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Where are the FIRs? 3 decades on J&K Police hasn't moved on killings

THE KASHMIR FILES

- ▶ Hundreds of people from the minority community were killed by terrorists, many women were raped and murdered, kidnapped, assaulted, many houses looted and burnt, many temples desecrated.
- ▶ There is no concrete official number. The Kashmiri Pandit community leaders say that over 700 people were killed, but figures on rapes, assaults, kidnappings etc. are not recorded.
- ▶ The community leaders have been pleading for a probe to unravel the faces behind the holocaust, but the successive governments have not paid any heed.

Deepika Bhan | New Delhi

For any crime committed, the basic that the police is expected to do is file an FIR. It is the fundamental duty of any state and its police to act on any act of crime. But, when it comes to Kashmir, all the basics seem to dither.

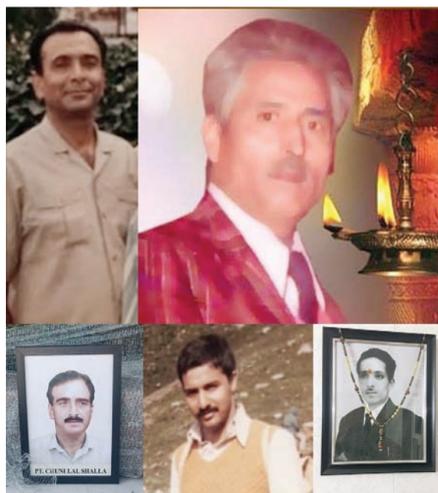
One of the most talked about political killings in Kashmir is of Tikalal Taploo. His son Ashutosh Taploo, who after fleeing from Kashmir settled in Delhi, says that no FIR was ever registered and he never got the death certificate also.

Sushma Shalla Kaul's father Pandit Chuni Lal Shalla was kidnapped, tortured and shot dead in May 1990. He was a CID officer posted in Baramulla in Kashmir and it was his PSO who betrayed him.

"I remember they had told us FIR was done," said Sushma.

"The police have not given me anything officially and there is no progress in the case. I am not even sure whether the number that I have been given is the real one or not," says Sushma.

Ramesh Mota, originally from Srinagar's Habba Kadal, claims that he has no FIR of his father's murder. His father, Omkar Nath Mota, was a businessman, who was gunned down in his ancestral home in Kashmir's Pampore district. On being asked why FIR was not filed, Rohit Kak said,



VP Singh refused to listen to us, Mufti downplayed the exodus: Surinder Kaul

New Delhi: Surinder Kaul, the founder of the Global Kashmiri Pandit Diaspora, is reminded of the treatment that the government of the day in 1990-1991 meted out to the community.

Kaul said: "After we were forced out of Kashmir, where I was doing house-job in Srinagar Medical College, we organised several protests, dharams and rallies in Delhi. We sat for weeks at Jantar Mantar. V.P. Singh was the Prime Minister then and Mufti Mohammad Sayed was the Home Minister. We took out a protest to the PM's residence and after a long time, a delegation of five of us were allowed to meet the PM. We were all young students, desperate and terribly anguished. When we finally met him, all he had to say was Dekhta hun (Let me see)", and then he started moving away. One of my colleagues was forceful and said 'he doesn't even have five minutes to hear our plight...' The PM was offended by this. It was so visible and he left. We moved out and the moment we got back to the waiting crowd of other students outside the PM's residence, Delhi Police lathi-charged us, they rained blows on us and we were arrested.

After some days, we went to meet Home Minister Mufti Sayed and all he had to say was 'yes, this is not ok'. He had no answers to our questions. We told him, 'Why the local police and intelligence network had just vanished. Why was no one doing their work? Why was there no security?' He just kept mum. That day I realised that the state and the central power system of our country had collapsed and no one was there to help us."

"I was just 12 years old then. But I remember the situation those days was not such that one could approach the police and get help. In fact, we always suspected that the J&K policemen were in cohorts with the terrorists. If someone approached the police, there was fear of retaliation from the terrorists."

Sanjay Kak's father, Bansilal Kak, 53, was an executive engineer in the J&K government and had a good rapport with his Muslim colleagues.

Like Sushma, Sanjay Kak, Ashutosh Taploo, Ramesh Mota, Rohit Kak, there are several such cases where the families were forced to flee after their near and dear ones were killed in Kashmir.

There are hundreds of such cases where complaints were not filed and FIRs registered.

The number of those killed and those who fled the Valley is disputed while rape and gang-rape numbers are not recorded. In many cases of murders, even the FIRs were never filed and even in those where cases were lodged, the movement has been a near nil.

While the community says that around seven lakh KPs were forced to flee, and the number of killed is over 700, no J&K administration and even the Centre has done anything to get the actual figures.

BJP CAN'T ABSOLVE ITSELF OF BLAME FOR EXODUS OF PANDITS

New Delhi: As the debate on the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990 goes on, a blame game between the BJP and the Congress has started. Both of them accuse each other for the fate of the Kashmiri Pandits who have been displaced from their homeland and are not able to return. Since 1990, the Congress has ruled the country for three terms and BJP is into its fourth term including six years of Vajpayee from 1998 to 2004 and Modi from 2014 to now. But the problem remains and Kashmiri Pandits are forced to live as refugees in different parts of the country. Apart from this, the historical fact is that during the exodus there was no Congress government in the country. It was the government of V.P. Singh supported by the BJP and Jagmohan was the governor of Jammu and Kashmir who later became a Minister in the Vajpayee government. Revisiting the facts, Shakil Akhtar who has worked with a leading newspaper in Srinagar for ten years from 1990-2000 said, "It was Jagmohan who facilitated the exodus by arranging transportation and did not provide security to the Kashmiri Pandits and after they fled, the Governor appealed that KPs should not leave the Valley in March, three months after they left." He said that the Governor could have stopped the exodus but he did not do it deliberately. The Congress alleges that BJP was instrumental in the removal of Farooq Abdullah, the then elected Chief Minister and appointment of Jagmohan, whom the Congress squarely blames for the exodus as at that time Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was the Home Minister, with whom the BJP formed government in Kashmir in 2015-16. The BJP counters and alleges that 1989 insurgency began after allegations of rigging in Assembly elections of 1987 and the JKLF started targeting the KPs.



To Be Continued...

INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES PLUNGED BY OVER \$9.6 BN, STEEPEST DIP IN 2 YR

Mumbai: India's foreign exchange reserves have plunged by over \$9.64 billion during the week that ended on March 11. Accordingly, the Reserve Bank of India data showed that India's forex reserves fell to \$622.275 billion from \$631.920 billion reported the previous week. According to analysts, a likely intervention by the Reserve Bank of India to arrest the sharp fall in rupee value against the US dollar depleted the reserve. The RBI is known to enter the markets via intermediaries to either sell or buy US dollars to keep the rupee in a stable orbit. According to reports, the latest decline in forex reserves is the steepest in nearly two years. The country's forex reserves comprise foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold reserves, SDRs, and the country's reserve position with the IMF. On a weekly basis, FCAs, the largest component of the forex reserves, edged lower by \$11.108 billion to \$554.359 billion. However, the value of the country's gold reserves increased by \$1.522 billion to \$43.842 billion. The SDR value fell by \$53 million to \$18.928 billion. In addition, the country's reserve position with the IMF slipped by \$7 million to \$5.146 billion.



GROUP OF RUSSIAN ELITE PLANS TO ASSASSINATE PUTIN BY POISON: UKRAINE INTEL

KIEV | Agencies

A group of influential people who oppose President Vladimir Putin and who plan to assassinate him, is forming among the Russian business and political elite, according to the Chief Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine.

The goal of this group is to remove Putin from power as soon as possible and restore economic ties with the West, destroyed by the war in Ukraine.

"A part of Russia's political elite sees Federal Security Service Director Alexander Bortnikov as Putin's successor. It is Bortnikov who has recently fallen out of favour with the Russian dictator. The official reason for the FSS leader's downfall is fatal miscalculations in the war against Ukraine", Ukraine intelligence has said, Ukrayinska Pravda reported.



It was Bortnikov and his department who were responsible for analysing the views of the Ukrainian population and the capacity of the Ukrainian army.

It is known that Bortnikov and some other influential members of the Russian elite are considering various options for removing Putin from power. In particular, poisoning, sudden illness, or other "accident" is not excluded, the intelligence said.

Russia fires Kalibr cruise missiles to destroy Ukraine facility

Moscow: The Russian Defence Ministry said that the Russian armed forces with Kalibr missiles destroyed workshops for the repair of damaged Ukrainian armoured vehicles.

At the same time, it is reported that Kalibr missiles from the waters of the Caspian Sea, as well as from the air-space over the Crimea, the Kinzhal complexes destroyed a large fuel and lubricants storage base near the village of Konstantinovka, Mykolaiv region. The 3M-54 Kalibr, also referred to it as 3M54-1 Kalibr is a family of Russian cruise missiles developed by the Novator Design Bureau. There are ship-launched, submarine-launched and air-launched versions of the missile, and variants for anti-ship, anti-submarine and land attack use.

BA.2 version of Omicron identified in 18.4% samples in TN

CHENNAI | Agencies

The Tamil Nadu public health department has in a statement said that BA.2 Sub variant of Omicron was identified in 18.4 per cent of the samples sequenced in the state from January to March 2022.

It is to be noted that the BA.2 sub-variant is driving the Covid-19 cases in the UK. The genomic analysis on the samples also found that the sub-variant BA.1.1

was identified in 43 per cent of the samples while the BA.1 sub-variant was found in 37.3 per cent of the samples.

The health department also said that Omicron was the dominant variant in circulation in the state. The Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) at the State Public Health Laboratory showed that 93 per cent of the 496 variants sequenced in the state were of Omicron variant.

One held for trying to get inside Hindon airbase

GHAZIABAD | Agencies

A 26-year-old man was on Sunday arrested for trying to sneak into the premises of the Indian Air Force's Hindon air base in an unauthorised manner.

The accused was identified as Zaahir, a native of Bihar, currently residing at a shanty outside the airbase.

A police officer told reporter that the man allegedly tried to scale the wall of the air force base.

"He was possibly in an inebriated state," the police officer said. The Air Force officials nabbed him while he was trying to sneak into the technical area inside the premises of the airbase and called the police. Meanwhile, the police have registered an FIR under Sections 3 (If any person for any purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the state) and 7 (Interfering with officers of the police or members of the Armed Forces of the Union) of



the Official Secrets Act, and arrested the man. "The accused will now be presented at the court," the police officer said, adding that further investigation is underway.

Pak opposition threatens sit-in inside parliament if no-confidence motion not tabled

Hamza Ameer | Islamabad

The political matrix in Pakistan continues to twist and turn in favour and against the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is faced with a formidable opposition alliance, which has also taken support of many breakaway party members of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the number of which continues to creep up, to pile up pressure on him.

The opposition alliance, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) has continued to gain more support from breakaway members of the ruling party. It now claims support of about three dozen members, who are ready to vote against the government in the no-confidence motion, which would be a decider of the future of Imran Khan and his politics.



Several blasts in Sialkot ammunition shed

Sialkot (Pakistan): A fire erupted in an army ammunition shed Sunday morning in Sialkot garrison area, Pakistan military's media wing Inter-Services Public Relations has confirmed, Samaa TV reported.

The fire, caused due to a short circuit, has been put out as a result of "swift and effective response". No life or property loss was reported, the report said. Earlier on Sunday, Twitter users began posting videos said to be from Sialkot in which smoke could be seen billowing far away. They reported loud blasts were also heard. Urdu News has quoted Sialkot District Police Officer (DPO) Umer Saeed Malik saying that the fire erupted early morning in cantonment area after which several blasts happened.

REDUCE COVISHIELD DOSE GAP TO 8-16 WEEKS, RECOMMENDS PANEL

New Delhi: The National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) has recommended reducing the gap between the first and second dose of Covid vaccine Covishield to 8 to 16 weeks in view of ongoing Omicron pandemic, said a source on Sunday.

Presently, the second dose of Covishield is being administered 12-16 weeks after the first dose under the national vaccination drive. India's apex body on immunisation now recommends this be curbed to ramp up the administration of the second dose of Covishield to the remaining population amid rising cases in European nations and some other countries.

The government had on May 13, 2021 extended the gap between the first and second doses of the Covishield vaccine from 6-8 weeks to 12-16 weeks, based on the recommendations by NTAGI that provides guidance to the Union Health Ministry on the immunisation.



IIT MADRAS' BRAIN CENTRE TO MAP HUMAN BRAINS AT CELLULAR LEVEL

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras has launched the Sudha Gopalakrishnan Brain Centre to power an ambitious Global Project to map the human brain at the cellular and connectivity levels, with a focus on high-resolution brain imaging.

This state-of-the-art Centre aims to become a world-renowned research centre, generating unprecedented human brain data, scientific output and technology tools.

IITM has been ranked No.1 in the 'Overall' Category for the third consecutive year in India Ranking 2021 released by National Institutional Ranking Framework, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India

IIT Madras plans to train hundreds of undergraduate and postgraduate students at this centre in neuro-science and computing, machine learning techniques on cutting-edge brain



data.

According to a statement, the centre is supported by Infosys co-founder Kris Gopalakrishnan and his wife Sudha Gopalakrishnan. Their dedicated efforts in seeding research at IIT Madras at the intersection of Neuroscience and Engineering are now powering this centre in the fron-

tier research area of brain mapping. Prof. K. Vijay Raghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, said: "The combination of IIT Madras, which has the expertise in science and data analysis, with medicine is going to be revolutionary."

"Going forward, we have an extraordinary problem in Neuroscience, i.e. on the functioning of human brain. We are at an earlier stage in our understanding of the human brain functioning. The IIT Madras brain centre will help in solving complex issues that will benefit the world."

"The dynamic leadership of IIT Madras has shown the ability to herd different kinds of complex talent together. The IIT Madras Research Park is an example and today every institution wants to copy the model," he added.

Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director, IIT Madras, said: "The Brain Research Centre is a great case study which

proves that technology can contribute to medicine and solve societal problems. The Centre will make deep inroads in collecting data for brain research." Mohanasankar Sivaprakasam, Department of Electrical Engineering, IIT Madras, and Head of Sudha Gopalakrishnan Brain Centre said: "The technology platform we have developed and our strong medical collaborations, is allowing us to generate high-resolution large-format histology sections of human brains that will advance the field significantly."

The centre will also work on 3D digital neuro-anatomy of the post-mortem human brain with cellular resolution. This is a field with great potential for scientific discovery and also for the understanding of neurological disorders.

The unique data sets being generated here promise to be widely impactful through open sharing with an international research community.

Odisha police arrests man for cheating bizman of Rs 2.35 cr

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha police has arrested an accused, Himanshu Bhandari for cheating Rs 2.35 crore from a businessman, officials said here on Sunday.

Himanshu was arrested from Noida, Uttar Pradesh. The arrest was made against a case registered on the basis of a complaint filed by Pramod Kumar Rout, a businessman of Joda in mineral-rich Keonjhar district of Odisha, the EOW officials said.

As per the allegation, the accused and others cheated Rout to the tune of Rs 2.35 crore in the guise of paying him Rs 3 crore from the Government of India, under Pradhan Mantri Rahat Kosh Yojana against his Insurance Policy with Max New York Life, using the forged & manipulated documents.

During the investigation, the EOW found that Rout is holding one policy in Max New York Life Insurance Company since March 2012. He got a call in October 2019 from a person who introduced himself as A.K. Walia, Fund Releasing Head, Ministry of Finance posted at Hyderabad.

The caller informed that the com-

plainant's insurance policy has been selected under Pradhan Mantri Rahat Kosh Yojana and that the Government of India will release an amount of Rs 3 crore in his account, the officials said.

As he remained silent for some days, Rout received several letters, communications and calls from the fraudsters, who impersonated senior government officials and persuaded the complainant to transfer cash through RTGS and bank accounts.

Being persuaded, Rout, during the period from November 19, 2019 to February 4, 2021, transferred around Rs 2.35 crore in instalments. However, even after lapse of time, when no amount was returned to the complainant, Rout doubted their activities and when contacted, found all the mobile numbers (from which he had received calls) were switched off. All letters and images of two bank demand drafts in favour of the complainant amounting to Rs 1.27 crore and Rs 70.81 lakh, were found to be fake and forged, the EOW said.

It was found that the accused is one of the members of the gang which is involved in many such cases in various states. The police said they are making efforts to arrest other members of the gang.

TN fire department to induct women as firefighters



Chennai | Agencies

The Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue services will induct women as firefighters in its force. Braj Kishore Ravi, Director General of Police and Director of the department in a statement said that the department has already sent a proposal to the government in this regard.

He said that while the Fire and Rescue services have 22

women officers but women as firefighters have never been included in the department till now. He said that the department will provide the best training to personnel and equip them to handle any challenge. A new academy for training of Fire and Rescue services near Tambaram in Chennai is coming up to train the fire and rescue personnel involved in rescue operations and disaster management.

The academy will also train personnel from the police in the protection, rescue, and relief of people and animals during calamity. He also said that TNFRS is in the process of developing a separate dog squad for the department and has bought four pups. These pups will undergo training at the National Dog training centre in Madhya Pradesh. The trained dogs would be deployed to detect the presence of people and animals who are trapped in debris if a building collapse happens. The TNFRS will also train 1,00,000 people under the Safety Volunteers Scheme which at present has only 5000 trained volunteers. The department is also expecting these volunteers to be part of the Fire and Rescue departments response team to rescue people and animals who are under crisis during a disaster.

Y-CATEGORY SECURITY FOR K'TAKA HC JUDGES WHO GAVE HIJAB VERDICT

Bengaluru | Agencies

The Karnataka government has decided to beef up security for the High Court Judges who are part of the Special Bench that ruled against the plea for allowing Muslim girl students to wear hijab in school and college classrooms.

Karnataka government's decision comes in the wake of death threats to the judges from certain quarters in neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

Chief minister Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday said that the High Court judges who gave the verdict on the Hijab issue, will be provided with Y-category security.

Speaking to the media here on Sunday, Bommai said, "If anybody is not happy with the verdict he or she have the option of approaching the higher courts. We will not tolerate anti-national forces that threaten the rule of law in the country. Already security has been strengthened for the judges but I have instructed that they be provided with Y-category security." Bommai also questioned the silence of so-called liberals and secularists, on the threats being issued to the judges. The state police



have been instructed to seek custody of the accused and bring them to Karnataka for further investigation.

Two persons have been taken into custody in Tamil Nadu in connection with issuing death threats to the judges of Karnataka High Court who dismissed petitions demanding wearing of hijab in classrooms.

The special bench comprising the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court Ritu Raj Awasthi, Justice Krishna S. Dixit and Justice Khaji Jaibunnesa Mohiyuddin, while dismissing the petitions demanding hijab in classrooms, had underlined that wearing of hijab is not an essential part of Islam.

In Karnataka, Vidhana Soudha police in Bengaluru have booked FIRs based on the complaint by advocate Sudha Katwa. In the complaint it is mentioned that there is death threat, criminal intimidation, use of abusive language and also breach of peace and communal harmony in the state.

CISF to install body scanners at major airports soon

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is going to install body scanners at major airports in the country including Delhi and Mumbai.

According to officials, the trial run of body scanners has been conducted at Delhi, Bangalore, Cochin, Hyderabad, Pune and Chennai airports recently wherein some shortcomings were observed. "Now, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has constituted a 'technical sub-committee' to examine, evaluate and to recommend trial directives and testing protocols of Full Body Scanner," they said.

The CISF officials also said that it had tested two technologies -- backscatter X-ray and millimetre wave technology and the force has decided to adopt the latter one because of the lesser radiation emitted from it. However, the pandemic delayed the installation process and now it is a top priority of the stake-



holders, they added. The CISF has also conducted a trial run of the 'Body Worn Camera' which were conducted at Delhi and Mumbai airports. This camera records the conversation between the CISF per-

sonnel at airports and the passenger.

Citing an incident, a top official in the Force said that a passenger charged towards security personnel after being asked to remove his

shoes but his aggressiveness got subdued as he noticed a wearable camera on the body of the security personnel recording his movement.

The Force has also conducted trials of the latest scanning machines, known as CT-XBIS (Computed Tomography) for cabin baggage. This X-Ray machine or device combines Computed Tomography (CT) imaging system with advanced Explosive Detection System (EDS), which provides enhanced, real time, high resolution and three dimensional images of the object being screened at airports.

It has a feature of detecting explosives concealed in the luggage with accuracy and can highlight the same by displaying clear and sharp images, the officials said.

Following the instruction from the Ministry of Civil Aviation on biometric based digital processing of passengers at Airports called "Digi Yatra", a pilot project of Digi Yatra was conducted at Mumbai, Varanasi and Bangalore airports.

Woman raped inside public toilet in UP's Pratapgarh?

Pratapgarh (UP) | Agencies

In a shocking incident, a 20-year-old woman was allegedly raped in a toilet outside parking stand of Pratapgarh railway station.

The police have registered an FIR and investigations are underway.

Station house officer (SHO), Kotwali, R.N. Rai, said that the woman was waiting to board a train to Ahmedabad along with her husband on Saturday. However, her husband went outside to buy some food.

"Sometime later, the survivor went to a nearby washroom but seeing that it was full she returned and sat near the ticket counter," the SHO told reporters. He said that in the meantime, the accused approached and asked the



survivor, who was looking worried, if she needed any help. The survivor told the accused she was looking for a washroom. Thereafter, the accused gave the survivor key of another washroom and asked her to use it. "The survivor took the keys and as soon as she opened the locks of the toilet door, the

accused also barged inside the toilet and locked it from inside. Then they took turns to rape her. Hearing the screams of survivor, some locals rushed to help and the accused fled," the SHO added. An FIR under the charges of rape has been registered and efforts are on to nab the accused.

Man held with 25 country-made pistols in Gurugram



Gurugram | Agencies

The Gurugram Police Crime Branch unit has arrested a man with

country-made pistols from Panchgaon intersection on the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway. The police said that after a tip-off the accused Abhishek

alias Gabbar alias Kalu, a resident of Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh was arrested by the Crime Branch unit of Sector-17 from Panchgaon Chowk on the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway late on Saturday night.

"A total 25 country-made pistols and two live cartridges which were carried in a rucksack bag have been seized from his possession," the Gurugram police informed on Sunday.

During interrogation, the accused disclosed to the police that he had brought the illegal weapons from Aligarh and was to deliver in Gurugram but before that he was arrested by the Gurugram police.

BSF probing Chinese drone found on India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Border Security Force (BSF) on Sunday said that it is probing if the Chinese drone found in a farm field along the India-Bangladesh frontier in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district was being used for trans-border crimes. Officials of the BSF's South Bengal Frontier command said that a farmer from Purbapara, a village adjacent to the BSF border post Kalyani in North 24 Parganas, found a broken China-made drone in a field near the India-Bangladesh border, after which BSF security has been beefed up.

The drone was found by the farmer early on March 19 in a field just 300 metres away from the international border, the officials said.

The farmer picked up the broken drone and handed it over to the officials of the local Petrapole police station, they said.



After the recovery of the drone was reported, a BSF team from Kalyani post visited the spot to find

out more evidence but they could not find anything and the matter was reported to the local police.

The BSF officials from the South Bengal Frontier said that the officials from the Kalyani post also enquired in the nearby villages to get more information about the drone.

They also said that while central security agencies like the BSF and others, deployed along India's western border along Pakistan, have been battling with the emerging threat of drones carrying arms, ammunition and drugs or undertaking surveillance, this was probably the first time when a drone was found along the eastern border with Bangladesh. The BSF guards a total of 4,096 km of the India-Bangladesh border of which West Bengal comprises 2,217 km.

The BSF's South Bengal Frontier is responsible for 913 km in the state and this is marked by multiple riverine bodies, the mangrove area in Sunderbans and other difficult terrain areas.



12 teams to participate in the tournament

CM TO INAUGURATE OBAIDULLAH KHAN HERITAGE CUP HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Matches will be held at Major Dhyan Chand Hockey Stadium

Team Absolute | Bhopal

People of Bhopal will witness the excellent performance of 12 best hockey teams of the country for the next one week. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Yashodhara Raju Scindia will inaugurate the prestigious Obaidullah Khan Heritage Cup Hockey tournament at Major Dhyan Chand Hockey Stadium on Monday at 11:30 am.

Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Yashodhara Raju Scindia has said that it is a pleasant experience for me to restart the country's most prestigious heritage hockey tournament. Sports activities were badly affected due to Covid-19. Players will get a chance to make a comeback through this tournament. Over the years this tournament has been most popular in Madhya Pradesh. With limited resources and strong will power, we are able to start it again. The country is sure to get future champions from this tournament. In the year 1931, the Obaidullah Khan Cup hockey tournament



was started for the first time by the name Obaidullah Khan Gold Cup. The tournament was last held in 2016 under the name of Obaidullah Khan Heritage Hockey Cup, in which Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) team became the champion. Earlier in 2011, the Air India team became the champion.

The best hockey teams of the country including Indian Oil, Indian Railways,



Punjab and Sind Bank, Army XI, Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy, CNG, GST and Central Excise Chennai, Punjab Police, Indian Navy, Army Green, Central Secretariat and Madhya Pradesh Hockey Association will be taking part in the tournament from March 21-27. All the teams will showcase their talent for the prize money of Rs.11 lakh. The runner-up of the tournament will get Rs 7 lakh, winners of

the third prize will get Rs 3 lakh and the fourth prize will be Rs 1.5 lakh. In the category of individual prize, the player of the match will be given an amount of Rs 5 thousand per match. The player of the match in semi-final, final and one hard line match will be given Rs 10,000 per match. Apart from this, Player of the Tournament, Best Goalkeeper, Best Deep Defender, Best Midfielder, Best Forward will be given cash prizes of Rs 10,000 each. The Sports and Youth Welfare Department will make arrangements for accommodation, food and local transport for all the teams.

Lav Kumar Kanojia (Captain), Hemant Dhanraj Singh (Goalkeeper), Aman Khan (Goalkeeper), Telam Priyabarta, Saurabh Pashine, Kashif Khan, Sundaram Singh Rajawat, Anil, Saddam Ahmed, Konan Dad, Himanshu Sainik, Rajat, Deepak Sharma, Haider Ali, Shrey Dubey, Ali Ahmed, Mudassar Qureshi and Tounganajam Ingalemba Luwang is included in team. The head coach of the team is Shri Sameer Dad, assistant coach Shri Lokendra Sharma and the manager is Habib Hasan.

MBBS STUDENTS TO DOUBLE AS MENTORS OF ADIVASI CHILDREN

In a novel initiative, medical students in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol division have started mentoring tribal children to improve their standard of education.

College. Talking to IANS, Sharma said: "I have prepared a plan for the better results of these children studying in class 12. I have also discussed my proposal with the dean and professors at the medical college, after which I interacted with the school education department. The medical students are ready to guide the school children." According to Sharma there is abundance of talent in Madhya Pradesh, but due to lack of guidance, these tribal kids are unable to achieve their goals.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In a novel initiative, medical students in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol division have started mentoring tribal children to improve their standard of education.

With their parents being illiterate or having only basic education, children from the tribal communities in most parts of Madhya Pradesh are deprived of proper guidance at home, which is why they often flock to other states to prepare for competitive exams. Divisional Commissioner Rajiv Sharma has launched an initiative to ensure that these children stay in their hometown and get better guidance. The 12th grade students, who aspire to become doctors, will be prepared for the NEET exam by medical students studying MBBS at Shahdol Medical

"Keeping this in mind, I have planned to guide the school students for the NEET exam. Efforts will also be made to provide timely guidance to the children studying in class 8 and 10, in the future," he said. Sharing details of the scheme, Sharma said that on March 23, a dialogue between the class 12 science students and the MBBS students will be held at the Shahdol Medical School auditorium, after which the medical students will spread across various schools for tutoring them. This will help the capable kids to acquire the skills required to ace NEET. "It is being considered a new beginning at the administrative level."

Complete Pre-Monsoon Maintenance of Transmission Lines and Sub-stations by May

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Transco Managing Director Engg. Sumil Tiwari instructed in the review meeting of Transco held at Jabalpur headquarters that all the works of pre-monsoon maintenance of lines and sub-stations should be completed compulsorily by the month of May. There should be no interruption of any kind in the state due to the transmission company during

monsoon. Instructions were also given to use new ultramodern technology for effective monitoring and excellent maintenance of very high pressure lines of the company. With this, 24X7 power supply will be ensured to the consumers as per the intention of the state government. In the meeting, the Managing Director said that no personnel should hesitate in adopting innovation. Apart from routine tasks, the personnel should share their

ideas so that Transco can implement necessary innovations over time. Tiwari instructed in the meeting that all the construction works of the company should be done with proper quality and highest standards. Circle level officers should do continuous monitoring. He also directed to do all the civil works of the construction division before monsoon so that the preparation of Transco for the next Rabi season can be done in time after the rains.

50 Prisoners In Bhopal Central Jail Receive Training To Become Priests

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The prisoners of the Bhopal Central jail are taking lessons so that they are able to perform ritual practices and earn an honourable living once they are released from the jail. Gayatri Shaktipith of Bhopal under its programme namely 'Yug Purohit' is training 50 prisoners who are serving sentences for heinous crimes. Notably, this is not compulsory training, only those interested in the Vedic Rituals and aim to give a good message to the society through these rituals are allowed to learn. Sadanand Amrekar one of the priests and also a member of Gayatri

Shaktipith shared his vision about the programme. Giving details about the 'Yug Purohit' training he said, "We are training these prisoners as they are cloistered from society. They are being taught the rituals so that they can work for the well-being of the people. We want them to go back to society as humane and virtuous people. The priest training has been conducted with the aim of establishing oneself as a good person in the society and the meaning of Purohit is taking care of others. There are 50 prisoners as of now, to whom we have selected after the talking to them. We have selected them on their eligibility, ability to learn and keen interest to learn rituals. The

training session will end on March 28." Bhopal Central Jail Superintendent Dinesh Nargave revealed that the Gayatri Shaktipith has also worked with jail inmates in the past, and training of the priests have helped the inmates to be socially and morally uplifted. "Prisoners in jails are either in depression or in aggression. Most of them are semi-literate and poor. We felt the need of training prisoners so that they feel the positive energy around them. 50-60 prisoners who were willing to learn are being trained," he added. Sandeep Pawar who is serving a sentence in the central jail on the charge of murder claimed that he has achieved a sense of calmness

through this training and added that it has also helped him to stress. Praising the training provided in the jail, Sandeep Pawar said, "I'm imprisoned for murder. We are being taught to propagate virtues of love and camaraderie along with spiritual education and rituals. Earlier we used to be stressed but after the training, there's a sense of calmness and we do feel like a part of the society. I am feeling very good, earlier the mind used to be restless and it seemed that negativity was there in the jail, but ever since I have been associated with the session, now it is very peaceful and we feel that we are also a part of the society."

CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO VEERANGANA AVANTI BAI LODHI ON HER DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday paid homage to Veerangana Avanti Bai Lodhi on her death anniversary. Chouhan paid floral tributes to Veerangana Avanti Bai Lodhi in the auditorium at his residence office.



Chief Minister also remembered the contribution of Veerangana Avanti Bai Lodhi in the freedom movement. Rani Avanti Bai Lodhi was active in the revolt of 1857. Rani Avanti Bai, who became the architect of the liberation movement in Rewanchal, was the first female martyr. She fought continuously with the British. The British had to bow before her courage. Mandla and Ramgarh states became independent. The British sent troops from Nagpur to Ramgarh. Rani Avanti Bai's army was much smaller than the British army. The British army surrounded Rani Avanti Bai, who stood on the front. The queen was forced to give her life by stabbing her in the chest. She chose the honourable option instead of dying at the hands of the British. Rani Avanti Bai did the work of igniting the flame of independence by making sacrifice to protect her subjects. The Central Government also issued a postage stamp on March 20, 1988 in the memory of Veerangana Rani Avanti Bai.

CM EXPRESSES GRIEF OVER ACCIDENTS IN UMARIA AND ANUPPUR

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed deep grief over the tragic accidents in Manpur of Umaria district and Anuppur district. It is noteworthy that three youths, residents of Manpur in Umaria district, drowned at Ramdaha waterfall while celebrating a picnic and three innocent children died due to drowning at Sitapur sand mine in Anuppur district.

Describing both the accidents as sad, Chouhan has prayed to God to give peace to the souls of the deceased and strength to their families to bear the loss. Chief Minister Chouhan has directed the concerned administrative officers to provide necessary assistance to the affected families.

CM GRIEF OVER THE DEATH OF SENIOR JOURNALIST AND FREEDOM FIGHTER

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed profound grief over the sudden demise of senior journalist and freedom fighter of Vindhya region Late Chandrakant Shukla. He said that Pandit Chandrakant Shukla, the father of journalism, was awarded the Vindhya Shikhar Samman by the Speaker of the Vidhan Sabha, Girish Gautam on September 19, 2021 for his remarkable contribution in the field of journalism. Late Shukla was the nephew of Shambhunath Shukla who was the first Chief Minister of Vindhya Pradesh. Chouhan has prayed to God to grant peace to the departed soul and strength to the bereaved family to bear this loss.

Chief Minister Planted Pink Cassia and Karanj Saplings in Smart Garden

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Karanj and Pink Cassia in Smart Garden today. Dilip Raghuvanshi, Harish Chaturvedi, Nitesh Raghuvanshi of Narmada Seva Samiti Sanstha and farmer and social worker of Mandla Sandeep Lohan also planted saplings along with Chief Minister Chouhan.

The organisation has helped more than 25 thousand patients through continuous free camps since the year 2010. Every year, during the rainy season, the organisation also holds tree plantation programmes by connecting with the general public.

The organisation cleaned public places, schools, localities, markets by running cleanliness campaigns in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Motivated the children and the general public for cleanliness by writing cleanliness slogans on the walls. By taking oath of cleanliness, people were motivated to throw garbage in dustbins and keep dustbins in homes and shops. The



organisation is continuously working for human welfare and environment by working among the common people. The bark and leaves of Pink Cassia

planted today are used in making Ayurvedic medicines. Karanj is considered important in Ayurvedic medicine. Karanj is also used in religious ceremonies.

1 dead, 40 injured in communal clash

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A 25-year-old man was killed and at least 40 people were injured in a clash between tribal and Muslim communities in Raisen district on Friday night, police said.

Police said the district administration has invoked prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPc in the area. So far, 13 people, all Muslims, have been arrested after an FIR was registered against 16, police said. The clash erupted between two groups over a Muslim man riding a two-wheeler at high speed. "A local resident Javed Mansuri, along with his sister, was riding through a place where a few tribals were playing Holi on Friday afternoon," said Deepika Suri, IGP, Raisen. "Some members of the tribal community abused Mansuri and threatened them for riding the bike

at a high speed. Later, Mansuri returned with six others and beat up a few tribals. At 8pm, at least 500 people from the tribal community gathered in the village and clashes erupted between the two communities," the officer added. In the clashes, a tribal youth, identified as Raju Adiwasi, (25) was shot dead while two others were seriously injured and a man lost his vision due to an eye injury, the IG said. "As of now, the case has been registered against Muslim community only but we have received a complaint from Muslim community," said the IG.

A local resident, however, refuted the allegations. "The tribal men were in intoxicated state while celebrating Holi and tried to put colour on Javed Mansuri forcefully. This led to the clashes," the resident told HT, requesting anonymity.

SUGGESTIONS INVITED FROM CITIZENS FOR BETTER IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC WELFARE SCHEMES

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Public participation has been ensured in making various schemes and programmes run by the state government more effective and beneficial for the welfare of the people. Various Groups of Ministers (GoMs) have been constituted for the purpose of improving the schemes and programmes. Suggestions have been invited from the general public on mp.mygov.in portal to give suggestions to the GoMs. These suggestions can be given till March 25, 2022.

Culture and Tourism Minister Usha Thakur, Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav, Revenue and Transport Minister Govind Singh Rajput and Minister of State for Horticulture and Food Processing (Independent Charge) Bharat Singh Kushwaha have been included in the Group of Ministers constituted to effectively restart Mukhyamantri Teerth Darshan Yojana. Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silavat, Farmers- Welfare and Agriculture Minister Kamal Patel and Animal Husbandry Minister Prem Singh Patel have

been included in the Group of Ministers constituted to prepare the detailed process and framework of the Kanya-Vivah Yojana.

Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang, Tribal Welfare and Scheduled Caste Welfare Minister Meena Singh Mandve, Farmers- Welfare and Agriculture Development Minister Kamal Patel and Tourism and Culture Minister Thakur have been included in the Group of Ministers for making the plan for the beneficiaries of the Ladli Lakshmi Yojana. Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Minister Bisahul Singh, Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar, Cooperatives and Public Service Management Minister Arvind Singh Bhadauria and Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Horticulture and Food Processing Shri Bharat Singh Kushwaha has been included in the Group of Ministers constituted to effectively keep the system of distribution of ration to the citizens of the state in front of the public.

Minister of Industrial Policy and Investment Promotion Rajvardhan Singh, Minister of State for School Education (Independent Charge) and Minister of State

for General Administration Inder Singh Parmar, Minister of State for AYUSH (Independent Charge) and Minister of State for Water Resources Ram Kishore Kawre and Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Horticulture and Food Processing Bharat Singh Kushwaha have been included in the Group of Ministers constituted for effective promotion and implementation of CM Rise Yojana. Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silawat, Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang, Public Health and Family Welfare Minister Prabhuram Choudhary, Backward Classes and Minorities Welfare Minister Ramkhelawan Patel and Minister of State for Public Works Suresh Dhakad have been included in the Group of Ministers constituted to effectively implement the schemes of Public Health and Family Welfare Department.

Public Works Minister Gopal Bhargava, Finance and Commercial Taxes Minister Jagdish Deora, Minister of State for Public Health Engineering Brijendra Singh Yadav and New and Renewable Energy Minister Hardeep Singh Dang have been included in the Group of Ministers constituted to publi-

cize the Jal Jeevan Mission. Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Minister Bisahul Singh and Tribal Welfare and Scheduled Caste Welfare Minister Meena Mandve have been included in the Group of Ministers constituted for the scheme on the subject of Scheduled Tribes.

Finance and Commercial Taxes Minister Jagdish Deora, Animal Husbandry Minister Prem Singh Patel and Public Health and Family Welfare Minister Prabhuram Choudhary are included in the Group of Ministers constituted for the scheme related to Scheduled Castes group.

Public Works Minister Gopal Bhargava, Forest Minister Kunwar Vijay Shah, Urban Development and Housing Minister Bhupendra Singh, Tribal Welfare and Scheduled Castes Welfare Minister, Meena Singh Mandve, Mineral Resources Minister Brijendra Pratap Singh and Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Mahendra Singh Sisodia have been included in the Group of Ministers constituted for sand arrangement for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana houses.



EDITOR'S SPECS

SCHEMES FOR WOMEN IN UP

The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh, in its second term, will focus on the upliftment of women living below the poverty line in the next five years. The government has finalised the draft of the 'flour-spice mills' scheme. Immediately after the formation of the government, the Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation will start extending the benefits of this scheme to women of the state. Under the scheme, women will be given the grant to set up a flour and spice mill unit. Along with giving them employment opportunities, the government will also ensure to make them strong to take care of their families. Under the scheme of the government, as many as 125 women from each district of 18 divisional headquarters of the state will be benefited. A total of 2,250 women will be able to establish their flour-masala mill unit under the scheme. An amount of Rs 20,000 will be given to each woman for setting up the unit. In this, Rs 10,000 will be given as a grant and the remaining amount will be given as an interest-free loan from special central assistance. Starting this scheme as a pilot project from two districts, 17 women beneficiaries have also been selected. In the rest of the districts, preparations for connecting women to the scheme will be started more rapidly. In the last five years, the state government has made sincere efforts to make women living below the poverty line self-reliant and employed and to establish their planetary industries. Now, after the formation of the new government, these efforts will be implemented more rapidly in the villages.

NEED TO DE-COMMUNALISE RELIGION

D.C. Pathak

In a democracy, all citizens are on the same footing in the eyes of the state in terms of freedom of religion, equality of civic rights and grant of electoral choice at the time of political contests, whether for Parliament, Assembly or local bodies. A citizen lives in three dimensions of his or her temporal existence -- personal, social and political. Freedom of religion or right to worship defines the relationship of a man with his God -- this is direct and totally personal and not in need of a third party intervention. Sufism paid a heavy price in its initial years for suggesting that 'Saints' and 'Pirs' had the element of 'holiness' and a certain capacity to fulfil desires -- both these were considered an anathema in Islam which believed in a very fundamental way that there was a complete separation between God and a human being and that no 'divine' attributes could be assigned to a person. Ultimately, Sufism found a place within the Islamic umbrella by reaffirming the Unity of God or 'Tawhid' and accepting that the 'Sufi Saints' were only providing 'Waseela' or proximity for a better understanding of the ultimate reality. While religion decides the relationship of man with God, culture determines the behaviour of a man with others in society. Hopefully, religion is supposed to influence the social conduct of a person in the direction of maintaining harmony and spirit of tolerance towards people of other religious beliefs. There is no problem about religion so long as 'religious practices' performed in the open do not cause inconvenience to other sections of society, do not violate civil laws and do not flaunt 'superiority' of one belief system over others. Religion should not carry its 'exclusivism' to social relationships and should certainly not extend this to the political realm by say asking for a separate electorate or separate political treatment in violation of the fundamental principle of equality of all citizens on which democracy rests. What is happening is that the Ulema and the elite trying to lead the Muslim minority are projecting religion not only into politics, but also extending it more and more into social conduct by demanding the right to offer Namaz in large gatherings at public places, upholding the option of not standing during the singing of national anthem and now projecting the compulsory use of Hijab by Muslim girl students for covering their face as a mandate of Islam.



Quran does call for women to dress up so as to maintain their modesty but as the Karnataka High Court has pronounced, Hijab is not a part of fundamental injunctions of religion defined by the five Arkan or pillars of Islam. The high court has also given weightage to the factors of public order as well as unity and integrity of the country in upholding the right of an institution to prescribe a dress code. The application of the crucial religious practices and the principles of liberty and 'diversity' in the enforcement of institutional discipline by colleges will no doubt be settled finally by the Supreme Court. It can also be said that by opposing a secular directive of an autonomous educational institution about the wearing of school uniform, the leaders of the minority community are pushing the religious identity into the classroom and creating in Muslim girls a psyche of vulnerability in these times when women are successfully competing with men in all walks of life. All communities have paternalistic tendencies but can it be said that a clear mention in Quran that 'men are in charge of women' leads to the Ulema countering any measures that promoted a sense of independence amongst women? What is important in all of this is the evident encouragement to social exclusivism as a facilitator of political separatism. The latter was an instrument for gaining numbers in elections where caste and community appeals still remained a persistent factor in this country.

There has to be a fuller recognition of the built-in secularism that the democratic state of India demonstrated through the three point framework of 'one man one vote', equality of opportunity as also an equal protection of law and the constitutional mandate that no government will carry a denominational stamp. Too much of minority politics could lead to a change in the voting response of many members of the majority community as well - this was seemingly the case in the recent Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh which the BJP was winning on the strength of performance, in any case. The day to day concerns of livelihood and family affairs are the same for all Indians regardless of their community and the domestic polity should move towards development for all and a legitimate degree of welfare through schemes for the common man. The communal divide here is encouraging a hostile Pakistan to fish in our troubled waters by projecting Indo-Pak relations in the Hindu-Muslim framework. All Indians -- leadership of the minority community in particular -- would do well to counter this by highlighting the fact that in our democratic dispensation, all citizens have the right to demand -- individually or collectively -- fulfilment of their legitimate aspirations from the government of the day. The internal security situation is now threatened even more because the Sino-Pak axis is particularly active against India following the abolition of Article 370 of

the Constitution by the Parliament in August 2019 and creation of two separate Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir out of the erstwhile state. China and Pakistan are now concertedly opposing India's action and China is actively supporting Pakistan on various issues, including Afghanistan, Kashmir and terrorism. While China has stepped up its aggressive moves on the border in Arunachal Pradesh, Pakistan has intensified cross-border terrorism in Kashmir. Pakistan has taken to raising questions of treatment of Muslim minority in India, actively encouraging protagonists of Khalistan movement and directly attacking the Narendra Modi regime for allegedly pursuing a Hindu agenda -- Pakistan PM Imran Khan going on record to declare that "the pro-Hindu policies of Modi government had put the position of Muslim minority in India in jeopardy". The action of the Pakistan government in summoning the Indian Charge d'Affairs to its foreign ministry at Islamabad to convey 'deep concern' over the 'ban on Hijab' imposed on Muslim girls in parts of Karnataka confirms that Pakistan is determined to foment communal divide in India as a plank of its foreign policy. The leadership of the Muslim minority here should take note of this and not let any domestic issue be used by India's adversaries to their advantage. Leaders of the Valley-based political parties of Kashmir and their allies at the Centre at that time, including the Congress, took a politically-coloured view of the inexcusable violence of Islamic militants that had driven the Kashmiri Pandits out of the Valley in 1990 -- it is known that Pak ISI was behind this plan of making the Valley a totally Muslim territory. These parties always refused to name Pakistan for cross-border terrorism and what is worse, they are even now advocating that Pakistan had a case on Kashmir and should be engaged in talks. India cannot disregard the doings of Pakistani agents and acolytes in the present situation when newer forms of 'covert' offensives are making their appearance, including the play of 'proxy politics' by sponsored public for working with anti-India lobbies at home and abroad.

(The writer is a former Director of Intelligence Bureau. The views expressed are personal)

international

Fire breaks out in Pakistan ammunition shed

Islamabad | Agencies

A fire broke out in an ammunition shed in Sialkot district in Pakistan's Punjab province, the military said on Sunday. The fire erupted in the ammunition depot near the Sialkot garrison due to short circuiting, according to the military's media wing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The damage was immediately contained and the fire was extinguished, the ISPR said in a statement, adding that no damage to property or loss of life has occurred, reports Xinhua news agency. Sialkot



District Police Officer Umar Saeed Malik told local media that the fire erupted early Sunday morning in the military area of the district, after which several blasts occurred, leading to panic among local residents.

PUTIN NOT WILLING TO MEET ZELENSKY, SAYS TURKEY

Kiev | Ankara

Turkey, which is trying hard to bring Moscow and Kiev to the negotiating table in an effort to end the ongoing war, has said that Russian President Vladimir Putin is still not willing to meet his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky. Speaking to local media outlets, Ibrahim Kalin, a government spokesman in Ankara, said that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has proposed a meeting between the leaders of the two warring nations in Turkey in an effort to end the ongoing war, reports Ukrayinska Pravda. "Zelensky is ready to do this. Putin, by contrast, believes that the parties have not yet reached a common vision sufficient to conduct negotiations at the head-of-state level," Kalin was quoted as saying. According to the spokesman, in Erdogan's proposed meeting, the main point of focus will be on a possible compromise between Ukraine



and Russia, after which detailed negotiations on the agreement will continue. Kalin said that Putin, during a conversation with Erdogan, put forward six main points, which were Ukraine's neutrality and refusal to join NATO in future; 'demilitarisation' and mutual provision of security guarantees according to the Austrian security model; de-nazification; removal of "obstacles" to the widespread use of the Russian language; status recognition of the

"Donetsk People's Republic", "Luhansk People's Republic"; and recognition of Russia's annexation of Crimea. According to the spokesman, the Ukrainian delegation apparently discussed the first four points with the Russians, but is not prepared even to discuss the fifth and sixth, Ukrayinska Pravda reported. Therefore, Turkey is hoping to organise the meeting between Putin and Zelensky after which further progress can be

made in the negotiations. Kalin further said that neither Ukraine nor the world community is likely to easily agree to the recognition of Russia's occupation of Crimea and the Donbas region, which comprised Luhansk and Donetsk, as "this is a flagrant violation of international law". He added that Russia was trying to negotiate from a position of strength, but "it should not be forgotten that the continuation of the war will primarily hit the Russian army and economy". On March 10, under Turkey's initiative, a tripartite meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Moscow, Kiev and Ankara took place in Antalya. However, no progress was achieved on a truce. Russian authorities on March 16 announced their readiness to continue negotiations with Ukraine in the tripartite format. Earlier this month, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov had assured that Russia was not against personal talks between Zelensky and Putin.

OVER 40% NEW COVID CASES GLOBALLY IN AREAS NEIGHBOURING CHINA

Beijing: China is facing mounting pressure to guard against imported infections as new confirmed Covid-19 cases have rebounded globally in the past week with more than 40 per cent of cases appearing in areas surrounding China, according to China's National Health Commission (NHC) at a press conference, Global Times reported.



In particular, since the beginning of this year, the epidemic situation in China's neighbouring countries and regions has been increasingly volatile. Since March this year, the average number of daily imported cases in China has exceeded 200. From March 1 to 18, more than 29,000 Covid-19 cases were reported across 28 provinces and regions in China, including more than 10,000 cases in one province of Jilin, according to officials at the press conference. "On the whole, the local epidemic situation in China is still in the development stage, and many provinces and regions are fighting against the Omicron epidemic in multiple cities at the same time," the official said, noting that the national epidemic prevention and control situation remains grim and complex. Citing global statistics which showed that the average age of death of Covid-19 patients is over 70 years old, the NHC stressed the rate of vaccination among the elderly should be further raised.

Putin is trapped in a closed world of his own making, Western spies believe

Russian President Vladimir Putin is trapped in a closed world of his own making, Western spies believe and that worries them.

London | Agencies

Russian President Vladimir Putin is trapped in a closed world of his own making, Western spies believe and that worries them. For years they have sought to get inside Putin's mind, to better understand his intentions, the BBC said in a report. There has been speculation that Russia's leader was ill, but many analysts believe he has actually become isolated and closed off to any alternative views. His isolation has been evident in pictures of his meetings, such as when he met President Emmanuel Macron. The leaders were seated at far ends of a long table. It was also evident in Putin's meeting with his own national security team on the eve of the war. Putin's initial military plan looked like something devised by a KGB officer, one western intelligence official explains, the BBC reported. It had been created, they say, by a



tight "conspiratorial cabal" with an emphasis on secrecy. But the result was chaos. Russian military commanders were not ready and some soldiers went over the border without knowing what they were doing. "The challenge of understanding the Kremlin's moves is that Putin is the single decision-maker in Moscow," explains John Sipher, who formerly ran

the CIA's Russia operations. Putin, intelligence officials say, is isolated in a bubble of his own making, which very little outside information penetrates, particularly any which might challenge what he thinks. "He is a victim of his own propaganda in the sense that he only listens to a certain number of people and blocks out everything else. This gives him a strange view of the world," says Adrian Furnham, a professor of psychology and co-author of a forthcoming book "The Psychology of Spies and Spying". The risk is what is called "group think" in which everyone reinforces his view. "If he's a victim of group think we need to know who the group is," the BBC quoted Prof Furnham as saying. The circle of those Putin talks to has never been large but when it came to the decision to invade Ukraine, it had narrowed to just a handful of people, Western intelligence officials believe, all of those "true believers" who share Putin's mindset and obsessions.

PAKISTAN OPPN BACKTRACKS ON THREAT TO BLOCK OIC SUMMIT

Islamabad: The Pakistan joint opposition has backtracked on its threat to block the Organisation of Islamic cooperation (OIC) Foreign Ministers' summit in Islamabad over the government's alleged plans to delay a vote on the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan. Samaa TV reported. In a statement issued on Saturday shortly after Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari warned the government of a sit-in, the joint opposition said that it would not allow Pakistan's internal political situation and political wrangling to affect the OIC meetings. The joint opposition said that welcomes the OIC Foreign Ministers and delegates to Pakistan and assured that it would play its role to make their stay memorable and pleasant. Earlier, the joint opposition had asked the National Assembly Speaker to allow it to table the no-confidence motion against Khan on Monday, instead of adjourning the session for several days. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Shehbaz Sharif, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam's Fazlur Rehman and other leaders addressed the press conference after a key meeting of the opposition parties at the Islamabad residence of Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday. They warned the National Assembly speakers that if he adjourned the NA session citing the OIC foreign minister conference, the opposition members will stage a sit-in in the National Assembly hall. "We will see how you convene the OIC conference," said Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. The OIC conference is scheduled to be held in the same hall on March 22-23. NA Speaker Asad Qaiser was quoted by Geo News on Friday as saying that he has the power to postpone the NA session for an indefinite period, sparking fears among opposition that the speaker may not allow them to move the no-trust motion. However, a spokesperson later said the speaker had said nothing to that effect.



I-T DEPT RAIDS MAHA-BASED UNICORN, UNEARTHES RS 224 CR BLACK MONEY

The Income Tax Department on Sunday said that it has conducted a search and seizure operation on a Pune and Thane based unicorn, and has found evidence of undisclosed income of Rs 224 crore.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Income Tax Department on Sunday said that it has conducted a search and seizure operation on a Pune and Thane based unicorn, and has found evidence of undisclosed income of Rs 224 crore. The I-T department found evidences of foreign funding and a hawala network of Mumbai and Thane based shell companies. It has so far seized Rs 1 crore cash and jewellery worth Rs 22 lakh in

the raid. The group is primarily engaged in the business of wholesale and retail of construction material and has pan India presence having annual turnover exceeding Rs 6,000 crore. A total of 23 premises were covered in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, in the search operation. A large number of incriminating evidences in the form of hard copy documents and digital data were found which were later seized by the IT team during the search operation.

These evidences revealed that the group has booked bogus purchases, made huge unaccounted cash expenditure and obtained accommodation entries, aggregating to the tune of over Rs 400 crore. These evidences were confronted to the Directors of the group, who admitted under oath this modus operandi, disclosed additional income of more than Rs 224 crore in various assessment years, and consequently offered to pay their due tax liability. The search action also revealed that the group had obtained huge

foreign funding via Mauritius route, by issuing shares at exorbitantly high premium. During the search operation, a complex hawala network of some Mumbai and Thane based shell companies, was also unearthed. These shell companies exist on paper, and were created only for the purpose of providing accommodation entries. Preliminary analysis has revealed that the total quantum of accommodation entries provided by these shell entities exceeds Rs 1,500 crore. Further investigations in the matter is underway.

Counter BJP in every village: CM Thackeray to Shiv Sainiks

On Friday, Sharad Pawar had advised the young leaders of the NCP to fiercely counter the false narrative set by the opposition both within and outside the House. He also assured the young leaders that the government will complete its full term and asked the MLAs to focus on development works in their constituencies.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Days after NCP chief Sharad Pawar asked young MLAs of Maha Vikas Aghadi to fiercely counter the "false narrative" of the BJP both within and outside the House, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday directed Shiv Sainiks to confront the saffron party in every village of the state. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) success in the recently concluded assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur has made it more aggressive with political analysts saying that the saffron party may make a serious effort to dislodge the MVA government. Uddhav has asked his party to destroy all attempts to malign Shiv Sena's saffron. Maharashtra is bursting with Hindutva, he said. The CM also said that he would soon visit the various constituencies in the state soon and said that the Shiv Sena must prepare to counter the BJP in all those

seats where it has won. The BJP created a narrative in Uttar Pradesh that Hindus are in danger, Uddhav said and told his party workers to visit villages and propagate the views of Shiv Sena to counter the BJP. On Friday, NCP supremo Sharad Pawar had advised the young leaders of his party to fiercely counter the false narrative set by the BJP both within and outside the House and also assured the young leaders that the government will complete its full term. Responding to this, NCP leaders pledged to effectively combat the BJP not only in their own constituencies, but also in their respective districts and regions. On Saturday, Union Minister Bhagwat Karad said that MVA MLAs in Maharashtra should join the BJP as the ruling alliance is beset with corruption. There are corruption allegations against several MVA ministers and in such a scenario, a government of three parties cannot bring about progress, for that Maharashtra BJP government, he added.

Do not politicise sensitive issue like Kashmir by using film: MVA

As the politics on 'The Kashmir Files' has heated up, the partners in Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra -- Shiv Sena and NCP -- have slammed the BJP for using it for political gains.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As the politics on 'The Kashmir Files' has heated up, the partners in Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra -- Shiv Sena and NCP -- have slammed the BJP for using it for political gains. Majeed Memon, NCP leader in a tweet on Sunday said, "Films are not exact narration of true event of history. They are based upon fiction, fantasy and imaginary stories. It is irony that attempts are being made to foisted on people depiction of concocted historical events as true." The Shiv Sena accused the BJP of using it for making

gains in the forthcoming elections. Party spokesperson Sanjay Raut talking to reporters said, "Its not correct to use sensitive issue like Kashmir for politics as 'The Kashmir Files' is just a film, it won't provide any political advantage to anyone." The BJP has hit out at the opposition, and its national general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh has said that it is better to leave the narrative and conversation to take shape on their own. Quoting a tweet by Ramesh, Santhosh said, "Leave the narrative & conversation to take shape on their own. Kashmir Files has initiated a conversation. Let it build up. Let's see it will be hate or pain or unfoldment of

truth or something else. You branded in the same way many developments post independence." On Saturday, Ramesh tweeted, "Some films inspire change. Kashmir Files incites hate. Truth can lead to justice, rehabilitation, reconciliation & peace. Propaganda twists facts, distorts history to whip up anger & promote violence. Statesmen heal wounds. Pracharaks exploit fear and prejudice to divide & rule." Director of the movie, Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri tweeted, "Why don't we Jairam_RameshA ji. public will get to know your point of view also. A film should start conversations and I would be too happy to take the lead."

'The Kashmir Files' producer Abhishek Agarwal: We intend to bring out truth, not hatred

As 'The Kashmir Files' is receiving huge audience appreciation while minting money at the box office, and even Prime Minister Narendra Modi showered praise on the film, its producer Abhishek Agarwal explains how the film intends to bring out the truth and not incite hatred against any community.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As 'The Kashmir Files' is receiving huge audience appreciation while minting money at the box office, and even Prime Minister Narendra Modi showered praise on the film, its producer Abhishek Agarwal explains how the film intends to bring out the truth and not incite hatred against any community. The film is based on the real-life incidents of the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits and the makers emphasised to call it a 'genocide', even as a section of people have questioned the timing of the film.



Considering the fact that in the last few years, society has become polarised and hatred against the Muslim community has increased, the possibility increases of fuelling more hatred against Muslims through the film. Addressing the point, in conversation with IANS, Abhishek, the producer of the film explained, "I dis-

agree on that point. We intended to bring out the truth that was ignored for the last 32 years. Bringing out the truth to people does not mean we are generating hatred against Muslims. Kashmiri Pandit community was brutally killed and forced to flee from their land by the terrorists. "They were trained terrorists, their minds were radicalised. A terrorist

cannot have any religion. I look at the matter this way, a bunch of terrorists who happened to be Muslims, killed Kashmiri Pandits. We have shown the truth in the film." The film, directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri, is based on extensive research work, a collection of several testimonies by the first-generation victims of the exodus that took place in Kashmir in 1990. Asked about how he came on board as producer for the film, Abhishek shared, "Post the abrogation of Article 370, I wanted to make a film on the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. I just realised that even though there are several references of Kashmir in our cinema, one of the most important parts of our history hasn't been shown in our films. "When I decided to make the film, and also got to know that Vivek ji is already doing research on the film, we had a conversation and decided that instead of making two films, let's make one proper film and reach out to the widest audience possible." The film featuring - Mithun Chakraborty, Anupam Kher, Chinmay Mandlekar, Darshan Kumar, Prakash Belawadi, Puneet Issar, Pallavi Joshi, and Bhasha Sumbli - released in theatres on March 11.

Maharashtra: Covid situation eases but dramatic change likely, warns official

The Covid-19 situation is currently comfortable now in Maharashtra but it may change "dramatically" over the next few weeks amid the emergence of a new variant of the Coronavirus, a top health official warned here on Saturday.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Covid-19 situation is currently comfortable now in Maharashtra but it may change "dramatically" over the next few weeks amid the emergence of a new variant of the Coronavirus, a top health official warned here on Saturday. Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Dr. Pradeep Vyas said that while almost all restrictions have been

relaxed in the state, some new variants are suspected to be fuelling infections in Israel and other countries. Simultaneously, Health Minister Rajesh Tope hinted at the possibility of a fourth wave of Covid, sparking fresh concerns in various quarters. In a precautionary issued to all Collectors, Municipal

Commissioners, Zilla Parishad CEOs and others, Vyas said that the state now has less than 2,000 'active cases' which is a good sign, but "we need to be alert". He pointed out that Covid cases are now steadily rising in different parts of the world, including China and Europe with a weekly growth of 8-10 per cent and more than 11 million per

week. "Though at present we are quite comfortable with only around 2,000 'active' Covid cases, but situation may change dramatically over the next few weeks," Vyas said. He reiterated the need to prevent crowding, wearing masks, alertness in identifying clusters of SARI and ILI cases and increasing their surveillance, besides to catching up on vaccination as the state is below the national average. Dwelling on the current global scenario, Vyas said in the past 24 hours, some countries recorded the highest ever new Covid cases since the beginning of the pandemic two years ago. South Korea reported 621,000 new cases in a day, Germany 262,000 and UK 84,000 cases daily, and, in comparison, the state had recorded the highest figure of around 68,000 new cases in a day during the second wave (early-2021), indicating the extent of infections presently in different countries.

As raw material costs skyrocket, builders threaten to halt construction

The apex body of over 3,000 builders in Maharashtra, CREDAI, on Saturday threatened to stop work at its construction sites owing to the steep rise in rates of building materials which may directly impact the prices of flats and delay the possession schedules promised to the buyers

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The apex body of over 3,000 builders in Maharashtra, CREDAI, on Saturday threatened to stop work at its construction sites owing to the steep rise in rates of building materials which may directly impact the prices of flats and delay the possession schedules promised to the buyers. In a strong statement, CREDAI Maharashtra President Sunil Furde said that the prices of cement, steel, sand, bricks and all other necessary building materials have been steadily escalating since over a year and have now skyrocketed to unaffordable levels. The prices of steel -- the most important building compo-

nent -- has doubled from Rs 42,000 per tonne to Rs 85,000 per tonne now, cement bags have shot up from Rs 260 to Rs 400, cost of four-inch brick has increased from Rs 6,500/1K to Rs 8,000/1K, sand has escalated from Rs 6,000/brass to Rs 7,500/brass, while wash sand has gone up from Rs 3,800/brass to Rs 4,800/brass, Furde said. "Besides, the cost of all other materials like electric wires, fittings, tiles, pipes, sanitary-ware, fabrications, secondary minerals, and labour charges have also shot up by around 40 per cent. With such high rates, we cannot afford to build houses. So all CREDAI Maharashtra members are planning to shut down all building activities," he said. The CREDAI has shot off a

letter to the Maharashtra government, including Deputy CM and Finance Minister Ajit Pawar and Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat, seeking to verify whether the increase in raw material costs "is natural or due to hoarding for profiteering during the pandemic lockdown period. to extend the completion deadline for the closed projects. In Mumbai, Pune, Thane and Nagpur from April 1 will further hit consumers planning to buy a house, and urged the state government to reconsider or defer the move by at least two years. CREDAI - barring the MCHI in Mumbai - has a total of over 3,000 big and small realtors as members spread across 61 cities and urban centres in the state.

FIR LODGED IN NASHIK AGAINST ASHOK GEHLOT'S SON FOR ALLEGED FRAUD

An FIR has been registered against Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's son Vaibhav Gehlot, who's also the President of Rajasthan Cricket Association (RCA), in Maharashtra's Nashik district in connection with an alleged cheating case.



Jaipur | Agencies

An FIR has been registered against Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's son Vaibhav Gehlot, who's also the President of Rajasthan Cricket Association (RCA), in Maharashtra's Nashik district in connection with an alleged cheating case.

A Nashik businessman, Sushil Bhalchandra Patil, has accused

Vaibhav Gehlot of committing a fraud of Rs 6.80 crore on the pretext of securing tenders in government depart-

ments, including for e-toilets under the tourism department of Maharashtra. Patil lodged a case against 14 persons, including Vaibhav Gehlot, on March 17 at Gangapur police station in Nashik. The case has been registered following the order of a court. The main accused is Gujarat Congress secretary Sachin Purushottam Valera. Valera's father Purushottam Bhai Valera has also been a senior Congress leader. According to the FIR, Sachin Valera, describing himself as an advertising executive, said that he had a contract for advertising at petrol pumps in 13 states. He claimed that he had good relations with the Chief Minister of Rajasthan and his son. He also claimed to look after the financial matters of Ashok Gehlot. Sachin Valera assured of handsome profit for investing in his

work and said that the investors have to participate in the tender bidding process as a mere formality. Vaibhav Gehlot will look after the rest of the work, he said, as per the complaint. Sachin Valera gave all the details about this investment and showed circulars issued by the Rajasthan government, which were later found to be fake. Even the tender documents of the tourism department shown by Sachin Valera were found to be fake during investigation. There were no tenders for e-toilets. Later, when the payment was not received and the fraud was realised, the victim approached a Nashik court, which ordered the Gangapur police station to investigate the matter. Meanwhile, Vaibhav Gehlot said in a tweet that the reports doing the rounds in media are baseless and

he had no clue about the same. "We all know that such manipulated facts will come to the fore as and when the elections near," he said. Rajasthan BJP President Satish Poonia shared a Marathi news channel clipping on his Twitter handle and said, "The name of Chief Minister's son is being heard in these Marathi news. Hon'ble Chief Minister should clarify the situation. The people of Rajasthan are only trying to know the truth." Leader of Opposition, Gulabchand Kataria, said, "The son of the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, who calls himself the 'Gandhi of Rajasthan', has been booked in a corruption case worth crores in Maharashtra on the order of the court. The Chief Minister should immediately present the truth in front of the public."



CHARLI XCX: THE MUSIC INDUSTRY IS CATCHING UP WITH ME

Los Angeles: Singer Charli XCX has released her fifth studio album, 'Crash', and the 29-year-old pop star finally feels her future-leaning music is a "tangible genre" not just loved by the "weird kids".

Speaking to Zane Lowe on Apple Music 1, Charli said: "I'm on my fifth album in my five-album deal. I've arrived at this place where I'm incorporating all of the different things that I've done in the past into one body of work. "I also feel like, and this might sound like a negative but I actually think it's a positive, I also feel like we're at a time in the music industry where the music industry is beginning to catch up with me a little bit," reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Charli said: "We're at this time now where being an artist like me is actually quite common and the norm and with things like hyperpop existing. It's like that is now a tangible genre that not only weird kids who have great taste can understand but playlisters can understand or whatever." "This album feels very cyclical in many ways a people can understand who I am now." Charli describes her LP as "hyper-sexualised" and recently explained how she wanted to "challenge" herself with the dancing in the promo for the single 'Baby'. She said: "It's probably the most sexy song I've ever made. It's about sex and sexuality and having good sex and just feeling yourself essentially. I know that that's the tone. "I knew that that was the tone I wanted to carry across for the entire record. This kind of hyper-sexualised, feminine power zone was where I was feeling myself going, and 'Baby' was the genesis of this. "Also I think that's probably why I wanted to challenge myself on the choreo for this song, which was really, really tough and I have so much respect for dancers, professional dancers, anyone who communicates emotion through dance. It is so hard and challenging, but so rewarding."



PGA Awards: 'CODA,' 'Succession' win top honours

Los Angeles | Agencies

What began as a Sundance sensation directed by Heder - the heart-tugging story following the only hearing family member in a tribe of charismatic New England fishermen - won the Darryl F. Zanuck award for best motion picture producing, reports Variety.

Other notable film winners at Los Angeles' Fairmont Hotel were Questlove's 'Summer of Soul' for documentary feature, and the musical juggernaut 'Encanto' for best producers of an animated film.

'Succession' took home the Norman Felton Award for outstanding episodic drama.

'Ted Lasso' continued its trophy collection spree by claiming the Danny Thomas Award for outstanding television comedy. 'Mare of Easttown' won the David L. Wolper award for outstanding producer of a limited series.

Power players including Universal Filmed Entertainment Group Chairman Donna Langley, Neon head Tom Quinn, Marvel Studios head of physical and postproduction Victoria Alonso, super-producer Ryan

Musical drama 'Coda' directed by Sian Heder, took the top film prize at the annual Producers Guild Awards.

Murphy and more circulated before prizes were handed out.

Early in the evening was the PGA Lifetime Achievement Award, presented to Lucasfilm founder George Lucas and present leader Kathleen Kennedy. Long-time collaborator and Hollywood icon Steven Spielberg presented to the duo. "My wish is you feel the impact he's had on your life, and the lives of your kids and grandkids. And, yes George, we're of an age now where the great-grandkids are watching 'Star Wars' for the first time," Spielberg told the audience.

Kennedy, whose body of work has earned a staggering 120 Academy Award nominations, called Lucas "my friend, mentor and the greatest master Jedi of them all." EGOT winner Rita Moreno was awarded the Stanley Kramer prize, for her trailblazing career and off-screen life advocating for social justice.

"I am not a person of religious faith. For me, film has often been a sacred text to spur me to follow what Lincoln called the better angels of our nature," Moreno said. "Thankfully, filmmakers keep on preaching and never stop advocating for matters of equity and justice."

BELLA HADID CRIED EVERY DAY FOR THREE YEARS!

Supermodel Bella Hadid has battled depression and anxiety since her teens and she said that she spent a lot of time working putting on a brave face in front of people and breaking down when she was alone.

Los Angeles | Agencies

She said: "For three years while I was working, I would wake up every morning hysterical, in tears, alone. I wouldn't show anybody that. I would go to work, cry at lunch in my little greenroom, finish my day, go to whatever random little hotel I was in for the night, cry again, wake up in the morning, and do the same thing."

In January 2021, Bella had what she termed a burnout and no longer felt like herself, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She told America's Vogue magazine: "My immediate trauma response is people-pleasing. It literally makes me sick to my stomach if I leave somewhere and someone is unhappy with me, so I always go above and beyond, but the issue with that is that I get home and I don't have enough for myself. I became manic. I bleached my hair. I looked like a troll doll. Then I dyed it-it looked like a sunrise. That should have been the first sign."

Eventually, Bella checked into a treatment programme in Tennessee for two and a half weeks and admitted medication and therapy have subsequently changed her life.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker Steven Spielberg, who is one of the nominees for the Producers Guild of America (PGA) awards for his musical 'West Side Story', has said he will never direct another musical in his career, although he'll be involved as a producer on some.

He made the remarks at the annual breakfast with the nominees for the Darryl F. Zanuck Award at the Skirball Cultural Center. The theme of the panel was Spielberg.

During the conversation, the two-time Oscar-winning director for 'Schindler's List' and 'Saving Private Ryan' said he was currently co-producing the musical adaptation of 'The Color Purple' with Fantasia Barrino and Danielle Brooks in the lead

STEVEN SPIELBERG WON'T DIRECT ANOTHER MUSICAL AFTER 'WEST SIDE STORY'

roles. He helmed the 1985 Alice Walker adaptation, which was nominated for 11 Academy Awards and won him his first DGA prize, though he failed to score an Oscar nomination for best director. The adoration for Spielberg and the overall gratitude from all of the nominated producers was beautifully pronounced at the event. In response to a question about how producers can be successful and enter the business, Spielberg replied by saying: "The smartest thing I do is hire women. I always have and always will. I believe in the power of the producer. You're not just the leaders. You are therapists. I rely on someone stronger than me to produce." He reflected on the challenge of getting the rights to 'West Side Story', going to lyricist Stephen Sondheim's home saying: "His dogs were sniffing my crotch, and I was afraid to push them away (as) I didn't want to offend him."

Squid Game: HoYeon Jung might return as a twin in Season 2

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Squid Game' director Hwang Dong-Hyuk said that he is working hard on ideas for the next season of the South Korean killer survival drama.

Speaking to Deadline on the red carpet at Saturday's Producers Guild of America Awards ceremony, the show's creator said there is nothing to see just yet, but he is working hard on ideas for the next season of the South Korean killer survival drama, reports deadline.com.

"There will be more great games, that's all I can say," Dong-Hyuk said.

"I'm just still brainstorming and collecting the ideas for Season 2. I haven't even started with the writing yet."

Asked if there will be flashbacks? Are those Season 1 characters gone forever and can we expect to see some cast members coming back somehow?

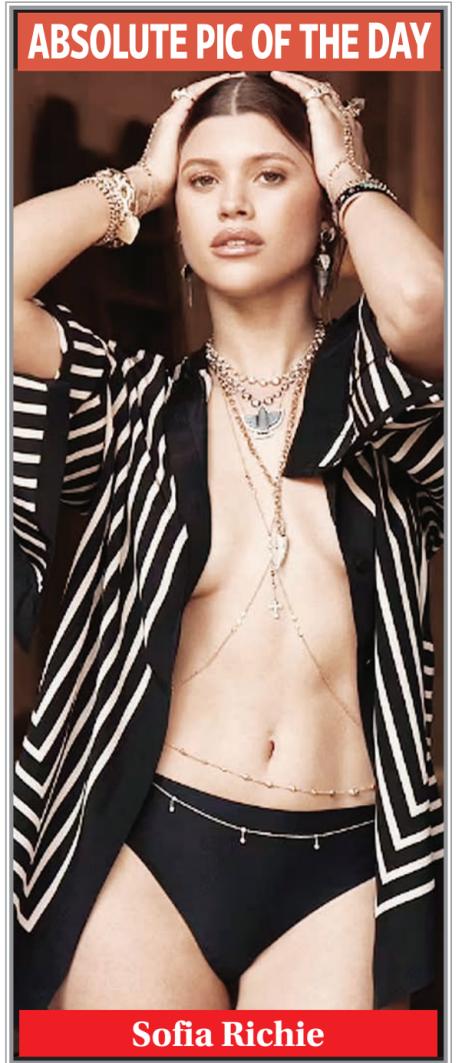
"No, because most of them are dead," Hwang said with a laugh.

"I'll try something to bring them back to Season 2." Gesturing beside him on the red carpet to HoYeon Jung, who plays Kang Sae-byek in 'Squid Game' Season 1, he said: "Let's say maybe she has a twin sister, you'll see." HoYeon laughed and said: "I could change my hair color. Let's do a little like plastic surgery."



Asked whether he had been surprised by the show's runaway success, Hwang said: "Yeah in a way because who can expect this kind of success. I tried hard to make a successful show, but I never expected this much success. It's a surprise."

The show won three SAG Awards this year, and since its September 17, 2021, release, 'Squid Game' has become the most-watched Netflix content ever.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Sofia Richie



INDIA'S JEHAN DARUVALA OPENS F2 CAMPAIGN WITH PODIUM FINISH IN BAHRAIN

Manama (Bahrain) | Agencies
India's Jehan Daruvala opened his bid for the Formula 2 title with a second-place finish in the Sprint race of the Championship's first round at the Sakhir International Circuit here. The 23-year-old from Mumbai, who races for Prema Racing and is a member of the Red Bull Junior Team, had started fourth after qualifying seventh under the Championship's reverse grid rules. Jehan's season-opening podium was founded on a good start. He was up to third straight away and, after fending off fellow Red Bull junior Liam Lawson in the Carlin, he set about in pursuit of second-placed Ralph Boschung. The safety car was deployed on Lap 3 to clear the stranded Hitech of Marcus Armstrong. It bunched up the field but Jehan, who took his first F2 win in Bahrain in 2020, held his ground, once again prevailing in a wheel-to-wheel battle with Lawson. He caught and passed Boschung on Lap 14 just before the race was interrupt-



ed for the second time by a Virtual Safety Car. Boschung retook second as the race resumed. But Jehan seized the place back on the 18th lap with a bold move around the outside of the Swiss racer into the right-handed Turn 4. He crossed the line less than two seconds behind Verschoor. "We definitely have a lot of positives to take. Finishing second

in the first race of the year is a good start. I think we had the pace to fight for the win. Unfortunately, I mistimed the Virtual Safety Car restart which lost us a lot of time and eventually cost us the win. But overall we have a really good car and I'm quite pleased with our start to the season," said Jehan. Jehan now heads into Sunday's feature race, which he

will start from seventh, where he qualified. He is hoping for another strong result to round off an encouraging season-opening weekend. This season is Jehan's third in Formula 2, the feeder-series that sits below F1 on the single-seater ladder. He raced for Carlin in the last two seasons but has made the move to Prema Racing this year.

I-League: Aizawl FC defeat Indian Arrows 2-0

Naihati (West Bengal) | Agencies
Aizawl FC registered a 2-0 win against Indian Arrows in the I-League at the Naihati stadium on Sunday. Aizawl's Aser Pierrick Dipanda Dicka scored on either side of halftime to give his side a much-needed win. Sibajit Singh of Indian Arrows got the first chance in the 4th minute, but he wasn't able to convert the opportunity. The game quickly changed into a back and forth of attacking play as both sides looked for the opening goal. The young guns of Indian Arrows created another early chance. Brijesh Giri delivered an inch-perfect cross from the left-hand side in the 11th minute, but Taison Singh headed it wide. Aizawl FC slowly grew into the game and started dominating the midfield battle midway through the first half. A chance almost came Aizawl's way in the 33rd minute as Dipanda Dicka played a gorgeous through ball towards David Zate. The attacking midfielder was over-eager in starting his run and was unfortunately offside. Although Indian Arrows were constantly putting pressure, the first goal came against the run of play in the 42nd minute for Aizawl. Full back Vanlanghenga played a superb cross-field ball to Dipanda Dicka and the Cameroonian



striker made no mistake in putting it past the keeper to break the deadlock. The half ended with Aizawl leading 1-0. The second half began with Aizawl attacking from the kick-off. Aizawl quickly struck again to double their lead in the 49th minute when Dipanda Dicka got on the end of a beautiful pierced through ball by Samuel Lalmuampa and placed the ball calmly in the bottom left corner to take his tally to two goals for the day. They even tried to freshen things up with a double substitution. Suhail Ahmad Bhat and Satendra Singh Yadav were sent in for Laitongbam Taison Singh and Velanco Rodrigues in the 57th minute. But the game ended 2-0 in favour of Aizawl, who battled hard against a persistent Indian Arrows side.

Nadal sets up Indian Wells title clash against Fritz

Indian Wells | Agencies
Three-time champion at Indian Wells, world No. 4 Rafael Nadal, will get the opportunity to bag a fourth title here when he plays American Taylor Fritz in the final after the Spaniard defeated country-mate Carlos Alcaraz 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 in the BNP Paribas Open last-four on Sunday (IST). Home favourite Fritz eliminated seventh seed Andrey Rublev of Russia 7-5, 6-4 to set up a title clash with the Spanish stalwart. The 18-year-old Alcaraz showed why he is the future of tennis, giving Nadal a tough time in the three hours and 12 minutes con-



test played in heavy winds. It will be Nadal's fifth final appearance at Indian Wells. "I am super happy to be in the final," Nadal was quoted as saying by atp-tour.com. "It means a lot to me, and I'll just keep going." Nadal is off to a personal-best 20-0 start to the season with titles at a Melbourne ATP 250, the Australian Open and Acapulco (Mexico). If the fourth seed

defeats Fritz in the title clash, he will tie Novak Djokovic for the most ATP Masters 1000 titles in history with 37. The 35-year-old Nadal earned the decisive break at 4-3 in the final set when he smashed a huge forehand and then rushed to the net to put away a forehand volley. It allowed him to finally overcome the teen's resistance. Meanwhile, 20th seed Fritz became the first American man in Indian Wells final since 2012 following his semifinal win over Rublev. Fritz is the first man from his country to make the Indian Wells championship match since John Isner in 2012.

Chelsea book FA Cup semis spot, Arsenal strengthen claim for Premier League top four

London | Agencies
Chelsea booked their place in the semifinals of the FA Cup with a relatively comfortable 2-0 win away to Middlesbrough. On Saturday night, Chelsea had the game under control by the 31st minute, after Romelu Lukaku and Hakim Ziyech had both found the back of the second-tier Championship side's net. Lukaku was left with a simple tap-in, while Ziyech hit a nasty dipping shot to double Chelsea's lead as the home side failed to hit a shot on target, Xinhua reports. The remaining quarterfinals will be played later on Sunday. In the Premier



League, Bukayo Saka's 30th minute goal gave Arsenal a 1-0 win away to Aston Villa

to strengthen their place in fourth. Saka struck a crisp half-volley which went

under the hand of slightly unsighted Villa keeper Emiliano Martinez. Although

Arsenal were tired in the closing minutes, they were able to hold on for three points that give them a four-point lead over fifth placed Manchester United with a game in hand. Earlier, Leeds United came back from 2-0 down away to olverhampton to take a vital 3-2 win, which lifts them away from the bottom three. First half goals from Jonny and Francisco Trincao gave Wolves a comfortable lead at the break. However, two goals in three minutes from Jack Harrison and Rodrigo Moreno made it 2-2 in the 66th minute, before Luke Ayling's goal in injury time sealed three vital points and gave Jesse Marsch his second win as Leeds coach.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

ENGLAND'S ONE-WICKET WIN OVER WHITE FERNS

Auckland | Agencies
Defending champions England on Sunday boosted their chances of a semifinal berth in the ICC Women's World Cup, defeating hosts New Zealand by just one wicket at the Eden Park to move up to fifth place on the table with four points. With Heather Knight's side still to play two games, it has a chance to aggregate eight points and stake claim to a semifinal berth. The White Ferns, on the other hand, are virtually out of the tournament, as they have four points from six outings and only one game to go. At best Sophie Devine's side can finish with six points, which will most likely be insufficient to earn a last-four spot. England chased down New Zealand's score of 203 with more than two overs remaining, but just one wicket in hand. The defending champions were made to win the hard way as they lost five wickets for just 20 runs late in the chase to allow New



Zealand back into the match. In the end it was experienced bowler Anya Shrubsole (7 not out) who held her nerve, as the England

number 11 found the winning runs off Brooke Halliday (1/18) just as the home side pushed for the final wicket.

Spinners Sophie Ecclestone (3/41) and Charlie Dean (2/36) did the damage with the ball for England, before the experienced Nat Sciver (61) and Heather Knight (42) guided the successful run chase up until the late wobble. If England win their final two matches -- against Pakistan and Bangladesh -- it would likely see them qualify for the knockout stages. New Zealand had a miserable day as injuries to skipper Sophie Devine and seamer Lea Tahuu hurt them hard on Sunday. Devine hurt her back while batting and didn't take the field for England's innings, while Tahuu pulled up short with a left hamstring injury.

Brief scores:
New Zealand 203 in 48.5 overs (Sophie Devine 41, Maddy Green 52 not out; Kate Cross 3/35, Charlie Dean 2/36, Sophie Ecclestone 3/41) lost to England 204/9 in 47.2 overs (Heather Knight 42, Nat Sciver 61, Sophie Dunkley 33; Jess Kerr 2/36, Frances Mackay 4/34) by one wicket.

Kraigg Brathwaite's 12-hour vigil negates England's advantage in second Test

Bridgetown (Barbados) | Agencies
West Indies skipper Kraigg Brathwaite played the innings of his life as he patiently faced 489 balls to score a workman-like 160 to guide the home team to 411 on Day 4 of the second Test against England at the Kensington Oval on Sunday (IST). Thanks to Brathwaite's nearly 12-hour vigil, the hosts almost negated England's advantage, as West Indies fell 96 runs short of the tourists' first-innings total of 507/9 declared. Joe Root's England were 40 without loss in their second innings -- a lead of 136 runs -- as a draw looks the most likely result on the fifth and final day. In an innings that personified patience, Brathwaite's 160 frustrated the England bowling attack leaving both

sides needing something special to force a result on the final day. Monday's morning session will play an important role in determining the fate of this match and whether either team can take a 1-0 lead in the series. Entering Day 4, West Indies resumed their innings at 288/4, with Brathwaite continuing where he left off, clipping the day's first delivery off his legs for four. The hosts passed their first goal of the day within the hour, as they reached the follow-on mark. While England's seamers toiled to not avail, spinner Jack Leach appeared more fruitful in his approach, producing consistent turn and bounce in the early interchanges. As the fifth-wicket partnership went past fifty, England turned to all-rounder Ben Stokes who, in his third over of the day, man-

aged to force nightwatchman Alzari Joseph into playing a false shot. Chasing a wide delivery, Joseph found Dan Lawrence at gully. The fall of wicket brought Jason Holder to the crease. He alongside Brathwaite continued to adopt the steady approach, slowly nibbling away at England's mammoth total. The pair led West Indies through to the lunch break at 351/5, with Brathwaite five runs short of a second Test score of 150-plus and Holder adopting the supporting role

Brief scores:
England 507/9 decl and 40 for no loss vs West Indies 411 (Kraigg Brathwaite 160, Shamarh Brooks 39, Jermaine Blackwood 102, Joshua Da Silva 33; Jack Leach 3/118, Ben Stokes 2/65). England lead by 136 runs.

ITBP WINS 11TH NATIONAL ICE HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

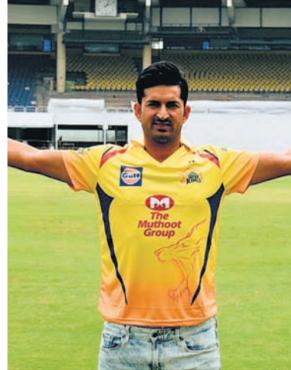


Team Absolute | New Delhi
The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has won the 11th National Ice Hockey Championship organised at Kaza in Himachal Pradesh, the force officials said here on Sunday. In the final, the ITBP team defeated Indian Army 3-1. The central ice hockey team of the ITBP representing All India Police Sports Control Board (AIPSB) won

the 11th edition of the Ice Hockey Association of India (IHAI) National Ice Hockey Championship for men - 2022 organised in Kaza, Himachal Pradesh, the ITBP said in a statement. The officials also said that five top teams of the country, including AIPSB (ITBP), Ladakh, Army Sports Control Board (LSRC), Delhi and Himachal Pradesh participated in the tournament. This tournament began on March 14.

IPL Purple Cap winner Mohit Sharma turns out as net bowler for Gujarat Titans, shocks fans

Ahmedabad | Agencies
Cricket fans have been left shell-shocked after it has emerged that former India limited-overs pacer Mohit Sharma, who was the IPL 2014 Purple Cap-winner, had been roped in as a net bowler by new IPL franchise Gujarat Titans alongside left-arm fast bowler Barinder Sran for the upcoming season beginning on March 26. Sharma, representing Chennai Super Kings, had emerged the highest wicket-taker in the 2014 IPL season, taking 23 wickets at an average of 19.65 in 16 matches. The 33-year-old Sharma found no takers at the IPL 2022 Mega Auction last month. The Haryana cricketer was with the Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led CSK between 2013 and 2015 before moving to Kings XI Punjab (now Punjab Kings 2016-2018), and returning to don the yellow CSK jersey in 2019. He also had a



stint with Delhi Capitals in 2020. Overall, the bowler has 92 wickets from 86 IPL games. Sharma, who has played 26 ODIs and eight T20Is, was also a part of the Indian squad that made it to the 2014 ICC

World T20 final in Bangladesh and the 2015 World Cup semifinals co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand. Sharma's career graph started going down following CSK's two-year suspension. Though he was roped in by KXIP, he was not the same player in the red jersey. Sharma tried to re-create the 2014 magic for CSK in 2019 but was nowhere near his best. With Delhi Capitals too in 2020 he hardly made an impact, getting just one game in the season and returning with figures of 1/45. Fans expressed their shock by taking to social media and posting comments such as, "This downfall of Mohit Sharma", "Seeing Mohit Sharma as a net bowler is killing me", "Mohit Sharma was Purple cap winner back in 2014 and now he is a net bowler, what a turnaround". Gujarat Titans will open their IPL 2022 campaign against Lucknow Super Giants at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on March 28.

ARJUN KADHE WINS SINGLES TITLE AT SKME ITF OPEN



Bengaluru: Fifth seed Arjun Kadhe of India completed a golden double after he won the singles title, defeating second seed Sidharth Rawat 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 in the final of the US\$ 15,000 SKME ITF Open which concluded at the KSLTA Stadium here on Sunday. The 28-year-old had won the doubles title on Saturday and garnered back-to-back ITF titles after the win in Bhopal last Sunday where, incidentally, Rawat had finished runners-up. While Kadhe adopted an aggressive approach, Rawat played defensive and waited for his rival to make mistakes, which Kadhe didn't most of the time. The rest of the games went with the serve as Kadhe took the first set at 6-3. With the players tied at 3-3 in the second set, one loose shot by Kadhe changed the momentum in favour of Rawat who broke his rival's serve in the sixth and eighth game to come back into the match strongly.



ANUSHKA SHARMA

STEPS AWAY FROM HER PRODUCTION COMPANY TO FOCUS ON ACTING

Anushka Sharma has stepped away from Clean Slate Filmz (CSF), a production banner that she co-founded with her brother Karnesh Ssharma in the year 2013.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The actress shared the news of her departure from the production company through social media on Saturday.

The actress wants to commit her time to the craft of acting and this decision allows her to dedicate her time and resources to her first love which is acting. The move makes Karnesh the sole decision maker and places him at the helm of affairs at Clean Slate Filmz.

Taking to her Instagram, Anushka shared a long note as she wrote in the caption, "Onwards and Upwards @kans26 @officialcsfilms! My best wishes are always with you!!" The actress shared in the long note, "When I started Clean Slate Filmz with my brother Karnesh Ssharma, we were novices when it came to production but we had a fire in our belly and we wanted to try and set the agenda of entertainment in India through clutter-breaking content. Today, when I look back at our journey so far, I'm deeply proud of what we have created and the disruption that we have managed to achieve."

Mentioning the reason behind this decision, she said, "While CSF started with my vision to change the narrative of what commercial projects should be like, I have to credit Karnesh who has excelled in shaping what CSF has become today. Being a new mother who has chosen to be an actor by profession, I have to balance my life in an entirely new fashion like never before."



Karishma Kotak to make a cameo in Shaad Ali's upcoming

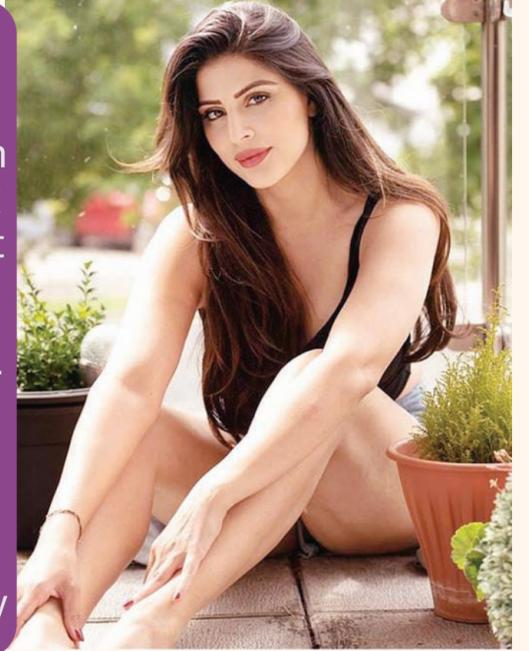
Big Boss 6' fame Karishma Kotak is all set to be part of director Shaad Ali's project 'Mister Mummy'

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She is making a guest appearance. It is rumoured that the film features power couple Genelia D'Souza and Riteish Deshmukh.

Karishma says about playing this role: "It's great to be shooting in the UK itself and I'm glad it worked out to do this guest appearance/cameo along with my hosting the cricket leagues in it. It is great fun to work alongside the happy couple Genelia and Riteish and I wish to do it more often in the future."

"When it came to doing this with



Shaad Ali, I was glad that it fell right with my hosting schedules. Although I cannot reveal much about my character, I am in my happy place now with multiple offers pouring in and I really hope I make all the right decisions," adds the actress who appeared in several films and reality shows.

The movie backed by the Deshmukhs' production company, Mumbai Film Company is scheduled to release by November this year. It is surely going to be a fun laughter filled experience judging by the poster which portrays Riteish as pregnant.



ALI FAZAL WANTS TO TELL STORIES ON A GLOBAL SCALE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actor Ali Fazal, who was recently seen sharing screen space with names like Gal Gadot in his latest release 'Death On The Nile' and is currently busy shooting with Gerard Butler for 'Kandahar', says he wants to be a part of stories on a global level.

In a conversation with reporter, Ali spoke about living several lives in one -- from the world of 'Fukrey' to 'Mirzapur', to 'Victoria and Abdul' and 'Death On The Nile', Ali said: "It feels nice but I know the quest is larger... For artists in India our golden period was in the 1950s and I think that was the time when we were globally out there thanks to people like Satyajit Ray and everybody."

"So, I see that we have a big stake now

again after a long long time and so I don't want to reflect too much. I want to look ahead and I feel that there are so many more stories to tell and I feel that sometime 'time dhokha de jaata hai' (time betrays us) because I have half my work here and there which I am complaining about but I end up losing out on some stuff but one at a time I want to tell the stories that I want to on a global scale... I think we are going through a very big and interesting change here in Indian cinema."

'Kandahar' the first collaboration between Ali and director Ric Roman Waugh, who has previously worked with Butler in 'Greenland' and 'Angel Has Fallen'.

On the work front, Ali is shooting for filmmaker Vishal Bharadwaj's directorial 'Khufiya'.



Samantha's stunts in upcoming to raise the bar higher

Hyderabad | Agencies

Samantha Ruth Prabhu is getting ready for her upcoming movie 'Yashoda', in which she will perform some difficult stunts.

Yannick Ben, a Hollywood stuntman, has been brought in to train and choreograph stunts for the 'Oh Baby' actress.

Samantha, who had earlier worked with Yannick Ben for popular web series 'The Family Man 2', has come together with the stunt coordinator for another time.

Touted to be a thriller, 'Yashoda' will have Samantha essaying a titular role, for which she will now perform a few stunts. The excited actress posed with her stunt coordinator Yannick, as

she begins for the high-octane sequences. 'Yashoda' is directed by debutant director duo Hari - Harish under Sridevi Movies. Produced by Sivalenka Krishna Prasad, 'Yashoda' will have Tamil actress Varalaxmi Sarathkumar in an important role as well. The makers of 'Yashoda' aim to release it in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi & Kannada simultaneously.



HOW ADAA KHAN'S ACTING CAREER STARTED?

Mumbai: 'Khatron Ke Khiladi 10' fame Adaa Khan agrees that career is important for every professional. Not many know that she never imagined becoming an actor. Showbiz happened to her accidentally.

"I was spotted at the restaurant in Bandra and that's how I got my first project. It's been a great journey. I am grateful to have come this far," says the actor, known for TV shows such as 'Amrit Manthan', 'Comedy Nights Bachao' and 'Naagin'. Struggle and insecurities are part of everyone's journey. "Each one of us again has to go through it and that's how we reach a point in our career. Our struggles help us respect our job and when we look back we see that we have come this far," she adds. The motivation to continue with this journey came from fans, shares Adaa. "The love of the audience inspired me. God has been kind and gave me some amazing shows and obviously once you've entered the field you don't want to look back. You want to achieve more and do more or want to explore more as yourself, as an actor. And of course my mom always wanted me to become successful and that's what keeps me going," she says. In the current scenario in spite of films, OTT and television opening many doors, there is an increase in competition and unemployment.



Ananya Pandey

Katrina celebrates first Holi with Kaushals



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Katrina Kaif shared the pictures from her first Holi with husband Vicky Kaushal and her in-laws recently.

Taking to her Instagram,

the actress shared two pictures, where she can be seen in the company of Vicky's father and acclaimed action director Sham Kaushal, his mother Veena Kaushal, and brother Sunny.

Everyone is seen smiling

with gulal on their faces. In the second picture, Veena is seen touching Katrina's cheek, as they posed for the camera. This year's Holi is Vicky and Katrina's first since their wedding. In the photos, Katrina is seen posing with Vicky's parents and his brother Sunny Kaushal.

Vicky and Katrina got married in December in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan. The very intimate wedding ceremony was attended only by their closest friends and family members. After the ceremony, they headed to the Maldives for a honeymoon and returned to Mumbai in just a few days. The couple also rented an apartment in the Juhu area of Mumbai after their marriage in December.