get India...



HOLLYWOOD > 06

Lady Gaga feels like 'annoying kid in school' for bragging about Salma...



SPORTS > 07

Danielle Collins storms into final after beating Iga Swiatek...

AIR INDIA'S DIVESTMENT COMPLETE; TATA SONS TAKES OVER CONTROL

MAHARAJA'S HOMECOMING

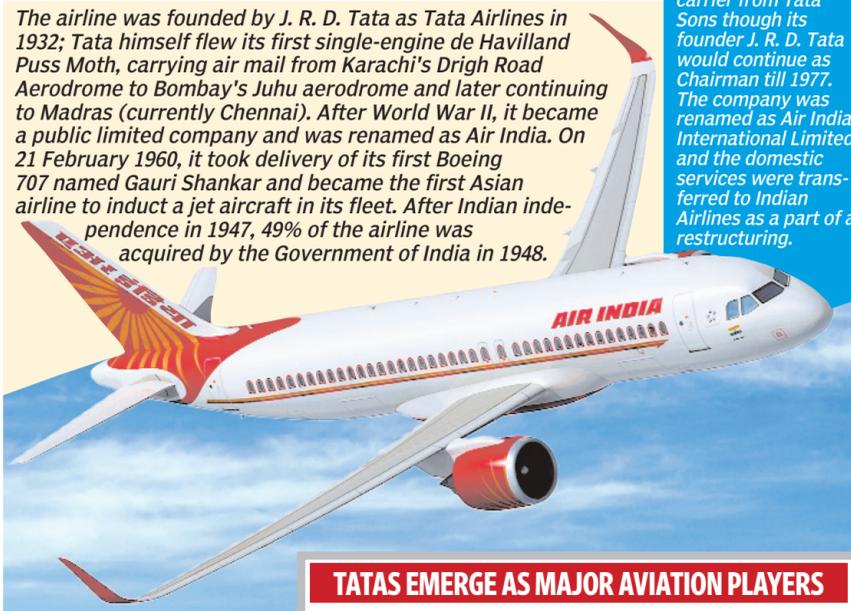
With this Air India's strategic divestment was complete after the Centre received a consideration of Rs 2,700 crore from the 'Strategic Partner' -- Talace -- which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tata Sons. Besides the upfront payment, Talace will retain a debt of Rs 15,300 crore. Notably, the transaction covered three entities - Air India, Air India Express and AI SATS.

In 1953, the Government of India passed the Air Corporations Act and purchased a majority stake in the carrier from Tata Sons through its founder J. R. D. Tata would continue as Chairman till 1977. The company was renamed as Air India International Limited and the domestic services were transferred to Indian Airlines as a part of a restructuring.

"We are excited to have Air India back in the Tata Group and are committed to making this a world-class airline. I warmly welcome all the employees of Air India, to our Group, and look forward to working together."

N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons

The airline was founded by J. R. D. Tata as Tata Airlines in 1932; Tata himself flew its first single-engine de Havilland Puss Moth, carrying air mail from Karachi's Drigh Road Aerodrome to Bombay's Juhu aerodrome and later continuing to Madras (currently Chennai). After World War II, it became a public limited company and was renamed as Air India. On 21 February 1960, it took delivery of its first Boeing 707 named Gauri Shankar and became the first Asian airline to induct a jet aircraft in its fleet. After Indian independence in 1947, 49% of the airline was acquired by the Government of India in 1948.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre on Thursday handed over the management control of national carrier Air India to a subsidiary of Tata Sons. On Thursday, Tata Sons Chairman N. Chandrasekaran called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi ahead of the official handover of Air India. Afterwards, at 'Airlines House', the HQ of Air India, a new board was constituted which included Tata Group's executives.

The Centre has already settled over Rs 61,000 crore worth debt and excess liabilities of Air India as it handed over the national carrier to Tata Sons on Thursday, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey told Nikunj Ohri in an interview. The Air India Asset Holding Company Ltd (AIAHL) has paid off debt of Air India of about Rs 46,000 crore, and settled about Rs 15,000 crore of excess liabilities such as unpaid fuel bills. Last month, the Competition Commission of India had approved the acquisition of Air India, Air India Express and Air India SATS Airport Services by Talace.

The airline, along with AIXL, is primarily engaged in the business of providing domestic and international

NEW FLIGHT APP, STRATEGY FOR BETTER OTP ON ANVIL

New Delhi: National carrier Air India under the Tata brand is set for major revamp in service standards as well as introduction of new passenger friendly amenities. According to sources, on arrival are the likely introduction of a flight App developed by TCS for passengers and staff. Besides, implementation of new strategies to improve the airline's OTP (On Time Performance) standards are also on cards. Apart from operational standards, improvements are expected to take place in in-flight services such as more choices of meals.

scheduled air passenger transport

TATAS EMERGE AS MAJOR AVIATION PLAYERS

- ▶ AFTER SUCCESSFULLY TAKING OVER THE MANAGERIAL CONTROL OF AIR INDIA, CONGLOMERATE TATA GROUP HAS EMERGED AS ONE OF THE LARGEST AVIATION PLAYER GLOBALLY.
- ▶ IT NOW HAS OVER 200 AIRCRAFT AND OVER 80 DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS.
- ▶ THE GROUP HAS TWO FULL-SERVICE CARRIERS -- VISTARA AND AIR INDIA -- ALONG WITH TWO LOW-COST AIRLINES -- AIR INDIA EXPRESS AND AIRASIA INDIA -- AND A GROUND AND CARGO HANDLING COMPANY, AISATS.
- ▶ ACCORDING TO SOURCES, IT PLANS TO PILOT SYNERGIES BETWEEN ALL ITS AIRLINES TO COMPETE IN VARIOUS MARKET SEGMENTS.
- ▶ ON THURSDAY, A NEW BOARD WHICH INCLUDED TATA'S NOMINEES TOOK CHARGE OF AIR INDIA.

service, along with air cargo transport service. Air India SATS Airport Services is engaged in the business of providing ground handling services at Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mangaluru and Thiruvananthapuram airports, and cargo handling services at Bengaluru airport. Tata Sons' sub sidiary Talace

had emerged as the highest bidder for the national carrier under the divestment process. It had quoted an enterprise value of Rs 18,000 crore for 100 per cent equity shareholding of the Centre in Air India along with that of Air India Express and AISATS. On its part, the Centre had stipulated a reserve price of Rs 12,906 crore.

246 MILITANTS SURRENDER IN ASSAM; DEPOSIT LARGE CACHE OF ARMS, AMMUNITION

Officials said that 169 cadres of the United Gorkha Peoples Organisation (UGPO) and 77 members of the Tiwa Liberation Army (TLA) surrendered at a function held at the international auditorium of Srimanta Sankardev Kalashetra at Panjabari in Guwahati.



Team Absolute | Guwahati

A total of 246 militants from two outfits surrendered before Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday and deposited a large cache of arms and ammunition at a function held here.

Welcoming the surrendered extremists, Sarma said that his government has been focusing on peace and growth in the state and today's surrender would go a long way in putting Assam on the road to further development.

According to a senior police officer, the surrendered cadres of UGPO, which was formed in 2007, belong to Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Biswanath, Bongaigaon, Kamrup (Rural), Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Udalguri and Sonitpur districts. At the time of surrender, the militants

together deposited 277 various types of sophisticated arms, several grenades and 720 rounds of ammunition.

During the function, one-time financial grant of Rs 1.5 lakh each was distributed to the 462 ex-militants from five different outfits who had laid down their arms in 2020.

The five militant outfits -- Rabha National Liberation Front, Adivasi Dragon Fighters, National Santhal Liberation Army, National Liberation Front of Bengal and United People's Revolutionary Front -- are currently not active in Assam after the surrender of most of their cadres.

Responding to the Chief Minister's earlier appeal, the Paresh Barua-led United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I) had declared a unilateral ceasefire in May last year that has been extended thrice so far.

Omicron sub-variant BA.2 gradually increasing in India: Centre

EAM JAISHANKAR TESTS POSITIVE

New Delhi: The Minister of External Affairs, S. Jaishankar, has tested positive for Covid-19 on Thursday. Talking to Twitter, the minister said: "Have tested Covid positive. Urge all those who have come in recent contact to take suitable precautions." Earlier in the day, Jaishankar had met his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian virtually to discuss the opportunities for India in the French Presidency of the European Union.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The prevalence of Omicron sub-lineage BA.2 is gradually increasing in India, said Sujet Kumar Singh, Director, National



Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), here on Thursday. Addressing a Health Ministry press briefing, Singh said that Omicron sub-variant BA.2 is more prevalent in comparison to the BA.1 variant in India now, adding that the BA.3 sub-variant has not been detected in India yet. Talking about increasing cases of Omicron, Singh said that out of the total genome sequencing reports received so far, increasing cases of Omicron have been found in the month of January.

COVID-19 GUIDELINES EXTENDED TILL FEB 28

New Delhi: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Thursday extended the Covid-19 guidelines till February 28, and asked the states and Union Territories (UTs) not to lower the guard against the pandemic. In a letter written to the Chief Secretaries of the states and UTs, Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla said that due to the current Covid wave, led by the new variant, Omicron, there has been a steady increase in the number of the cases in the country.

Of the total reports received, 1,292 Omicron cases were found in December last year, whereas the number of Delta cases was over 17,000, he said. In January so far, 9,672 Omicron cases have been found against 4,779 Delta cases, which includes 3,201 AYC variant and 1,578 Delta variant, Singh said. He emphasised that the Delta variant has not gone yet.

Maha clears wine sales at supermarkets, walk-in stores

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a significant decision, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra on Thursday permitted all supermarkets and walk-in stores to sell wine manufactured in the state as part of its new wine policy, officials said.

The decision was taken by the state Cabinet presided over by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray - and it immediately attracted flak from the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Interestingly, the move comes a week after neighbouring Madhya Pradesh permitted liquor sales at all its airports, select supermarkets in four major cities and also



allowed issuing home bar licences to those earning Rs 1 crore or more annually.

Briefing the media, Nationalist Congress Party Minister Nawab Malik said that supermarkets with a minimum area of 1,000 sq ft or more shall be allowed to sell wine - as opposed to beers and other liquors - under the new policy enacted last year after the earlier 20-year-old policy lapsed. Wine sales will be permitted

through a shelf-in-shop in the supermarkets or walk-in stores, with a single cupboard measuring 2.25 cubic metres, kept locked and selling only sealed bottles of wine, with an annual specified licence fee of Rs 5,000 from such establishments.

The state has around four dozen wineries, most centred in Nashik district which accounts for 80 per cent of the wine produced in India, besides small wineries in other districts like Ahmednagar, Sangli, Pune, Solapur and Buldhana.

The country's fledgling wine industry is worth around Rs 1,000 crore with Maharashtra, a pioneering state in this sector, contributing nearly two-third to the revenue.

ANY CASE OF DRUNKEN DRIVING SHOULD NOT BE TREATED LENIENTLY: SC

New Delhi: Refusing to show leniency to a driver, who was dismissed from service for driving under the influence of alcohol, the Supreme Court has observed that just because no major accident was reported cannot be a ground to show leniency in such cases.

"It was sheer good luck that the accident was not a fatal accident. It could have been a fatal accident," a bench of Justices M.R. Shah and B.V. Nagarathna said while hearing the plea of petitioner, who caused the accident in an inebriated condition, seeking leniency on the grounds that it was a minor accident and challenging the Allahabad High Court order. The court said drunken driving and playing with the life of others is very serious misconduct.

CHINA HANDS OVER MISSING ARUNACHAL YOUTH TO INDIA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has handed over the Arunachal Pradesh teenager Miram Taron to the Indian Army nine days after the youth went missing.

Union Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijju on Thursday tweeted: "The Chinese PLA has handed over the young boy from Arunachal Pradesh Shri Miram Taron to the Indian

Army. Due procedures are being followed including the medical examination."

An official of the Upper Siang District administration said that they in association with the Army, police, health and the local officials would follow the formalities before handing over the youth to his family. "We have to follow the Covid-19 protocols before handing over the youth to his family," an official of the Upper Siang District administration told the media.

Shocking: Woman gang-raped, paraded through streets in Delhi

A woman was allegedly abducted, gang-raped and paraded by her attackers on the streets of east Delhi's Kasturba Nagar with her hair chopped, face blackened and a shoe garland around her neck, police said on Thursday. Of the 11 accused, nine people, including seven women from one family, have been nabbed.

▶ The 20-year-old woman, who was rescued by police and is being counselled, was at her husband's home in Anand Vihar when the accused who lived near her mother's place in Kasturba Nagar abducted her, police said. Preliminary investigations indicate the woman and a boy belonging to the family of the accused were friends.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The incident, which once again highlights the vulnerability of women in the national capital and is described by police as provoked by personal enmity, took place on Wednesday afternoon, a few metres from a police booth that was closed since it was Republic Day. Several videos purportedly of

the woman being paraded did the rounds of social media.

Of the 11 people allegedly involved, seven are women and four men, including juveniles. While the seven women have been arrested, police are trying to ascertain the age of the two others picked up, officials said.

Those accused in police custody said during their interrogation they perpetrated the

sexual assault and the subsequent public humiliation to defame the survivor, officials disclosed.

The other two accused have also been identified but are absconding. Twelve sections of the Indian Penal Code, including that of abduction and gang-rap have been added to the case, and the survivor's family provided police security, police said.

"The boy committed suicide in November last year and his family is now blaming the victim. They have alleged it was because of her that he took the extreme step. To extract revenge from her, they allegedly abducted her. They wanted to teach her a lesson."

Police official



INDIA SHOWCASES MILITARY MIGHT, CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON 73RD R-DAY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With armoured personnel carriers, artillery guns and new age battle tanks along with the rich cultural diversity of the states, India on Wednesday showcased its prowess on the occasion of 73rd Republic Day.

The grandeur of the majestic Rajpath in the heart of the national capital were a sight to watch. The celebrations commenced after Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute at the national war memorial. President Ram Nath Kovind arrived, escorted by his bodyguards on their magnificent bay and dark bay coloured mounts. The President's bodyguard, raised in 1773, is the senior most regiment of the Indian Army.

As the dignitaries were seated, a 21 gun Salute was presented by the ceremonial battery of 871 field regiment. The 21 gun salute is usually presented during Republic Day, Independence Day and visits of foreign heads of states. The first contingent in the uniform of the erstwhile Gwalior Lancers 61 Cavalry was led by Major Mrityunjay Singh Chouhan. The 61 Cavalry is the only active serving



horse cavalry regiment in the world. It was raised on August 1, 1953 with the amalgamation of six state forces' cavalry units.

The Indian Army was represented by a Mounted Column of 61 Cavalry, 14 Mechanised Columns, six marching contingents and a fly past by Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) of Army Aviation. One Tank PT-76 and Centurion (On Tank Transporters) and two MBT Arjun MK-I, one APC TOPAS and BMP-I (On Tank

Transporter) and Two BMP-II, one 75/24 Towed Gun (On Vehicle) and two Dhanush Gun System, one PMS Bridge & Two Sarvatra Bridge System, one HT-16 (On Vehicle) and two Tarang Shakti Electronic Warfare System, one Tiger Cat Missile and two Akash Missile System were the main attraction in the mechanised columns. A total of six marching contingents of the Army were there including the Rajput Regiment, the Assam Regiment, the Jammu and

Kashmir Light Regiment, the Sikh Light Regiment, the Army Ordnance Corps and the Parachute Regiment.

The combined Band of the Madras Regimental Centre, the Kumoun Regimental Centre, Maratha Light Regimental Centre, Jammu and Kashmir Light Regimental Centre, Army Medical Corps Centre and School, 14 Gorkha Training Centre, Army Supply Corps Centre and College, Bihar Regimental Centre and Army Ordnance Corps Centre marched past the saluting dais.

The grand finale and the most keenly awaited segment of the parade, the Flypast, for the first time, witnessed 75 aircraft and helicopters of the Indian Air Force displaying a number of formations. Vintage as well as current modern aircraft/helicopters like Rafale, Sukhoi, Jaguar, Mi-17, Sarang, Apache and Dakota displayed different formations, including Rahat, Meghna, Eklavya, Trishul, Tiranga, Vijay and Amrit.

The ceremony culminated with the national anthem and the release of Tricolour balloons. For the first time IAF coordinated with Doordarshan to show cockpit videos during the fly-past.

Patna police rule out arrest of coaching centre teachers for now

PATNA | Agencies

In relief to teachers of coaching centres who are facing charges of provoking the students and job aspirants in the ongoing agitation against RRB and NTPC exams, police in Patna on Thursday ruled out any arrests now.

Senior Superintendent, Patna, Manavjeet Singh Dhillon, said that FIRs have been registered against teachers and owners of coaching institutes in different police stations but the department is not looking at immediate arrests.

"We have decided to give them a fair chance. We have video footage of social media like Youtube, Whatsapp and Twitter. This video footage will be cross checked with the statements of accused teachers and then take action against them," he said.

Patna police has registered FIRs against 'Khan Sir', S.K. Jha, 'Navin Sir', 'Amarnath Sir', Gagan Pratap, and Gopal Verma for provoking students and job aspirants through their respective Youtube channels. The SSP has said



that the FIRs have been registered against them on the basis of evidence they have.

"We will serve notice to them wherein every teacher to appear before police and give logical arguments as proof to establish that they are not involved in circulating provocative videos and messages among students.

"During investigation, we have found that many Youtube, Facebook and Twitter accounts were used for live telecast of agitation. Such a practice has turned provocative for students to

take part in the agitation," he said.

The RRB had issued a notification of 35,000 posts at various level in Indian Railway and NTPC in 2019 and also conducted an examination. As all those who qualified were waiting for the posting, the RRB issued fresh notification for another examination last week and also said that the students have to give two examinations, in the form of preliminary and mains in future. This has provoked job aspirants and students to undertake agitation in Bihar.

Shweta Tiwari lands into trouble over controversial remark; MP minister wants probe

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Recently, actress Shweta Tiwari was in Bhopal to promote her upcoming web series 'Show Stopper', which is based on the fashion world and also stars Sourabh Raaj Jain and Rohit Roy.

Shweta, while talking about the web show, said, "Mere bra ka size bhagwan le rahe hai (God is taking the size of my bra)."

The TV diva faced flak from social media users after the video from the event went viral. Netizens slammed the 41-year-old actress for "joking about God". Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra took cognizance of



Shweta's comment and instructed Bhopal's police commissioner to submit a report within 24 hours, on the basis of which action will be taken. For the unversed, Shweta Tiwari became a household name playing Purna in 'Kasautii Zindagii

Kay' and ever since then, the actress is slaying. On the professional front, the actress was last seen in Khatron Ke Khiladi. She was among the Top 5 contestants with Arjun Bijlani, Divyanka Tripathi, Varun Sood and Vishal Aditya Singh.

SPURIOUS LIQUOR KILLS 6 IN BUXAR

Patna: Six persons died and four others were seriously ill after they consumed poisonous liquor in Buxar, sources said on Thursday. The incident was reported from Ansari village under Murar block in the district on Wednesday. According to the families of the deceased, the victims had consumed poisonous liquor on Wednesday evening and their health started deteriorating around 10 p.m. Some of them were rushed to private hospitals where they succumbed this morning. The deceased were identified as Sukhu Mushar (60), Shiv Mohan Yadav (55), Bhirug Singh (48), Minku Singh (35) Anand Kumar (30) and an unidentified person. Bunty Singh, Munna Chaudhary, Sanjay Chaudhary and one more person are currently undergoing treatment in the private hospital. When contacted, an official of Murar police station said that the reason of deaths will be ascertained only after the post-mortem report. As many as 18 persons lost their lives in Maker and Annaur blocks of Saran district on January 18.

Hamid Ansari attends IAMC event which had tried to get India blacklisted

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Vice President Hamid Ansari and actress Swara Bhaskar participated in an event by IAMC on Republic Day, an organisation which tried to get India blacklisted by the US, DisinfoLab said in a report.

"Former VP Ansari & Actor Swara Bhaskar participating in an event by IAMC to 'save pluralism' on #RepublicDay They may not know: IAMC paid money to get India black-list by the US is linked with Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) & Linked with the fraud in name of Covid crisis," DisinfoLab said in a tweet.

UAPA was imposed on Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) last year for spreading fake news to incite communal violence and reinforces the narrative of minority



plight in India - from fabricated stories on CAA to Tripura violence, the report said. IAMC members like Kaleem Kawaja have been vocal supporter of Taliban.

Director of Operations in IMANA is Zahid Mahmood, who is a former Pak Navy official. Coincidentally, IMANA is also linked with Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), a Muslim Brotherhood front in the US.

IAMC is headed by Rasheed Ahmed, who was Executive Director (2008-17) of another

shady front -- Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA). At the peak of Covid crisis in India, IMANA collected funds in the name of helping India and robbed all money.

AMC key player Shaik Ubaid and his buddy Abdul Malik Mujahid headed Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) -- the US front for Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan. ICNA has known links with Pak-based terror groups, including LeT, the report said.

AMC founder Shaik Ubaid collected funds in the name of Rohingyas and paid to Lobby firm FGR for getting India blacklisted by USCIRF. FGR head Terry Allen was a long time associate of Nadine Maenza, USCIRF Chair, who is also 'saving pluralism' in India.

Cong to announce CM face in Punjab after consulting party workers: Rahul

CHANDIGARH | Agencies

Indicating that the Congress will go into the Punjab polls with a CM face in place, party leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday categorically said that it will announce a chief ministerial candidate after consulting the party workers.

Both Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and state Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu have urged Rahul Gandhi to announce a CM face well ahead of the polls, instead of going with the collective leadership.

"Both (Channi and Sidhu) have assured me that they will help whoever is named as the CM face," said Rahul Gandhi, who kickstarted Congress' election campaign in Punjab on Thursday after paying obeisance at the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

At the same time, he said that there should be a dedicated manifesto for the women of Punjab. Flanked by Chief



Minister Channi and Sidhu, Rahul also paid obeisance at the Durgiana Mandir and Bhagwan Valmiki temple in Amritsar. After partaking 'Langar' with Sidhu and Channi at the Golden Temple, Rahul Gandhi held a meeting with the party candidates with the message 'Navi Soch, Nava Punjab'. Later, the Congress leader started the campaign by

addressing a virtual rally from Jalandhar.

The Congress has so far fielded 109 candidates for the 117-member Punjab Assembly that will go to the polls on February 20. The names of the remaining candidates are yet to be announced.

The counting of votes will be taken up on March 10.

IMAM HELD FOR RAPING 8-YR-OLD GIRL IN UP DISTRICT

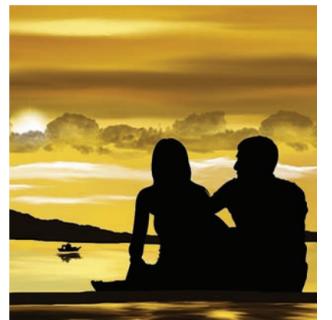
Mainpuri (UP): An eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped by the Imam of a mosque in Mainpuri district. After committing the crime, the accused made the victim swear by the Quran that she would not tell anyone about it. When the girl reached home, profusely bleeding, her family members came to know of the incident and lodged a case with the police. The police arrested the Imam on Wednesday night and sent the girl for treatment and medical examination.

The incident took place in a village in Kisni police circle of Mainpuri. Jamal Ahmed, 52, has been in charge of the mosque since the past ten years and also teaches children here. The girl used to go to the mosque to study. She used to return home by 4 p.m but on Wednesday, she reached home late crying. Her clothes were stained with blood and when her mother asked her, she narrated her ordeal.

Breach of marriage promise is not cheating: K'taka HC

Bengaluru: The Karnataka High Court has said that a breach of promise of marriage by an individual can't be considered as a crime of cheating under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The individual was allegedly in love with a woman for eight years and then had married another woman breaking the marriage promise.

The court further quashed an FIR against the individual and his family members lodged on the charges of cheating after committing to marry the woman. The bench headed by Justice K. Natarajan has given the order while taking up the petition filed in this regard by Venkatesh, a resident of K.R. Pura in Bengaluru. "It is stated that the petitioner has violated the promise of marriage. But, it can't be considered cheating if a marriage promise is violated. The aspect of breaking of marriage can't be included in the purview of Indian Penal Code 415," the bench noted. "Criminal case could be filed when a marriage agreement is made



with the intention of cheating. But, it has not been established in this case that the petitioner has broken the marriage promise for the purpose of cheating. The girl has not shown anything of that sort and it can't be a crime under IPC Section 420," the court further stated in its recent order.

Woman mauled to death by stray dogs in UP district

BUNOR | Agencies

In a shocking incident, a 30-year-old woman was fatally injured when she was attacked by a pack of stray dogs while returning home after collecting fodder for her cattle.

The woman succumbed to injuries on way to hospital.

The incident took place in Bijnaura village under Hasanpur police circle when the woman, Nathia, was bitten by dogs.

She had deep wounds on her face, stomach and throat.

Her family rushed her to the Hasanpur community centre in an unconscious state but she was declared brought dead. Villagers said that stray packs of dogs have become a menace in the area. The dogs had earlier attacked people in the neighbouring Kanata, Deepur, Rampur and Bhabha villages.

In December last year, a



pack of stray dogs mauled to death a 15-year-old girl near her house when she went out of her house to dispose of garbage at Husainpur village. While canines charging at small children are reported

fairly frequently, it is rare for stray dogs to attack and kill adults. The people have urged the local administration to take immediate action or else they will boycott the upcoming elections.

Delhi residents can now file theft, burglary cases online

Delhi residents, who have been victims of a house theft or burglary, now don't have to visit a police station to lodge a case. Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana, on Wednesday launched the citizen service app where common people can lodge E-FIR for the incidents of house theft and burglary.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A senior police official said that this service has been activated in the e-FIR application for registration of theft cases.

"This activation is a milestone in the series of web applications developed by Delhi Police to enable the complainants to register FIR and receive a copy of the same instantly without going to a police station. These transformations have made the life of citizens simpler through hassle-free registration, and will facilitate speedy investigation and systematic documentation," said the official.

The main objective of launching this service is to benefit Delhities to immediately



lodge the FIR, and facilitate investigating officer to complete investigation steps and documentation, and timely dispose of the cases.

It will reduce the pendency of cases at police stations and courts.

"People will be able to lodge FIR under Sections 379 (theft), 380 (theft in dwelling house), 454 (lurking trespass or house-breaking) of IPC without visiting any police station. The application shall have the provision to add/delete section(s) of law in the CD module as per the facts revealed in the investigation," said the police official.

A copy of the digitally signed FIR will be immediately despatched to the area SHO, senior officers and designated court.



SC ASKS NITESH RANE TO SURRENDER, GRANTS 10-DAY PROTECTION FROM ARREST

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed Bharatiya Janata Party's Maharashtra MLA Nitesh Rane, the son of Union Minister Narayan Rane, to surrender before the trial court and seek regular bail in connection with an attempt to murder case lodged against him in Sindhudurg district last month and also granted him ten days protection from arrest.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed Bharatiya Janata Party's Maharashtra MLA Nitesh Rane, the son of Union Minister Narayan Rane, to surrender before the trial court and seek regular bail in connection with an attempt to murder case lodged against him in Sindhudurg district last month and also granted him ten days protection from arrest. Hearing the special leave petition filed by Rane challenging the Bombay High Court's order refusing pre-arrest bail to him, a bench of Chief Justice N.V. Ramana, Justice Hima Kohli and Justice AS Bopanna disposed of the plea accordingly. Senior Advocate Mukul Rohatgi and Siddharth Luthra



appeared for Rane and Senior Advocate AM Singhvi appeared on behalf of the Maharashtra government. Two days ago, in the last hearing, Rohatgi had mentioned the matter for urgent hearing before the

bench, submitting that the matter is a result of political rivalry. Rane has challenged the January 17 order of the Bombay High Court, declining to entertain his plea seeking anticipatory bail, before the top court. The matter is connected with a road rage incident, which occurred in December last year. The complainant alleged that his motorcycle was hit by a car without a number plate and claimed he heard one of the occupants say "should inform Gotya Sawant and Nitesh Rane." The Maharashtra Police had given an oral assurance before the high court that Rane would not be arrested Monday. However, Nitish claimed the case was registered to stop him from participating in the Sindhudurg District Cooperative Bank elections.

SC to hear plea against Bombay HC's reduced working hours

The Supreme Court will hear, on February 4, a plea challenging the Bombay High Court's circular, reducing its working time to three hours in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court will hear, on February 4, a plea challenging the Bombay High Court's circular, reducing its working time to three hours in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. A bench of Justice DY Chandrachud on Thursday listed the matter for next week.

According to petitioner Ghanshyam Upadhyay, the principal bench of the High Court has been "functioning only for name's sake" causing hardships to the litigants and advocates due to the court's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). In view of the spiralling Covid cases in the city, the Bombay High Court on January 10 had decided to limit its working hours to just three hours

each weekday until January 28. The timing of the court is from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. without a lunch break from Monday to Friday, as per the schedule.

Due to the reduced hours, the fundamental rights of citizens are being jeopardised and violated and it was a matter of great concern and public importance, the plea contended. "The reason seems to reduce the risk for all concerned being infected with new variants, however, it has been forgotten that if all the courts are made functional for three hours in a day, then also such risk is inevitable," it read. According to the plea, another SOP has directed that from January 3, subordinate courts in Mumbai, Pune, Raigad, and Alibaug to function between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. with 50 per cent of staff on rotation and to hear remand, bail, and urgent matters through physical hearing.

However, there are no requisite infrastructures in these courts for hearing matters through the virtual platform, the plea stated. It also sought direction for the HC to form guidelines and ensure virtual hearing in all courts in Maharashtra in order to increase the disposal rate of cases.

Congress 'erased' in Malegaon civic body as 28 corporators join NCP

In a major jolt ahead of the upcoming elections, the ruling Congress was practically wiped out in the Malegaon Municipal Corporation with all 28 corporators including the Mayor 'defecting' to the Nationalist Congress Party here on Thursday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a major jolt ahead of the upcoming elections, the ruling Congress was practically wiped out in the Malegaon Municipal Corporation with all 28 corporators including the Mayor 'defecting' to the Nationalist Congress Party here on Thursday. Malegaon is a Muslim-dominated town, the hub of powerloom textiles in Nashik district while the

NCP-Congress are part of the Maha Vikas Aghadi along with Shiv Sena currently ruling the state. Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, NCP State President and Minister Jayant Patil, Ministers Nawab Malik and Chhagan Bhujbal, welcomed the new flock from the Congress to the party fold in Mumbai on Thursday afternoon. Malegaon Mayor Tahera Shaikh, her husband and corporator Shaikh Asif, a former MLA, and 26 others entered the NCP, pushing the two parties towards a possible political conflict.

Last year, Shaikh Asif had quit as the Malegaon Congress President, triggering widespread speculation, but things settled down. Taken aback by the sudden development, the Congress reacted angrily, but warned that people from NCP would soon defect to the grand old party. "Some persons from Congress have joined the NCP. Similarly, a few people from NCP will also be joining us, but I am not revealing details now. We may be in

alliance in MVA, but this is after all politics," Congress State President Nana Patole said. The political arithmetic in the 84-seat MMC has drastically changed with the fresh development, barely weeks ahead of the looming civic elections, along with other important civic bodies in the state. The current tally is Congress 28, NCP 20, Shiv Sena 12, BJP 9, AIMIM 7 and JD(S) 7, but now the NCP has shot up to 48 and the Congress reduced to zero.

At the small induction ceremony, Ajit Pawar urged all the newcomers to work for the people without creating ill-will or tarnishing the NCP's image. "From today, you are the soldiers of NCP - Work hard and don't behave in any manner that can discredit or malign the image of the NCP," Pawar said.

He lauded Shaikh Asif, with whom he is acquainted since the past 25 years, for his dedicated work in Malegaon, particularly among the powerloom workers and the local industrial sector.

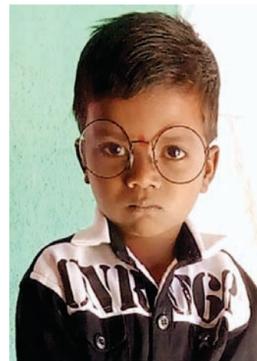
Maha man rides 40 kms on bike with wife carrying son's body as pillion

In a shocking development, a tribal couple rode around 40 kms on a motorcycle -- with the wife carrying their dead minor son's body -- to their village, officials said here on Thursday.

Palghar | Agencies

In a shocking development, a tribal couple rode around 40 kms on a motorcycle with the wife carrying their dead minor son's body to their village, officials said here on Thursday. The chilling incident happened late on Tuesday night when a 6-year-old boy Ajay Y. Pardhi succumbed to acute pneumonia at the government's sub-district facility, Cottage Hospital, Jawhar, around 9 p.m. After completing the hospital formalities, the distraught parents attempted to engage an ambulance to help transport their son's body back home at the remote Sadakwadi village, around 40 kms away. However, at least three ambulances available there refused to help out and the hospital authorities did not have a hearse van, usually deployed for moving bodies.

Confirming the development, Cottage Hospital CMO Dr. Ramdas Marad said that ambulances are generally prohibited from transporting the dead. "But, I was prepared to help out the family given the late hour and the very cold weather... I summoned a private ambulance, who demanded a large sum of



money which the family could not afford," Dr. Marad told IANS. He admitted that the 142-bed Cottage Hospital has no hearse van and alternative transport was not available despite all efforts.

When the hospital authorities suggested they should wait till morning, the couple reportedly refused fearing that their son would be subjected to an autopsy. The medics assured that since the boy had died of natural causes,



there was no need for a post-mortem, but the couple was adamant and insisted on returning despite the numbing chill that night.

Finally, just before midnight, the Pardhi couple -- Yuvraj Pardhi and his wife -- carefully wrapped up their deceased son's body in a couple of sheets, donned thick blankets themselves and left for home. They reached their tiny dwelling in the Sadakwadi vil-

lage home in the wee hours of Wednesday as the 73rd Republic Day dawned all over the country. The last rites of the boy were performed on Wednesday with the entire tribal hamlet in mourning while the nation erupted in celebrations. As the incident sparked huge outrage in the district, the hospital and district health authorities ordered a probe and recommended the immediate dismissal of the three ambulance drivers, hired from a contracting firm in Palghar town, said Dr. Marad. Shramjeevi Sanghatana Founder Vivek Pandit said such incidents are not uncommon in remote tribal areas of Palghar, Nandurbar and other tribal belts which lack health facilities. "This is merely one instance which has come in public glare... The situation in the farflung, forested or hilly areas is very alarming, they have no curative facilities, doctors, gynaecologists, nurses, ambulances, medicines but the government seems to be ignoring it," said Pandit, a former legislator. Health department official said the government will soon order deployment of a hearse van and an ambulance permanently at the sub-district hospital.

LATA MANGESHKAR'S HEALTH IMPROVES, TAKEN OFF VENTILATOR

Mumbai: Legendary singer Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar on Thursday morning was given a "trial of extubation (off the invasive Ventilator)" and is showing signs of improvement, the Mangeshkar family said in a statement.



The statement read that the "India's Nightingale" continues to be in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at the Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai. It read: "Lata didi continues to be in the ICU at Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai under treatment. She has been given a TRIAL of extubation (off the invasive Ventilator) this morning."

"Presently, she is showing signs of improvement but will remain under observation of the team of doctors headed by Dr Prati Samdani. We thank each one of you for your prayers and good wishes." The 92-year-old legendary singer was admitted to the hospital near her home in south Mumbai with Covid-19 and related health issues. She had tested positive on Tuesday (January 11) after reportedly contracting the virus from one of the house helps.

Maharashtra Colleges to Reopen from February 1, vaccination mandatory: Uday Samant

Maharashtra Colleges will be reopening from February 1, 2022 in the state. Uday Samant has announced about this decision after a proposal was placed in front of CM Uddhav Thackeray. Offline lectures would now resume for all students.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Colleges will be reopening now from February 1, 2022 for all students. After being closed for almost a month, the state government has announced today, on January 25, 2022 that all colleges in Maharashtra would reopen for offline classes. The announcement has been made around 8 pm today evening. Maharashtra Colleges reopening decision has been announced by State Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday



Samant. The Minister has even tweeted about it saying that colleges in Maharashtra can resume offline teaching from the mentioned date. The announcement has been made as CM Uddhav Thackeray accepted the pro-

posal of allowing this. Colleges would reopen not for all students but with some restrictions in place. Vaccination has been made mandatory and only fully vaccinated students will be allowed to come to campus

on the dates given by colleges. Uday Samant has also clarified that Maharashtra Colleges reopening decision also rests with local administration and bodies. In case some body doesn't want to resume offline classes, they can take a call to not do so.

Maharashtra Colleges have also been asked to continue with online exams for papers scheduled till February 15, 2022. However, for papers scheduled on a later date, colleges can take a call if they want to have online/offline exams. Detailed guidelines are awaited.

Tipu Sultan row in Maharashtra: President praised Tipu too, will they demand his resignation: Raut

Mumbai: The Shiv Sena has now hit out at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over the ongoing political row regarding the naming of a sports complex after controversial Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan.



Responding to the objections raised by the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) over naming the sports complex in Mumbai's Malad after Tipu Sultan, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut questioned if the BJP will demand President Ram Nath Kovind's resignation for praising Tipu Sultan in Karnataka. "President Kovind went to Karnataka and praised Tipu Sultan that he was a historical warrior, freedom fighter. So, will you ask for the President's resignation too? BJP should clarify this. This is drama," Raut told reporters on being questioned over the Tipu Sultan row in Maharashtra. BJP can try to change history in Delhi, but 'they won't succeed': Raut Raut said that the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra is capable of making decisions. Urging the BJP to not re-write history, Raut taunted that the BJP can try to change history in Delhi, but 'they won't succeed.' "BJP thinks that only they have history's knowledge. Everyone's sitting down to write a new history, these historians are here to change history."

Land acquisition begins for more rail tracks

▶ THE TOTAL LAND REQUIRED IS 13.62 HECTARES OF WHICH 10.45 HECTARES IS PRIVATE AND 3.16 HECTARES IS GOVERNMENT LAND. RECENTLY, THE THANE COLLECTORATE PUBLISHED A NOTICE TO ACQUIRE THE LAST 6.26 HECTARES OF LAND BETWEEN KALYAN AND BADLAPUR.

between Kalyan and Badlapur. The project is being executed by Mumbai Rail Vikas Corporation (MRVC) and its spokesperson said the land acquisition proposal has been submitted to the state government and provisional award has been declared.

The third and fourth tracks are a part of Mumbai Urban Transport Project IIIA and were approved by the Union Cabinet in April 2019. The 14.6 km-long corridor, at Rs 1,553 crore, is expected to be completed by 2025.

Badlapur, Ambarnath, Ulhasnagar are some of the most developing cities on the Kalyan Karjat corridor and suburban train services can increase if there is a separate line for the outstation trains. A senior official of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority said, "Satellite towns of Mumbai on the boundary of MMR are poor in terms of civic transport and the only way to improve connectivity is better rail network. Currently, Metro network can connect these towns only till Kalyan and the Kanjur Marg Badlapur Metro will take at least 10 years to come."

The MRVC spokesperson said that work on the Kalyan Kasara quadrupling is also taking place. A third line is being developed by the construction department of Central Railway and the fourth line is being developed by MRVC.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government has begun work for land acquisition for the third and fourth track between Kalyan junction and Badlapur station on the Central Railway. The addition of tracks is expected to streamline and increase the capacity on suburban trains. The total land required is 13.62 hectares of which 10.45 hectares is private and 3.16 hectares is government land. Recently, the Thane collectorate published a notice to acquire the last 6.26 hectares of land

Thorat assures developers to review revenue, registration, stamp duty matters

Team Absolute | Mumbai

State Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat has assured real estate developers to undertake a review of issues related to revenue, registration and stamp duty matters in the state. Realty developers led by the industry body National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO), Maharashtra met the minister on Tuesday seeking online processing for Non-Agriculture (NA) lands, concession in stamp duty for integrated township projects, faster approvals for affordable housing projects and reduction in the ready reckoner rates. The minister has assured to streamline and digitize the processes to improve the ease of doing business. "The revenue department has already initiated large scale usage of technology to simplify plot measurements and prepare city survey plans for various corporations. The said plan will be rolled out in six months in a phase-wise manner," Thorat said. A delegation of NAREDCO Maharashtra led by its president Sandeep Runwal met the minister and submitted their



state-specific demands and recommendations with an appeal to bring in quick redressal of major issues affecting the industry. "We made some key appeals and recommendations to the Revenue Minister, including immediate interventions to boost affordable housing demand, stamp duty waivers and digitisation of processes. The Minister has assured us necessary reviews and actions soon," said Sandeep Runwal, President, NAREDCO Maharashtra. The devel-

opers have also sought to revoke the notification of levying the NA charges for the past 16 years, from 2006 to 2022. They have claimed that the developers in the state are made to pay arrears for 16 years on an enhanced amount of Rs. 5.50 per sq meters for the open lands in the layout and that the N.A. authorities were also threatening to levy interest and penalty at an exorbitant rate in the event of non-payment within 30 days. Hence, the industry association has suggested scrapping the

levy of NA taxes by the Municipal Corporation or Councils and the arrears of 16 years taxes be revoked at the earliest.

"The open dialogues between industry representatives and government authorities is aimed to foster growth, increase transaction volumes by rationalizing tax and fiscal incentivization. This will ensure an increase in state exchequer, foster home buying consumption, accelerate sales velocity, and usher in an unprecedented growth era for the real estate sector," said Niranjan Hiranandani, National Vice Chairman, NAREDCO. Mentioning that the real estate sector in Maharashtra, barring few pockets, has been going through a tough times since last few years and facing demand crunch in the wake of the Goods & Services Tax (GST), RERA implementation and the Covid19 pandemic, the industry body has urged the government to consider a reduction in the ready reckoner rates in the state on the lines of the government in New Delhi, which would boost the housing demand, as the prices will go down and the transaction will increase.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Voters are silent in UP

Till 2019, one could sit quietly at a wayside eatery or a tea kiosk and soak in the conversation around. People's mood, the profile of candidates, aspirations of a constituency and the caste factor could be assessed to a great extent. The number of flags on houses and shops gave an idea of the party that was popular in the area - or even the one that was not. Today, in Covid times, the scenario has changed and so have the people. Crowds are still there at tea stalls and eateries but the conversation is about weather. Politics has been meticulously drained out of the banter. People have become wiser because they are now being targeted for expressing their political preferences. They prefer not to talk to strangers but when they see a TV channel crew, they smartly talk in favour of the ruling party because they know that then it will be aired. In Barabanki, there are a number of staunch Yogi fans but none of them are virtually glued to virtual campaigns. Akshay Rawat, a young shopkeeper, has recently bought a smartphone but does not keep track of political rallies and is neither connected to any WhatsApp group. As he peers into his mobile phone, he says that his daily data recharge is spent in watching web series. The silence of voters in some constituencies is rather unnerving. In Ayodhya, voters refuse to comment on the formation of the next government. They neither appreciate the upcoming Ram temple and nor do they speak about hundreds of houses and shops being on the demolition list for beautification of the city. A daily visitor to the Ram temple since the past 25 years, he refuses to talk about the elections.

Politics of statue or recognising unrecognised!

Vinod Kumar Shukla

No one ever in his/her wildest dream would have thought that the statue of Subhash Chandra Bose would be placed where once the statue of King George V stood which was removed from India Gate premises in 1968. The canopy under which statue of George V stood remained unclaimed for almost 53 years before one of the rightful claimants got his due with Prime Minister Narendra Modi informing people of the country in his signature manner by tweeting about the government decision. The Prime Minister will also inaugurate a 216-foot statue of Saint Ramanujacharya in a sitting position in Hyderabad on February 5, 2022, to celebrate his 1,000th birth anniversary. The statue of the saint-philosopher will be called the 'Statue of Equality'. But as far as inaugurating Bose's statue is concerned, the Prime Minister already informed people that now Republic Day celebrations will start from January 23 instead of January 24. Now the Republic Day celebrations will start from January 23 making the birth anniversary of Bose part of it. A hologram of Bose has been projected at the site of the statue till the time installation of the actual statue is completed. But what is important to note here is that the incumbent government has the propensity of recognising such unsung heroes or people from history who were denied their dues. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently unveiled the statue of Rani Ahilya Bai Holkar in Varanasi while inaugurating Kashi Vishwanath corridor who has the credit of restoring and rebuilding the present-day Kashi Vishwanath temple in 1780. The temple was demolished by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. The Prime Minister also unveiled the statue of Adi Shankaracharya at

Kedarnath Dham in Uttarakhand in November, 2021. The entire Kedarnath Dham kshetra is also being rebuilt. There is a samadhi of Shankaracharya and his statue has added glory to the entire area. These are a couple of such examples which tell about the present-day government's intention, work culture and planning that how it can bring about glory to the lost icons and places of the country. Actually, it all started with the conceiving, planning and executing the idea of building a colossal statue of first deputy Prime Minister of the country Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel which is also known as 'Statue of Unity' situated at Kevadia in Narmada district of Gujarat. Now, the place has not only become one of the most sought-after tourist destinations after its inauguration on the birth anniversary of Sardar Patel but has also given Sardar Patel his due in the consciousness of people of the country that he deserves. Apparently recognising the unrecognized historical, cultural, political and religious leaders of the country has become a hallmark of the various BJP dispensations. To take the initiative further, statues of several other such icons will also be unveiled very soon. The Uttar Pradesh government has plans to unveil a statue of Lord Ram embracing Nishad Raj at Sringeripur in Prayagraj district where a park is also being developed. The other being the statue of Guru Gorakhnath on the Gorakhgiri hill in Mahoba district of Uttar Pradesh where he used to meditate in a cave which is now named after him. A 40-foot statue of Maharaja Suheldev on a horse in Bahraich will be a reality soon and a 12.5-foot statue of Maharishi Valmiki in the Valmiki Ashram in Chitrakoot district of Uttar Pradesh. A 251-metre-high statue of Lord Ram is already planned in Ayodhya



at the bank of Saryu River. Rs 2,500 crore for the project was approved by the Yogi cabinet and some money has already been sanctioned. These projects will become a reality very soon and work on them is already underway. These projects have evoked Hindutva sentiment on one hand and on the other have filled people of that particular region with pride. Despite local people celebrating these places for their importance, they were neglected by the successive governments. Magnificent temple of Lord Ram is being built in Ayodhya which will emerge as the biggest shrine of any religion in the world giving pride to the people of Ayodhya with an international airport in the city and various other facilities. But it is an

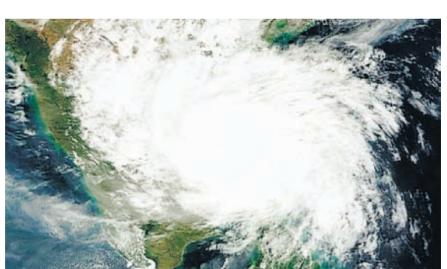
old story now. What is new is the statue of Lord Ram embracing Nishad Raj on the Ram Van Gaman Path at Sringeripur which has not only religious, political but cultural importance as well. In Indian cultural tradition, Sringeripur is not only the place from where Lord Ram crossed Ganga River to other side but is also associated with Shringi Rishi. At Shringaverpur, cultural sequences as old as 11th century BC up to recent times were found. Archaeological Survey of India information reveals this. Similarly, a statue of Guru Gorakhnath will come up near Gorakhgiri hill in Mahoba close to Natraja painting. Legend has it that

Alha and Udal, the two warriors of Chandel Kingdom, captured legendary Prathviraj Chouhan and imprisoned him in one of the caves there and was released on the intervention of Guru Gorakhnath. The importance of Chitrakoot is very important where remnants of Lord Ram's exile from Ayodhya and his stay there are present at every nook and cranny of the holy city which is very pious to Hindus. Sage Valmiki is especially revered by Valmiki Samaj who is generally neglected. Maharaja Suheldev on a horse in Bahraich will certainly cajole Rajbhar samaj who were being wooed by the BJP from a long time. The PM laid the foundation stone for construction of this statue in February 2021 itself. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath unveiled the statue of Mihir Bhoj in Dadri in September 2021 will revive the memory of the forgotten hero. Similarly, a 63-feet-tall statue of Deen Dayal Upadhyay was inaugurated in February 2022 who is the most important ideologue of the party in power in UP and at the Centre. Needless to say that all these initiatives of the government will have lasting impact on the minds of people with subtle Hindutva overtones. The way BJP governments have forced leaders of every other political party to visit temples and take a dip in Ganga, the Samajwadi Party too has announced its plans to install a 108-ft-tall statue of Lord Parashuram along the Lucknow-Agra Expressway near Lucknow to woo Brahmin voters but with a rider that if the party returns to power in 2022. (The writer is freelance journalist based in Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

international

OVER 70 DEAD DUE TO TROPICAL STORM ANA IN SA

Antananarivo | Agencies
The death count from a storm that struck three southern African countries rose to 70 on Thursday as emergency teams battled to repair damaged infrastructure and help tens of thousands of victims. Packing torrential rains, Tropical Storm Ana made landfall Monday in Madagascar before plunging into Mozambique and Malawi. Rescue workers and authorities across the three countries were still assessing the full extent of the damage. Madagascar has reported 41 dead, with 18 others killed in Mozambique and 11 in Malawi. Remnants of the storm have passed over Zimbabwe, but no deaths have been reported there. In the three hardest-hit countries, tens of thousands of homes were damaged. Some



collapsed under the heavy rain, trapping victims in the rubble. Bridges were washed away by swollen rivers, while livestock drowned and submerged fields, destroying the livelihoods of rural families. In Madagascar, 110,000 had to flee their homes. In the capital Antananarivo, schools and gyms were turned into emergency shelters. In northern and central Mozambique, Ana destroyed 10,000 homes, dozens of schools and hospitals, and downed power lines. Mozambique's weather service expects another storm to form over the Indian Ocean in the coming days. Up to six tropical cyclones are expected before the rainy season ends in March. In neighbouring Malawi, the government declared a state of natural disaster.

2. Gunman kills 5, injures 5 at Ukraine's military plant

■ The police detained a Ukrainian National Guard serviceman who shot five people dead and wounded five others at a military factory in the eastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro, Ukrainian Interior Minister Denys Monastyrsky wrote on Facebook Thursday.



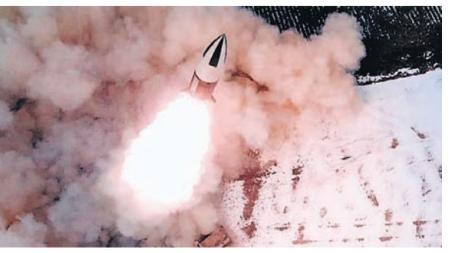
Facebook Thursday. The 21-year-old soldier opened fire at people inside a guard house of the Yuzhny Machine-Building Plant at about 4 a.m. local time (GMT 0200) for unknown reasons. Four servicemen and one civilian woman were killed in the incident and five others were severely injured.

Kiev | Agencies
The police detained a Ukrainian National Guard serviceman who shot five people dead and wounded five others at a military factory in the eastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro, Ukrainian Interior Minister Denys Monastyrsky wrote on

Nuke envoys of S Korea, US share 'deep concerns' over missile launches by N Korea

Top nuclear envoys of South Korea and the US shared their "deep concerns" over North Korea's recent series of missile launches over phone on Thursday, the foreign ministry said.

Seoul | Agencies
Top nuclear envoys of South Korea and the US shared their "deep concerns" over North Korea's recent series of missile launches over phone on Thursday, the foreign ministry said. Noh Kyu-duk, special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, had the emergency consultations with his American counterpart, Sung Kim, hours after the North fired two apparent short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea in its sixth such launch this year, Yonhap news agency reported. "The two sides shared consensus that it is urgent to prevent the situation from aggravating and agreed to



expand cooperation with related parties to resume talks with North Korea under close consultations between South Korea and the US," the ministry said in a release. The envoys held phone meetings each time after Pyongyang fired missiles this month in a show of the allies' united response, though they used slightly different language. Kim condemned Pyongyang's ballistic missile launches as a violation of UN Security Resolutions, while Noh stressed diplomatic efforts to defuse tension on the peninsula. Tensions on the peninsula have escalated after Pyongyang last week hinted at scrapping its yearslong moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile testing over US "hostile policy."

NAZARBAYEV'S LIFETIME CHAIRMANSHIP OF KAZAKHSTAN'S SECURITY COUNCIL CANCELLED



Nur-Sultan: The upper house of Kazakhstan's parliament on Thursday decided to cancel former President Nursultan Nazarbayev's lifetime chairmanship of the country's Security Council and the Assembly of People. The lower house made the same decision last week, Xinhua reported citing Kazinform news agency. Deputies of the upper chamber also proposed cancelling of the requirement to consult with Nazarbayev on key foreign and domestic policies, according to the report. If the proposal is approved by the lower house, the amendment will be submitted to Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to sign into effect, according to the news outlet.

S Korea, US commanders discuss combined defence posture against N Korea

■ The leaders of the South Korean military and US Forces Korea (USFK) on Thursday discussed ways to bolster their combined deterrence posture against North Korea following Pyongyang's recent series of missile tests, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

Seoul | Agencies
The leaders of the South Korean military and US Forces Korea (USFK) on Thursday discussed ways to bolster their combined deterrence posture against North Korea following Pyongyang's recent series of missile tests, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. JCS chairman Gen Won In-choul had a closed-door meeting with USFK commander Gen Paul LaCamera, hours after the North fired two apparent short-range ballistic missiles

toward the East Sea, the sixth such launch this year, Yonhap news agency reported. They exchanged views on Pyongyang's recent missile tests and reaffirmed the alliance between the two nations, the JCS said. Later in the day, Won visited the Air Force Operational Command at Osan Air Base, south of Seoul, and held a video conference with commanders in charge of anti-missile strategies to stress the robust readiness, it noted. The latest move was seen as part of efforts to assuage public security concerns over Pyongyang's flurry of missile tests at the start of the year. The North apparently test-fired at least two cruise missiles from an inland area on Tuesday following four reported rounds of weapons tests, including hypersonic missile launches on January 5 and 11. It also tested the KN-23 missile, modelled after Russia's Iskander ballistic missile, on January 14 and its own version of the US Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), called the KN-24, three days later.

UN official calls on Libyan parties to set clear timeline for polls

Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Libya Stephanie Williams called on parties in the country to set a clear timeline for the holding of general elections in the country.

Tripoli | Agencies
Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Libya Stephanie Williams called on parties in the country to set a clear timeline for the holding of general elections in the country. Williams made her remarks on Wednesday during a meeting with representatives of the municipal council of the southern city of Sabha. Included in the meeting were academics, dignitaries and representatives from youth and women groups, Xinhua news agency reported. "My visit today was an expression of my determina-



tion to meet the people of Sabha face-to-face, listen to them firsthand about their concerns and their views, especially about Libya's political future and how the UN can assist them in their quest for peace, stability, unity and democracy," Williams tweeted. "From the city of Sabha, I renewed my call to the House of Representatives, the High Council of State, the Government of National Unity, and other concerned institutions and parties to lis-

ten to the will of their people and put the elections firmly back on track, through a consensual path and a clear timeline that can lead to the holding of elections in the shortest possible timeframe," Williams said. Libya was expected to hold presidential elections on December 24 last year. However, the elections were postponed indefinitely due to technical and legal issues, according to the country's elections commission. The elections are part of a roadmap adopted by the UN-sponsored Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, with the aim of bringing stability to Libya following years of political division and insecurity.



CHIEF MINISTER REACHES SC-ST POST MATRIC GIRLS HOSTEL

Chouhan interacts with girl students and has meals with them

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan reached SC/ST Post Matric Girls Hostel at Qila Maidan Indore where he interacted with the girl students and listened to their problems and resolved them. Chouhan also had lunch with them. On this occasion, Chief Minister's wife Sadhana Singh, State Disaster Management Committee member Nishant Khare and officials were also present.



Chouhan interacted with the girl students and listened to their problems. The girls stated the need for a library, computer and online coaching in the hostel. Chief Minister immediately instructed the officers to set up a library here. Computer should be arranged. Along with this, the facility of online coaching should also be made available. Chouhan said on this occasion that a daughter is a boon. Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao campaign is being run by the state government. Many computer schemes are being operated to educate more and more daughters. Bicycles have been provided

ed by the government to the children to go to school. Ladli Laxmi Yojana is being effectively implemented. Gaon Ki Beti Yojana is being run to help in higher education. He said that new ashrams and hostels are being opened in the state as per requirement. Arrangements have also been made for the marriage of girls under Mukhya Mantri Kanyadan Yojana.

Chouhan said that arrangements are also being made to provide employment to daughters in both government and private sectors. In a decision taken by the state government, 50 percent posts of teachers and 30 percent posts in police have been reserved for women. A colorful cultural programme was presented by the students on this occasion.

Republic Day celebrated with gaiety and patriotic fervour

PARADE ACCOMPANIED BY DEVELOPMENTAL TABLEAUX AND ATTRACTIVE CULTURAL PROGRAMME

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The 73rd Republic Day was celebrated in the state with full gaiety and patriotic fervour. The national flag was hoisted in the programmes organized at the district headquarters, and cultural programme full of patriotism were presented along with attractive parade. The message of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was read out to the people of the state. Developmental tableaux of various departments were taken out and government officials and employees were also rewarded for outstanding performance. Republic Day was celebrated with solemnity in all the urban bodies, district panchayat and village panchayat headquarters of the state.

The national flag was hoisted and the message of the Chief Minister was read out by Home, Jail, Parliamentary Affairs, Law and Legislative Affairs Minister Narottam Mishra in Chhindwara, Public Works, Cottage and Village Industries

Minister Gopal Bhargava at Jabalpur, Water Resources, Fishermen Welfare and Fisheries Development Minister Tulsiram Silawat in Gwalior, Forest Minister Vijay Shah, Narsinghpur, Commercial Tax, Finance, Planning, Economic and Statistics Minister Jagdish Deora in Ujjain, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Minister Bisahul Singh in Mandla, Tribal Affairs and Scheduled Castes Welfare Minister Meena Singh Mandve in Anuppur, Farmers Welfare and Agriculture Development Minister Kamal Patel, Khargone, Revenue and Transport Minister Govind Singh Rajput Bhand, Mineral Resources and Labor Minister Brijendra Pratap Singh Hoshangabad, Medical Education, Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Vishwas Kailash Sarang in Vidisha, Public Health and Family Welfare Minister Prabhuram Choudhary in Sehore, Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar in Guna, Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Science and Technology Omprakash Saklecha in Seoni, Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav at Rajgarh, New and Renewable Energy and Environment Minister Hardeep Singh Dang in Barwani, Industrial Policy Investment Promotion Minister Rajvardhan Singh

Dattigaon Mandsaur, Minister of State for Horticulture and Food Processing (Independent Charge) Narmada Valley Development Bharat Singh Kushwaha Sheopor, Minister of State for School Education (Independent Charge) and General Administration Inder Singh Parmar visited Betul, Minister of State for Backward Classes and Minorities Welfare (Independent Charge), Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes Welfare (Independent Charge), Panchayat and Rural Development, Ram Khelawan Patel, Shahdol, AYUSH (Independent Charge), Minister of State for Water Resources, Ram Kishore Kanvre in Panna, Minister of State for Public Health Engineering Brijendra Singh Yadav in Shajapur, Minister of State for Public Works Suresh Dhakad in Datia and Minister of State for Urban Development and Housing OPS Bhadauria in Ratlam.

Flag was hoisted at Niwari, Harda, Satna, Katni, Agar-Malwa, Sidhi, Damoh, Singrauli, Dhar, Ashok Nagar, Chhatarpur, Neemuch, Raisen, Dindori, Balaghat, Alirajpur, Morena, Jhabua, Umaria, Dewas, Tikamgarh, Shivpuri, Burhanpur, Khandwa and Sagar districts by the Collectors of the concerned districts.

There Is vast wealth of Herbal Knowledge in Tribal Languages: Governor Mangubhai Patel

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that the vast wealth of knowledge of traditional medicine and herbs of Ayurveda is hidden in the tribal traditions, dialects and languages. The possibilities of introducing this treasure to the future generations should be considered. He said that strengthening Indian languages and dialects is the amalgamation of our culture, the preservation of the singularities of diversity in unity.

Patel was addressing the inauguration programme of the seminar on "Folk Literature in Indian Languages today and tomorrow" by Regional Institute of Education virtually from Raj Bhavan. In the seminar, the Souvenir of the Regional Institute of Education was released and Padma Shri Kapil Tiwari was honoured by presenting a shawl, a certificate of honour.

Governor Patel has said that Indian culture is the unique culture of the world, which is multi-coloured, a symbol of cultural unity of diversity with the continuity of thousands of years. The soul of our folk culture is embedded in folk literature and arts, in which there is a vast treasure of folk beliefs, values and philosophy. This can be gauged from the fact that the 2011 Census found more than 120 languages spoken and understood by more



Information and communication technology today has opened up immense possibilities of new opportunities for individual oriented, field oriented education. Scholars should also reflect on how the digital platform can be used in the expansion of Indian languages.

10 FREEDOM FIGHTERS HONOURED BY GOVERNOR

Bhopal: Governor Mangubhai Patel made arrangements to honour all freedom fighters of Madhya Pradesh by visiting their residences in view of the situation of Covid infection. On behalf of the Governor, the officers of Raj Bhavan honoured the freedom fighters by presenting them shawls, shrifal and sweets along with the Republic Day greetings. These included Devisharan, Parvati Devi, Savitri Devi, Chandravati Singh, Mukhtar Khan, Habib Nazar, Narayan Prasad Narolia, Mohammad Jamir, Narayani Devi and Laxmikant Mishra.

than 10 thousand people in India. To understand the essence of folk culture, art and literature, it is also necessary to understand the traditions, various aspects and prevailing customs of the society. Patel said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given an opportunity to preserve and promote Indian Sanatan and folk culture in the new National Education Policy. According to the new education policy, it is necessary to make effective arrangements for teaching-learning, teaching material, teaching-training for education in mother tongue.

Days after being pulled off train, Muslim man held for 'conversion' attempt

A Muslim man who was recently dragged out of a train at Ujjain railway station in Madhya Pradesh by a group of Bajrang Dal members has now been arrested for allegedly forcing the Hindu woman, who was travelling with him, to convert to Islam.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A Muslim man who was recently dragged out of a train at Ujjain railway station in Madhya Pradesh by a group of Bajrang Dal members has now been arrested for allegedly forcing the Hindu woman, who was travelling with him, to convert to Islam.

The man, identified as Asif Shaikh, and the woman were pulled out of a train at Ujjain railway station on January 14 by the members of Bajrang Dal, who accused him of love jihad. Both were later handed over to the railway police, which after recording the statements of their parents, let them off. The action was taken after the woman lodged a complaint against Shaikh at Mhow police station, claiming that he was forcing her for conversion. According to police, an FIR against Shaikh was registered on Sunday and he was arrested on Monday. The woman told the police that her husband's friend (Shaikh), who is a resident of Azad Nagar, Indore, used to frequently visit to her home and was introduced to her by her husband. According to the FIR, taking benefit of the friendship, Shaikh clicked private photographs of the complainant and started threaten-

ing that he will upload her photographs on social media. He was forcing the woman to convert to Islam and marry him. "To protect the dignity of my family and my own, I was forced to follow all his instructions," read the FIR copy available with IANS. "The victim has accused Shaikh of blackmailing and pressuring her for conversion. He has been booked under the Indian Penal Code Section 384 (extortion) and the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 202," said a senior police official. The matter came to light after a couple of video of the incident went viral on social media. Superintendent of Police (GRP) of Ujjain, Nivedita Gupta had then said, "Bajrang Dal members had brought the man and woman alleging Love Jihad, however, when questioned it was found that they were family friends and both are adults. There was no offence.

CM PLANTED SAPPLINGS WITH THE FIRST EVEREST CLIMBER OF THE STATE

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Karanj and Almond in Smart Garden today along with Madhya Pradesh's first Everest climber Bhagwan Singh. Chouhan plants saplings every day in the fulfillment of his resolve. In order to encourage social participation in environment-protection and plantation activities, Chouhan is planting saplings every day with volunteers, social organisations and individuals active in these areas. Bhagwan Singh had hoisted the Indian Tricolour and the flag of the Sports Department of Madhya Pradesh on the world's highest mountain peak Everest on 19 May 2016. Bhagwan Singh is giving training to the players at Taty Tope Nagar Stadium in Bhopal. He has been travelling by bicycle for the last 40 years. He also provides training through groups to motivate children to ride bicycles. Along with the members of the cycle group, he is also active in motivating them to plant saplings for cleanliness and environment-protection. Bhagwan Singh travels from Bhopal to his residence Gwalior by bicycle. Almond is a dry fruit. Technically, it is the seed of the fruit of the almond tree. The almond tree bears pink and white fragrant flowers. It grows more in mountainous areas. In Asia, it occurs in greater numbers in Iran-Iraq. Almond being fiber aids in digestion. Almonds are useful in the treatment of high blood pressure, constipation and heart diseases. It is rich in potassium, magnesium, calcium and vitamin E. Karanj plant is considered important in Ayurvedic medicine. Karanj plant is also used in religious works.



Bomb scare in MP with note naming UP CM Adityanath

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A box made of tin attached to a timer along with a note left on a flyover on the National Highway connecting Rewa district in Madhya Pradesh with Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh kept the police on their toes on Wednesday.

The handwritten note mentioning a few names, including that of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, said the box is fitted with explosives, thus creating panic among the local people.

However, the police later found that the box had a timer and wires attached to it, but there were no explosives inside. It all started after a passerby noticed the box on the flyover, which falls under the Mangawan police station, 30 km from district headquarters Rewa, and informed the local police. On reaching the spot, the police found that the note attached to the box mentioned it as a bomb, following which the district police headquarters in Rewa was alerted. Suspecting it to be a terror attack



attempt on the occasion of Republic Day, a team of district police led by Additional Superintendent of Police, Shiv Kumar Verma, reached the spot along with the bomb disposal squad.

By the time the bomb squad arrived and inspected the object, security was tightened in and around the area, and the traffic on the highway was also halted temporarily. "The box was fitted with multiple wires and a clock timer. A case has been registered in the matter and further investigation is underway," Verma told IANS. The officer also said that it wasn't an explosive device.

Country Is Proud of the Announcement of Honour to the Personalities: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has welcomed the announcement of conferring Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri honours to the eminent personalities who have served the country for their remarkable contribution in various fields including social service, arts, science, and congratulated the esteemed personalities. Chouhan has tweeted that I bow at the feet of those who have dedicated their entire lives in the service of the nation. Chouhan paid homage to former CDS General Late Bipin Rawat, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Late Kalyan Singh, former President of Gita Press, Late Radheshyam Khemka, along with respected personalities of the state. Along with this, warm wishes have

been sent to classical musician Prabha Atrre. Chouhan has said that the country is proud of the announcement of honour to the dignitaries. It is noteworthy that the Padma awards have been announced on the eve of Republic Day. It is noteworthy that Late Dr NP Mishra of Bhopal (posthumously) has been honoured with Padma Shri in the field of Medicine and Shri Arjun Singh Dhurve in the field of Arts, Shri Awadh Kishore Jadia in Literature and Education and Shri Ramsahay Pandey and Sushri Durgabai Vyam in the field of Arts. Chouhan has tweeted that "I bow to Late Dr NP Mishra, an internationally renowned physician, who made extraordinary medical arrangements for thousands of victims after the Bhopal gas tragedy, on the Padma Shri award for the medical field.

CM To Transfer 875 Crore Under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin)

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will transfer the first instalment amount of Rs 875 crore to three lakh 50 thousand beneficiaries on January 28 for the approved new houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin). Chouhan will also interact virtually with the beneficiaries in this programme to be held at Kushabhau Thackeray Hall, Bhopal at 12 noon. Perhaps for the first time in the country, the amount is being transferred to such a large number of beneficiaries of the scheme.

Principal Secretary Panchayat and Rural Development Umakant Umrao informed that so far more than 23 lakh seven thousand rural families of Madhya

Pradesh have got their homes under this ambitious scheme. These are all such families, who did not have a house or were living in kutcha dilapidated houses.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna, keeping in mind the "Awas for all 2024" houses are being constructed rapidly in the state. In the current financial year, despite floods and excessive rainfall in most of the districts, a record has been set for constructing more than one lakh



Development Department in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Grih Pravesham of about 1 lakh 75 thousand housing beneficiaries was performed collectively. In the same sequence, in

60 thousand houses in the short period of July 2021 to September 22, 2021. Also, during the corona period, more than four lakh 40 thousand houses have been built so far, which is a big achievement.

It is worth mentioning that in the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) last year, in the virtual ceremony held by the Panchayat and Rural

Grih Pravesham (Dwitiya) also one lakh 25 thousand beneficiaries were benefited.

PM Modi has set a target of providing housing to all the homeless families of the country by the year 2024. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) has been implemented in Madhya Pradesh to achieve the target of "Housing for all 2024". Along with houses, benefits of Ujjwala Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission and other schemes are also being given through convergence along with MNREGA wages. In the financial year 2017-18, 23 lakh 261 houses have been completed by sanctioning 25 thousand 221 houses to 3 backward tribes of Madhya Pradesh namely Saharia, Baiga and Bharia. In the year 2021-22, 23 thousand 928 houses are being approved.



LADY GAGA

FEELS LIKE 'ANNOYING KID IN SCHOOL' FOR BRAGGING ABOUT SALMA HAYEK KISS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress-singer Lady Gaga says she felt like "the annoying kid in school" for bragging about kissing Salma Hayek on the set of 'House of Gucci'.
 Appearing on 'Jimmy Kimmel Live' this week, Gaga said: "(Salma's) walking around the house and the camera was following her feet and all her cats were following her, and Salma - in order to get the cats to follow her - she put a bunch of catnip in her boots and the cats are following her."
 "Then we're surrounded by cats and we start making out - and I made out with Salma Hayek. I'm like that really, you know, annoying kid in school that's like bragging that they made out with the popular girl, but has no proof."
 The 'Telephone' singer shared the scene,

which was cut from the final movie, was her idea, and she got consent from Salma before making her move, reports femalefirst.co.uk.
 She added: "I said, 'OK so I was thinking, you know, after the hit gets put out on Maurizio and you get the phone call that he's dead, that I walk over to you and kiss you', and she's like, 'WHAT?!'"
 Her comments come after Gaga first opened up about the scene earlier this month while appearing on a panel.
 She said: "There's a whole side of this film that you did not see where Pina and I developed a sexual relationship."
 "Director's cut, who knows? But this is a testament to (Ridley Scott) as a director because he allowed us to go there. I remember being on set with Salma and going, 'So after Maurizio dies, maybe it gets hot?'"
 Hayek - who was also on the panel - quipped: "You think she's kidding..."

Bradley Cooper: I have a crazy work ethic

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Bradley Cooper has admitted that his passionate approach to work can occasionally make life difficult for some of his co-stars. Cooper, who has starred in films such as 'American Sniper', 'A Star Is Born', and the 'Hangover' franchise, explained: "Love equals discipline. If I love something, I can have the discipline."
 "I have a crazy work ethic. That is definitely true. So much so that the jobs that I have taken in the last five or six years, the people that I've worked with, I have said, 'I work really hard, and this isn't going to be easy. And it's because I love it so much.'" Cooper dreamed of working in the movie industry during his younger years, reports femalefirst.co.uk. He's now desperate to make the most of every opportunity that comes his way. The Hollywood star told Variety: "The thing that I just cannot live with myself is if I didn't use that time to work as hard as I could to get it to the best place it could be. I grew up with this idea that we do what we do for a living; I dreamt it." He suggested he's already surpassed his own career expectations. However, he doesn't have any intention of slowing down anytime soon and his passion for making movies remains as strong as ever. The actor shared: "I don't know if I ever dreamt this big. I don't even know if I allowed myself to. Shame on me if I don't work hard, and I'm here now. I'm not going to squander this. No way, man. No way. It all comes from love."



'Mortal Kombat' sequel in the works with 'Moon Knight' screenwriter

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Mortal Kombat' sequel is in the works at Warner Bros. and New Line Cinema. Jeremy Slater, best known for the Disney Plus Marvel series 'Moon Knight', has been tapped to write the screenplay. According to variety.com, Warner Bros. and New Line had quietly been looking to develop other installments in its 'Mortal Kombat' universe, but plans for a followup film had not been official until Slater had been hired to pen the script.
 The first 'Mortal Kombat', a martial arts-inspired adaptation of the popular video game, opened in theaters and on HBO Max last April.
 Despite mixed reviews, the R-rated movie still managed to generate solid ticket sales at a time when most people were largely steering clear of their local cinema. It earned \$42 million domestically and \$83 million worldwide. Simon McQuoid, who directed 'Mortal Kombat', previously hinted to Variety that he would be interested in expanding the movie into a gory action franchise.
 The companies backing 'Mortal Kombat II' have not announced whether or not McQuoid will return to direct the sequel.
 "None of us used the as-word! We'd never talk about it in any depth whatsoever because we feel like we have to put all our energy into this film," McQuoid said in reference to the release of 2021's 'Mortal Kombat.' "That being said, if the fans want another one, we that's not for us to decide; that's for the fans to decide. Then, we need a couple of joiner pieces that we know can lead us somewhere because there's a treasure trove of stuff that's just sitting there."
 Plot details, as well as returning or newly cast actors, have not been finalised.



Gigi, Zayn 'getting along fine' for sake of daughter post-split

Los Angeles | Agencies

Supermodel Gigi Hadid and former One Direction star Zayn Malik are reportedly "getting along just fine" as they're trying to work things out as co-parents.
 A source spilled to Us Weekly about the current nature of the former couple's relationship, reports aceshowbiz.com.
 The source said, "Gigi and Zayn are getting along just fine," adding that "they've been in each other's lives in some way or another for the past few weeks."
 "There is no custody battle going on right now," the so-called inside

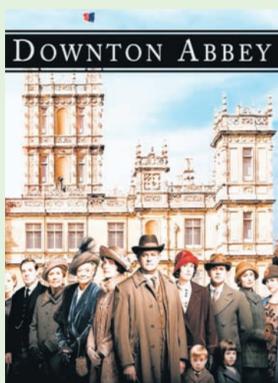
source went on saying. The insider added that the exes, who share their 16-month-old daughter together, are "just trying to work things out as co-parents," noting that Zayn has been continuing to prove he is a "responsible father" to their little girl.
 A separate source told In Touch that Zayn "has been working on himself." The insider said, "There's still a strong emotional connection between him and Gigi, but there are also lingering trust issues."
 "He'd have to prove that he has fixed his anger problems and completely changed for Gigi to consider giving him another chance," the source claimed.

"They're taking it one day at a time and seeing what happens, but she's prioritising Khai over anything else."
 Last October, Zayn, who pleaded no contest to four charges of harassment, reportedly begged his ex to take him back.
 "He's been begging and sobbing on the phone, insisting that it was an isolated incident," a source close to the 'Pillowtalk' crooner claimed in November.
 The source added, "Gigi is upset and shell-shocked but does believe he's sorry, which has (Yolanda Hadid) terrified that she'll take him back." As for Gigi, she's reportedly "done" with Zayn.

'Downton Abbey: A New Era' pushes US, UK release dates

London | Agencies

The release date of the sequel 'Downton Abbey: A New Era' has been pushed forward. Focus Features, Universal Pictures International and Carnival Films revealed on Wednesday that the film, previously dated for March 18, 2022, will now release in UK cinemas on April 29 and in the US on May 20, reports variety.com.
 Created by Julian Fellowes, the sequel reunites the cast as they go on a journey to the South of France to uncover the mystery of the Dowager Countess' newly inherited villa.



The original principal cast, including Hugh Bonneville, Maggie Smith, Michelle Dockery, Joanne Froggatt and Penelope Wilton return alongside new additions Hugh Dancy, Laura Haddock, Nathalie Baye and Dominic West.
 The film, based on the Emmy and BAFTA winning TV series, is a sequel to 2019 film 'Downton Abbey'.
 The screenplay is written by Fellowes, with Emmy and BAFTA-winning Gareth Neame and Emmy Award-winning Liz Trubridge producing. BAFTA and Emmy-nominated Simon Curtis is directing.
 Meanwhile, Focus Features and FilmNation Entertainment have also moved the release date of Oscar-winning aThe Imitation Game' writer Graham Moore's directorial debut, crime drama 'The Outfit' from February 25 to March 18.
 Moore also co-wrote the screenplay with actor-writer Johnathan McClain. The film stars Oscar winner Mark Rylance, Dylan O'Brien, Zoey Deutch, Johnny Flynn, Nikki Amuka-Bird and Simon Russell Beale.
 Producers are Scoop Wasserstein, Ben Browning and Amy Jackson. The film is a thriller in which an expert tailor must outwit a dangerous group of mobsters in order to survive a fateful night.



Nadiya Bychkova



ROHIT RETURNS TO LEAD INDIA IN ODIS, T20IS VS WEST INDIES

The Selection Committee has rested pacers Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Shami for the series. On the other hand, KL Rahul will be available from the 2nd ODI onwards.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India on Wednesday announced an 18-member squad for the upcoming ODI and T20I series against the West Indies, with Rohit Sharma returning to lead the team and leg spinner Ravi Bishnoi getting maiden call-up to the senior side. Rohit, who was ruled out of the South Africa tour because of a hamstring injury has fully recovered from his injury and will lead the side. He cleared the mandatory fitness test at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru following which he attended the selection meeting with the senior selection committee. It would be the first series for Rohit as the full-time ODI skipper after he replaced Virat Kohli in December, last year. However, all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is undergoing his final stage of recovery post his knee injury and will not be available for the ODIs and T20Is. Hardik Pandya also remains sidelined as of now. Young leg-spinner Bishnoi has been



rewarded with a maiden India for the T20 series. He impressed everyone with his bowling skills while playing for Punjab in the last two seasons of Indian Premier League and has been picked up by new franchise Lucknow Super Giants

from the drafts for the next season of cash-rich league. Bishnoi first came to limelight after making an impression in the 2020 Under-19 World Cup. The other big call made by the selectors was bringing back Kuldeep Yadav into the 50-over for-

mat. The left-arm spinner has been on the sidelines for a long time and was only handed an opportunity in Sri Lanka last year when India were forced to pick a second string side.

Meanwhile, batting all-rounder Deepak Hooda has also earned a surprise call-up to the ODI squad whereas Harshal Patel finds a spot in the T20I squad. Pacer Avesh Khan has been picked in both the squads with the selectors opting to retain Bhuvneshwar Kumar only in the T20I set-up. Veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has been handed a break but his Tamil Nadu teammate Washington Sundar makes a return after missing out on the South Africa tour due to Covid-19. All-rounder Venkatesh Iyer has been chosen only in the T20I squad having already been benched in the third and final ODI in South Africa recently. India are set to play three ODIs at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad from February 6 followed by the T20I series at the Eden Gaens, Kolkata from February 16.

ODI squad: Rohit Sharma (Captain), KL Rahul (Vice-captain), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shikhar Dhawan, Virat Kohli, Surya Kumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, Deepak Hooda, Rishabh Pant (wicket-keeper), Deepak Chahar, Shardul Thakur, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Mohd. Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Avesh Khan
T20I squad: Rohit Sharma (Captain), KL Rahul (Vice-captain), Ishan Kishan, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Surya Kumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (wicket-keeper), Venkatesh Iyer, Deepak Chahar, Shardul Thakur, Ravi Bishnoi, Axar Patel, Yuzvendra Chahal, Washington Sundar, Mohd. Siraj, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Avesh Khan, Harshal Patel.

Australian Open

Danielle Collins storms into final after beating Iga Swiatek

Collins will now have a formidable task of facing No 1 seed Ashleigh Barty in the final.

Melbourne | Agencies

World No. 30 Danielle Collins stormed into the 2022 Australian Open final after beating No. 7 seed Iga Swiatek in the semi-finals, here on Thursday.

Collins, No. 27 seed, delivered an irresistible performance to upset World No 9 Swiatek 6-4, 6-1 and reach her first Grand Slam final.

The American tennis player is now guaranteed to make her Top 10 debut next week, surpassing her previous career high of No 23, set in Jan 2019. Last March, she underwent surgery to treat endometriosis; since returning, she has compiled a 36-10 record, including her first two

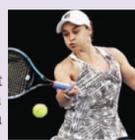


WTA titles in Palermo and San Jose. The 28-year-old Collins' intent was clear from the very

first game, in which she pounded a succession of returns as hard and deep as she could, to overwhelm Swiatek with pure first-strike tennis. Throughout the match, Collins never wavered in her commitment to this, and her magnificent execution barely let up.

Barty defeats Madison Keys, storms into final

Melbourne: World No. 1 tennis player Ash Barty became the first Australian woman to reach the final at her home major since 1980 by defeating a resurgent American Madison Keys 6-1, 6-3, here on Thursday. The crowd at Rod Laver Arena enjoyed a rendition of 'Girl on Fire' prior to the semi-finals at the Australian Open. American Keys, too, had been on fire, tallying a career-best winning streak of 10 after a difficult 2021 that saw her rankings fall outside the top 50. But Barty is on another level at the moment, showing her impeccable skills at the Australian Open.



Brief scores

West Indies 224/5 in 20 overs (Rovman Powell 107, Nicholas Pooran 70; Reece Topley 1/30) beat England 204/9 in 20 overs (Tom Banton 73, Phil Salt 57; Romario Shepherd 3/59, Kieron Pollard 2/31).

AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP

Japan finish top after stalemate with Korea Republic

Team Absolute | Pune

Two-time defending champions Japan secured top spot in Group C of the Women's Asian Cup India 2022 on Thursday despite being held to a 1-1 draw by Korea Republic at Pune's Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex. Seo Ji-yeon's equaliser following a goal-mouth scramble five minutes from time earned Colin Bell's side a point in a game dominated by the Japanese after Riko Ueki's first-minute opener put the champions in front. Futoshi Ikeda's side could not have asked for a better start as Ueki's speed of thought and movement

unlocked the Korean defence with barely seconds on the clock. The striker spun past her marker after receiving the ball from Shiori Miyake and found herself one-on-one with goalkeeper Kim Jung-mi, who offered little resistance as Ueki stroked the ball home. It was a blistering start from the champions, who should have taken a greater lead into the interval. With five minutes remaining, substitute Seo claimed the final touch - and her first international goal - after a melee on the line caused by a failure from the Japanese defence to deal with Ji So-yun's corner and ensure a nervous end to the game for Japan.

VIETNAM, MYANMAR SETTLE FOR DRAW

Navi Mumbai: Vietnam and Myanmar played a 2-2 draw in their final AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 Group C tie at the D.Y. Patil Stadium, here on Thursday. Vietnam came from behind twice to salvage a point and finish third but will have to wait till the Group B matches conclude later on Thursday to know their knockout stage fate, with the two best third-placed teams to join the respective group winners and runners-up in the quarter-finals.

Half-centuries from Haynes and Lanning steer Australia to 327/7

Canberra | Agencies

Half-centuries from Rachael Haynes (86) and captain Meg Lanning (93) steered Australia to 327/7 at stumps on day one of the women's Ashes Test at the Manuka Oval on Thursday. Meg and Rachael, who were dropped on 15 and 44 respectively, shared a 169-run partnership to rescue the hosts from 43/3 in 14.5 overs. But by the end of the day, England had taken the duo out and then sent back Ashleigh Gardner and Tahlia McGrath on the stroke of stumps to claw back into a day dominated by Australia. After winning the toss, England had made an excellent start in the first session. Alyssa Healy was the first to fall for a duck, giving a faint outer edge to wicketkeeper Amy Jones off Katherine Brunt. In the very



next over, Beth Mooney (3) nicked behind an outswinger off Anya Shrubsole. All-rounder Ellyse Perry was caught by Amy off a top edge for 18 off Nat Sciver. England were in danger of bowling out Australia quickly but Meg and Rachael didn't let that happen. With England dropping the catches, the duo motored along nicely to reach their fifties. They could have reached their centuries in

Test cricket easily if not for Katherine and Nat striking after being extremely persistent. Nat's outswinger forced Meg to drive hard and was caught in the slip cordon by England captain Heather Knight diving to her right. In the next over, Rachael poked at a length delivery from Katherine and the thick outer edge carried to Amy behind. Tahlia and Ashleigh then joined forces to add 84 runs off just

134 balls in the final session. Ashleigh's pressure-easing fifty came to an end when an in-ducker from Katherine trapped her plumb in front of the stumps.

Tahlia continued to pile on the runs by hitting Kate Cross for three boundaries and was lucky to be dropped to reach her half-century and fourth of the innings. But a lapse in concentration led her to go for a drive, only for the edge to be snapped by Amy for her fifth catch in the innings, giving Nat her third scalp of the day.

Brief scores

Australia 327/7 in 97 overs (Meg Lanning 93, Rachael Haynes 86, Nat Sciver 3/41, Katherine Brunt 3/52) against England

ODISHA OPEN BADMINTON

MALVIKA, ASHMITA ADVANCE TO QUARTER-FINALS

Cuttack | Agencies

Continuing her good run, Indian shuttler Malvika Bansod advanced to the quarter-finals of the women's singles at the Odisha Open 2022 badminton tournament, here on Thursday. The 20-year-old Bansod beat the junior world No 1 Tasnim Mir 21-13, 21-15 in a 33 minute clash. She will next face 18-year-old Tanya Hemanth on Friday. Another pre-tournament favourite Ashmita also sailed into the quarter-



finals after beating Anupama Upadhyaya 21-17, 21-16 in her round of 16 clash. Both Malvika and Ashmita, with world rankings of 67 and 69, respectively, are the top-rated Indian women at the Super 100 event in the absence of Olympic medallists PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal. In the men's singles, third seed Subhankar Dey beat Rahul Yadav Chittaboina 21-16, 21-14. He will be facing Kiran George, who defeated Chirag Sen 21-12, 21-13, in the quarter-finals.

Who doesn't want to captain the Indian team: Shami

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Team India fast bowler Mohammed Shami said that he is ready for the role of captaincy in Test cricket, but stressed that the thought of leading the Indian team is not in his mind at the moment. "I am not thinking too much about captaincy at the moment. I am ready for whatever responsibility is given to me. To be honest,



who doesn't want to captain the Indian team but it is not the only thing and I am looking to contribute in whichever manner possible for the team," Mohammed Shami was quoted as saying by India.com. The prolific pacer has been rested for the upcoming limited-overs series against India starting February 6 as Shami has been playing continuously for the last few months.

Manpreet to lead 20-member team in Men's Pro League matches in South Africa



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Manpreet Singh, who led India to a bronze at the Tokyo Olympic Games last year, will captain India in the upcoming FIH Pro League matches against South Africa and France, which will be played in Potchefstroom, South Africa, from February 8-12. Hockey India on Thursday named a 20-member Indian men's hockey squad for the South Africa tour with drag-

flicker Harmanpreet Singh as Manpreet's deputy, Hockey India informed in a press release on Thursday. The men's

team will start a busy season, which includes the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, later this year leading up to the senior men's World Cup in Odisha in January 2023, with the four Pro League matches. The Indian Team will leave for South Africa from Bengaluru on February 4. They will play France in the first match on February 8 and then take on South Africa the next day. They will play France on February 12 and hosts South Africa on the following day to complete their engagements on this tour.

Indian squad

Goalkeepers: Sreejesh PR, Krishan Bahadur Pathak; Defenders: Harmanpreet Singh (vice-captain), Amit Rohidas, Surender Kumar, Varun Kumar, Jarnanpreet Singh, Jugraj Singh; Midfielders: Manpreet Singh (captain), Nilakanta Sharma, Hardik Singh, Jaskaran Singh, Shamsher Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad; Forwards: Mandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Akashdeep Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Dilpreet Singh, Abhishek.

Hockey legend Charanjit Singh passes

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Two-time Olympic medalist and Padma Shri award winner Charanjit Singh passed away on Thursday in Una district, Himachal Pradesh, due to age-related complications. He was 92. The Arjuna Award winner was part of India's glorious days. A charismatic halfback, Charanjit Singh had led the Indian team to a historic gold medal in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, beating Pakistan in the final and was



also part of the Indian team that won silver in the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome. Born on November 20, 1929, Charanjit Singh was an alumnus of Col. Brown Cambridge School, Dehradun and Punjab University. After his illustrious career in international hockey, he worked as Director of the Physical Education department at Himachal Pradesh University, in Shimla. Hockey India on Thursday mourned the demise of hockey legend Charanjit Singh.

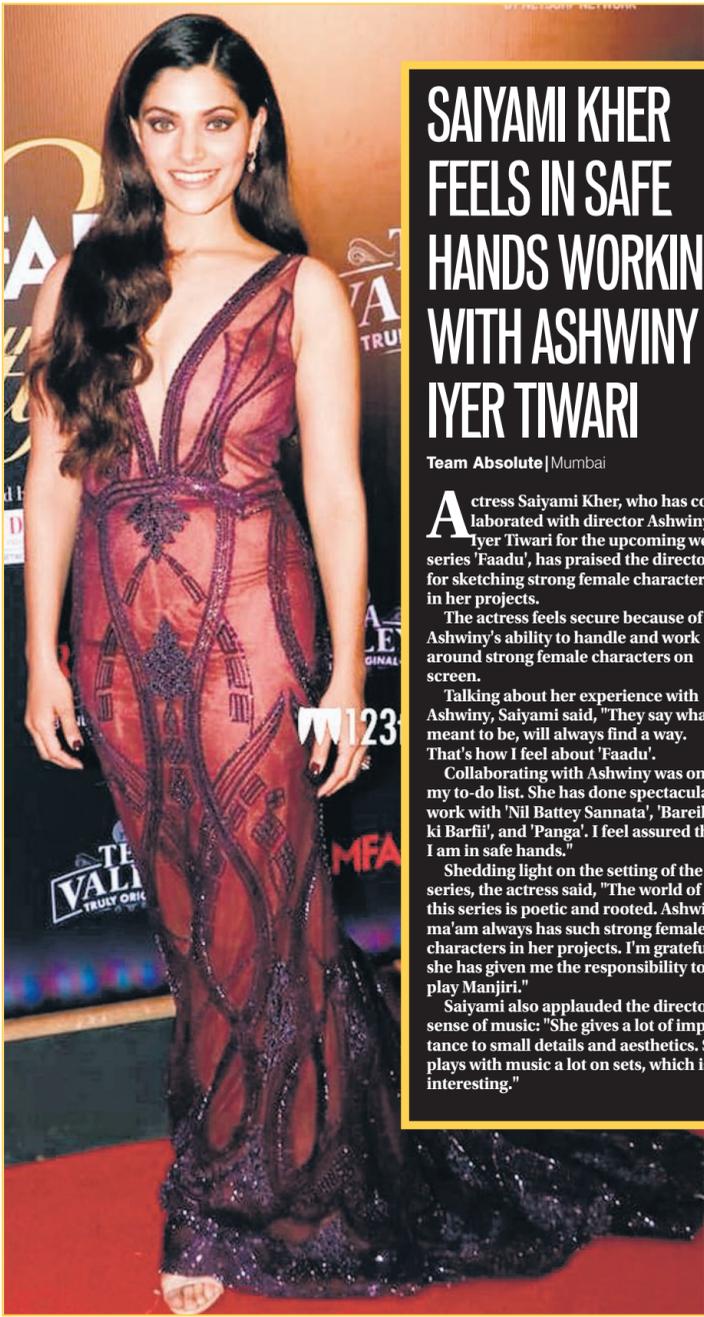
FORMER INDIA FOOTBALLER A D NAGENDRA PASSES AWAY

New Delhi: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Thursday condoled the demise of former India footballer A D Nagendra. Nagendra, who was a part of the Indian squad for the Merdeka Cup in 1969, passed away on Wednesday. The footballer was also a member of the then Mysore state Santosh Trophy from 1966 to 1975, and was a part of the triumphant squad in 1967, and 1968. He scored 4 goals in the process.

3rd T20I:

Powell, Shepherd help West Indies beat England by 20 runs

Bridgetown (Barbados): West India rode on an electrifying maiden century by Jamaican allrounder Rovman Powell to beat England by 20 runs in the third T20I of the series and take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series. Powell blazed to 107 off just 53 deliveries while senior batter Nicholas Pooran contributed a quick-fire 70 off 43 balls as West Indies posted a mammoth 224/5 in their allotted 20 overs. In response, wicket-keeper Tom Banton (73) and Phil Salt (57) scored half-centuries but England could manage only 204/9 in 20 overs to fall short by 20 runs. Romario Shepherd was the best West Indies bowler on the night as he claimed 3/59 off his four overs while skipper Kieron Pollard picked 2/31 off his full quota.



SAIYAMI KHER FEELS IN SAFE HANDS WORKING WITH ASHWINY IYER TIWARI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Saiyami Kher, who has collaborated with director Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari for the upcoming web series 'Faadu', has praised the director for sketching strong female characters in her projects.

The actress feels secure because of Ashwiny's ability to handle and work around strong female characters on screen.

Talking about her experience with Ashwiny, Saiyami said, "They say what's meant to be, will always find a way. That's how I feel about 'Faadu'.

Collaborating with Ashwiny was on my to-do list. She has done spectacular work with 'Nil Battey Sannata', 'Bareilly ki Barfi', and 'Panga'. I feel assured that I am in safe hands."

Shedding light on the setting of the series, the actress said, "The world of this series is poetic and rooted. Ashwiny ma'am always has such strong female characters in her projects. I'm grateful she has given me the responsibility to play Manjiri."

Saiyami also applauded the director's sense of music: "She gives a lot of importance to small details and aesthetics. She plays with music a lot on sets, which is interesting."

Sunidhi Chauhan: I am a constant learner like a child

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Celebrated singer Sunidhi Chauhan, who is exploring the independent music space with singles - her recent being 'Firaq', says even after having a long career of more than two decades she feels like a student of music who is hungry for learning more. Sunidhi told reporter: "I would say that my driving force has not changed since the time I was a child, I love music, I love singing."

"When I started my journey, it was nothing but the joy of singing and it is still the same. I am a constant learner, even after all these years. So as cliché as it sounds, the truth is, I feel like I just started my journey! That is why I am taking all the opportunities to explore different avenues of music. Starting her singing career at the age of 12, in 1999, she gained the spotlight with the song 'Ruki Ruki Si Zindagi'. Since then, she continues to deliver superhit tracks including 'Mehboob Mere', 'Dhoom Machale', 'Beedi Jalaile', 'Sheila Ki Jawani' to 'Ae Watan', 'Kamli', 'Tu Kuja' to many more. Sunidhi shared: "My relationship with music has only grown deeper. I feel that ever since I started singing for films, it has evolved not only how I look at music but also the way music has changed in cinema, in the independent space, in the music industry as a whole. "I am glad that somewhere I am also part of that change. One of the reasons why I am excited about new talents is, I become a part of a new musical vision. As an artist that gives me a chance to grow." In 2020, the singer started exploring the independent music space all the more.



On R-Day, Kamal Haasan makes a global pitch for khadi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Megastar and Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan says khadi, the banner of India's freedom struggle, not only represents Indianness, but also is a fabric for all seasons. He maintains that it has the potential to re-connect with people and all it would take for it to happen is a good idea to cultivate this affinity.

The actor was speaking on the sidelines of the launch of his clothing line named 'KH House of Khaddar', which went live on the occasion of the 73rd Republic Day. Breaking the stereotype around the fabric, he says, "Our first collection is not pompous. It answers questions like 'What can khadi do for style and fashion?' It can do all that linen can, and much more."

Recalling the launch of the label in Chicago in Fall 2021, he said: "It is the Windy City and the temperature there can turn icy, but I could walk down the

streets in a three-piece khadi outfit, and its warmth held me up. I do believe khadi is a textile for all seasons."

Commenting on the launch, Amritha Ram, designer and creative head of KH House of Khaddar, said: "I want to make sure that alongside presenting the designed element that would put KH House of Khaddar on the global map, we as a brand send out the message that we comprehensively take care of the three dimensions of sustainability: Economic Development, Social Development and Environmental Protection. That is my dream for Khadi."

Talking about what separates khadi from others, Ram said: "The fluidity of the fabric! One can groom the fabric the way one wants to. It is raw, beautiful and all natural."

The idea behind KH House of Khaddar is both to create a clothing line that flaunts khadi as a textile and to contribute to the uplift of the country's handloom weavers.

Samantha: Fell a 100 times but got up each time

Team Absolute | Chennai

Actress Samantha, who seems to be having a whale of a time in Switzerland, where she is on a holiday now, has put out another post on how she learnt skiing. On Instagram, the actress, who impressed fans and followers a few days ago by putting out a video of her skiing on the icy slopes of Verbier, Switzerland, on Thursday said: "I began my skiing journey with toddlers on a bunny slope. Very humbling! "Fell a 100 times. Got up each time. The thought of quitting crossed my mind multiple times but boy am I glad, I pushed through. In the time and effort it took for graduating from bunny slopes to completing a Red run, I found something truly special. It's been exhilarating & daunting in the best way imaginable." The actress, while giving a shout out to her trainer, also made a point by hashtagging the phrases, 'Just The Beginning' and 'Never Felt More Alive'.



Suneel Darshan accuses Google of copyright infringement



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmaker Suneel Darshan, who is known for films such as 'Inteqam' and 'Andaaz', has filed an FIR against the search engine giant

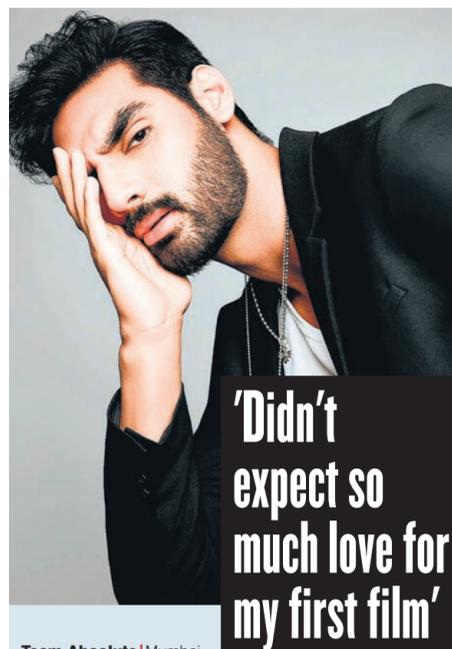
Google, its CEO Sundar Pichai and several other employees of the corporation, alleging an infringement of the copyright of his 2017 directorial 'Ek Haseena Thi Ek Deewana Tha' on YouTube.

Darshan has claimed that though he had not uploaded the movie anywhere, nor sold it to anyone, several channels on YouTube are profiting off it and Google has refused to take the movie off those channels. His FIR, filed with the MIDC Police Station at Andheri East, alleges infringement of Sections 51, 63 and 69 of the Copyright Act of 1957.

Sharing this information with reporter, he said: "My faith and belief in the advancement of technology are implicit, but the infringement of my rights is a cause of grave concern."

He added: "My entire copyrighted movie, apart from its songs and sequences from it, have been uploaded and monetised, and I have helplessly watched such illegal acts."

Darshan clarified that it was only after his repeated requests went unanswered that he had to seek legal help. "Their actions and replies indicate they are well-versed in deflecting queries from my end," he said.



'Didn't expect so much love for my first film'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Ahan Shetty, who made his Bollywood debut with the film 'Tadap', found it unbelievable receiving so much love and appreciation for his maiden movie.

Ahan recalled the time he received a call from filmmaker Rakesh Roshan praising his performance.

He said, "In general I was completely overwhelmed, I didn't expect so much love and appreciation for my first film. I remember the day the trailer released, Rakesh Roshan sir was the first person to call and congratulate me, he said I had a bright future ahead and that he was looking forward to seeing my film. "That phone call was so special coming from someone who is a legend in our industry."

'Tadap' also stars Tara Sutaria, Kumud Mishra and Saurabh Shukla. It follows the story of a guy hopelessly in love, who turns vindictive along the course of the film after being abandoned. Presented by Fox Star Studios, 'Tadap' is produced by Sajid Nadiadwala and co-produced by Fox Star Studios.



Deepika Padukone