

absolute india

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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM NEW DELHI, MUMBAI AND BHOPAL

NATION > 02

NGT suspects water contamination behind death of children...



HOLLYWOOD > 06

Rachel Zegler to voice character of Princess Ellian in 'Spellbound'...



SPORTS > 07

IPL 2022: Buttler's ton, Ashwin, Chahal bowling power...



India marching ahead towards Ramrajya, TN Guv



Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi has said that India is marching ahead towards the goal of Ramrajya envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Team Absolute | Chennai

Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi has said that India is marching ahead towards the goal of Ramrajya envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He was delivering the inaugural address of the 69th Ram Navami celebrations in Chennai organised by Sri Ram Samaj and described Sri Ram as an icon of India's shared cultural spirituality. The Tamil Nadu Governor said that lessons from the life of Sri Ram are ideal values for all to imbibe. RN Ravi said that Mahatma Gandhi invoked the idea of Ramrajya to unite the country against colonial rule and said that as an ideal son, brother, friend, and king, Sri Ram teaches us the value of mutual love and respect. Sri Ram Samaj president S Ravichandran and others participated in the function.

AFTER 8 YEARS, MUMBAI GETS 2 NEW METRO LINES IN SUBURBS

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday flagged off two new Mumbai Metros - Line 2A and Line 7, both in the suburbs - on the auspicious occasion of Gudi Padwa, the Maharashtra New Year.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday flagged off two new Mumbai Metros - Line 2A and Line 7, both in the suburbs - on the auspicious occasion of Gudi Padwa, the Maharashtra New Year. The two new lines shall start operations daily 5 a.m. - 11 p.m. from Sunday for commuters, with fares ranging from Rs 10 - Rs 40 for the airconditioned rides at speeds of around 70 kmph, said MMRDA Commissioner



S.V.R. Srinivas. Both fully elevated, Line 2A from Dahisar East to D.N. Nagar in Andheri West via the new Link Road, and Line 7 from Dahisar East to Andheri East via the Western Express Highway - are partially complete. Though the trains are equipped to operate with a driverless system, initially they will be run by a contingent of around 60 male and female drivers.

When fully completed, Line 7 will be 33.50 km long with 29 stations and Line 2A shall be 18 km long with 17 stations en route. The development came nearly 11 months after Thackeray had flagged off the trial runs on these 2 lines in May 2021. The city got the Mumbai Metro One its first - and only so far - elevated line on June 8, 2014 linking Versova-

Andheri-Ghatkopar in the east-west direction. The Line 2A and Line 7 were sanctioned in October 2015 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone during the erstwhile BJP-led government of the (then) CM Devendra Fadnis. The entire corridors of the two new lines are expected to be ready in the next five-six months, officials said.

Kashmir Singh is Punjab's first farmer to get online payment for wheat procurement

Team Absolute | Chandigarh

Kashmir Singh on Saturday became the first farmer in Punjab to receive Minimum Support Price (MSP) payment directly in his bank account. State Food, Civil Supplies Minister Lal Chand



Kataruchak said Singh, hailing from Mohabbatpur village in Patiala district, had brought 51 quintals of wheat in Rajpura on March 31 and it was cleaned and purchased on April 1, the first day of wheat procurement. Within 24 hours of purchase, the department has transferred the farmer's payment, amounting to Rs 1,02,765 directly into his bank account. Responding to a media question regarding arrangements of transport and labour, he said that it was for the first time that all labour and transport contracts had been completed well before the start of the season. This has ensured that all mandis across the state are in a state of readiness, with adequate labour and trucks. Regarding the slow pace of arrival of wheat in the mandis, the minister said the crop has not ripened yet and was expected to start reaching mandis in the Malwa area in significant quantities after April 6, while the Majha region will probably see the arrivals pick up after April 12.

Odisha registers 49% growth in gross GST collection in 2021-22

The gross GST collection in Odisha has recorded a 49 per cent growth during the financial year 2021-22 against the collection made during the previous financial year (2020-21), officials said here on Saturday.

Team Absolute | Bhubaneswar

The gross GST collection in Odisha has recorded a 49 per cent growth during the financial year 2021-22 against the collection made during the previous financial year (2020-21), officials said here on Saturday. According to the data shared by the office of the State GST Commissioner, the gross GST collection for the financial year 2021-22 was Rs 44,334.67 crore, whereas Rs 29,852.76 crore GST was collected during the previous financial year. The gross GST collection of Odisha in the month of March 2022 was Rs 4,124.66 crore as against Rs 3,285.29 crore collected during March 2021, thereby registering a growth of 26 per cent. This is the highest growth rate amongst all the major states in the country, claimed the officials. Similarly, the collection of OGST (State GST) during the last month was Rs 1,351.25 crore against the collection of Rs 954.62 crore during March 2021 with a growth rate of 42 per cent. The OGST collection for the entire financial year 2021-22 was Rs 12,743.01 crore whereas the state had collected Rs 8,292.15 crore OGST during the previous fiscal. With this, the OGST collection during the last fiscal recorded a growth rate of 54 per cent. There is a collection of Rs 1,109.85 crore in CGST, Rs 1,003.47 crore in IGST and Rs 660.09 crore in cess in the month of March this year.



The officials informed that the growth in GST is mostly driven by mining and manufacturing sectors. Among the top 100 taxpayers, while the mining sector witnessed a growth of 81 per cent, the manufacturing sector recorded 84 per cent growth during the financial year (2021-22). Similarly, the service sector, trading and work contract sector have witnessed growth of 56.78 per cent, 52.07 per cent and 36.99 per cent in the last fiscal over the corresponding period of its previous year. The total collection from VAT for the entire year 2021-22 was Rs 9,954.91 crore, which included Rs 2,093.70 crore from liquor. The professional tax collection also witnessed a decent growth of 8.48 per cent with collection of Rs 248.55 crore during the year. During the year 2021-22, six accused persons have been arrested involved in availing & passing on of bogus ITC of total amounting of Rs 462.49 crore. Further, 231 business premises have been raided resulting in detection of fraud and collection of tax and penalty to the tune of Rs 35.74 crore on spot. Moreover, the tax and penalty collection through mobile activities and transport godown checking was Rs 23.63 crore during the fiscal.

WEATHER TO REMAIN DRY AND CLEAR IN J&K, LADAKH DURING NEXT 24 HOURS

Weather remained clear in J&K and Ladakh on Saturday as the Meteorological (MeT) department forecast same weather condition to continue in the two UTs during the next 24 hours.

Team Absolute | Srinagar

Weather remained clear in J&K and Ladakh on Saturday as the Meteorological (MeT) department forecast same weather condition to continue in the two UTs during the next 24 hours. "Weather is likely to remain dry and clear in J&K and Ladakh during the next 24 hours", said an official of the MeT

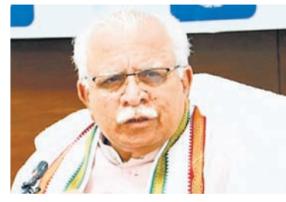


department. Srinagar recorded 8.6 degrees Celsius, Pahalgam 3.2 degrees and Gulmarg 4.5 degrees as the minimum temperature today. Drass town in Ladakh registered minus 3.4 degree, Leh 3.0 degrees and Kargil 0.8 as the night's lowest temperature. Meanwhile, Jammu clocked 19.5 degrees, Katra 17.9, Batote 12.5, Banihal 8.6 and Bhandarwah 10.4 as the minimum temperature.

CONSTRUCTION OF SHRI KRISHNA AYUSH UNIVERSITY TO START SOON

Chandigarh: The construction work of the country's first Shri Krishna Ayush University in Haryana's Kurukshetra will start soon, officials said on Saturday. At a meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Sanjeev Kaushal, it has been decided to appoint an executive agency for the construction of university with an outlay of Rs 500 crore. The agency will undertake planning, design, construction work, furniture, equipment, information technology arrangement and maintenance of the university, an official statement said. Director General, AYUSH, Saket Kumar, apprised about the action plan of the university at the meeting of the high-level committee constituted by the state government. The university will be built on 102 acres, in which postgraduation in all medical systems under AYUSH i.e. ayurveda, yoga, naturopathy, unani, siddha, and homeopathy will be imparted. Hospitals for all these medical systems will also be built. A 300-bed for ayurveda, 175 beds for unani, 175 for siddha, 75 for homeopathy, 30 for yoga and naturopathy hospitals will be constructed.

Global City to be developed in Gurugram: Khattar



Team Absolute | Gurugram

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday said that a consultation meeting was held here to develop a Global City in Gurugram. During the meeting, a discussion was held with leading developers of real estate from across the country. Khattar said that based on the sug-

gestions provided in the meeting, the government will plan to develop a Global City. After a month in the next meeting, all the stakeholders will be called to take this work forward and a world-class best Global City will be developed here. The Haryana Chief Minister while interacting with the mediapersons, said: "Gurugram has become a centre of attraction for investors from all across the world, more investors would come forward after the construction of the Global City." He further informed me that there is a plan to construct Global City in Gurugram on around 1,000 acres of land. In Global City, the planning of big and small plots will be done so that entrepreneurs can come forward for investment.

Haryana's stubble burning efforts lauded

In an attempt to have a better understanding of pollution and its impact on urban planning in the NCR, the Haryana IAS Officers Association on Saturday brought experts and academicians together on a platform here to share ideas and opinions at a first-of-its-kind seminar where the state's stubble burning efforts were lauded.

Team Absolute | Chandigarh

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more important as for almost two years, virtual mode has remained key communication mode for us. Hence, I am sure that such seminars would certainly prove to be milestones in having a better understanding of the role of governance in a changing milieu with a special focus on bringing together pioneering minds," he said. Commission for Air

Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Chairperson MM Kutty lauded state's stubble burning efforts and hoped the state would continue its pace to resolve this issue. He also praised the state's Mera Pani Meri Virasat scheme adopted for crop diversification and asked the officers to ensure the wide

extension of this scheme aimed toward crop diversification. "A mass awareness campaign along with extensive information, education and communication (IEC) activities should be launched to create awareness and disseminate information about stubble burning and other steps required to bring down the increasing pollution levels," said Kutty. He also lauded the state for launching an extensive plantation drive to maintain air quality index. "2G ethanol plant being set up by the Haryana government in Panipat would certainly prove the pioneering step in controlling stubble burning," he added. During the open discussion session, Kutty advised the officers to lay more focus on conducting more studies on identifying the major source of pollution. Research and study is a continuous

process, he added. Haryana State Pollution Control Board Chairman P. Raghavendra Rao talked about the governance aspects of tackling the pollution issue. "Young officers play a pivotal role in chalking out the strategies, rules and regulations related to air quality. Therefore, consent management becomes a significant area for every officer," he added. National Institute of Urban Affairs Director Jagan Shah gave a presentation on air quality and health impacts and transit-oriented development. Giving a vote of thanks, Additional Principal Secretary Amit Agrawal said considering that almost 57 per cent of Haryana falls in the NCR, this seminar would play a pivotal role in helping the officers chalking out strategies to tackle the issue of pollution.

TAMIL NADU TO ISSUE RELEASE LETTER, INTERIM COMPENSATION FOR RESCUED BONDED LABOURERS

Team Absolute | Chennai

The Tamil Nadu labour department has commenced proceedings to issue 'release letters' and sanction interim compensation of Rs 20,000 each to the bonded labourers who were rescued from a Virudhunagar paper mill by activists in 2020. This is following the Madras High Court issuing notice to the labour department on a Public Interest Litigation filed by M. Arokiasamy Britto, a social worker who was instrumental in rescuing the bonded labourers. According to the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976 and the Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourers, 2016, the state government must issue a 'release certificate' and an interim compensation amount of Rs 20,000 to the labourers 24 hours within their release. However, Arokiasamy Britto in his petition stated that he, along with the District Legal service



authority officials and Virudhunagar police officials, had rescued 33 Chhattisgarh natives from a paper mill in Sivakasi, Virudhunagar district in December 2020 and had sent them home. The social activist, who is also the convener of 'Shout For Freedom,' an alliance of several Non-profit organisations working against bonded labour, child labour and human trafficking, in Tamil Nadu said that to date the labour department has neither issued a 'release letter' nor have they paid any compensation to these labourers. While speaking to IANS, Britto said: "I have moved a

Public Interest Litigation in the Madras High court against this matter and the court has served notice to the Tamil Nadu state labour department". The Madurai bench of the Madras High Court represented by Justices Paresh Upadhyay and Justice R. Vijayakumar had issued notice to the labour department on Friday and adjourned the case to April 18. The social workers had rescued 33 bonded labourers, including 29 men, 2 women and 2 children, from the clutches of the paper factory owner at Sivakasi in Virudhunagar district.



INDIA-NEPAL OPEN BORDERS SHOULD NOT BE MISUSED BY UNWANTED ELEMENTS: MODI

▶ THE OPEN BORDERS OF INDIA AND NEPAL SHOULD NOT BE MISUSED BY UNWANTED ELEMENTS, SAID INDIAN PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI ON SATURDAY DURING HIS STATEMENT AFTER DELEGATION LEVEL MEETING WITH NEPAL PRIME MINISTER SHER BAHADUR DEUBA



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The open borders of India and Nepal should not be misused by unwanted elements, said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday during his statement after delegation level meeting with Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Both the leaders also discussed various aspects of cooperation, reviewed the progress of various projects and also discussed the blueprint for the future.

"Today we also discussed that the open borders of India and Nepal should not be misused by unwanted

elements. We also stressed on maintaining close cooperation between our defence and security institutions. I am sure that our talks today will go a long way in setting ambitious goals for the future of India-Nepal relations," Modi said.

In 2020, India and Nepal had a strained bilateral relationship over border row between the two countries. China which already had made aggression towards India at the Line of Actual Control in Eastern Ladakh region was making all efforts to amplify the row between India and Nepal relations.

Talking about power sector, Modi said that both the countries must reap the benefits of the opportunities

for cooperation in the power sector. He said that Nepal Prime Minister is an old friend of India.

"As the Prime Minister, this is his fifth visit to India. He has played an important role in developing relations and friendship between India and Nepal," said Modi adding that such an example can't be seen anywhere else in the world.

Modi also stated that India has been a firm companion in Nepal's journey of peace, prosperity and development, it will always be.

"Our Joint Vision Statement on Power Cooperation will prove to be the blueprint of cooperation, in the future," said Modi adding that both the leaders have expressed agree-

ment on more participation of Indian companies in Nepal's hydropower development projects.

"It is a matter of happiness that Nepal is exporting its surplus power to India. This will make positive contributions to the economic development of Nepal," he said.

Lauding the launch of the RuPay card in Nepal, Modi said it will add a new chapter to our financial connectivity.

Deuba in his address said, "I truly admire your love and affection for Nepal and the Nepali people and my visit today will further enforce these sentiments."

He appreciated India's effective management for battling Covid-19 and received first vaccine aid from India as well as medicines, medical equipment and logistics to combat the pandemic.

"As Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned, we had friendly talks and fruitful discussions on various aspects of India-Nepal relations. We shared our perspectives on further strengthening our friendly ties," Deuba said. Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepal counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba on Saturday jointly inaugurated cross-border passenger train services, RuPay payment system in Nepal and signed several Memorandums of Understanding.

K'taka set to make guideline for slaughterhouses, likely to trigger row

The Karnataka government is all set to make guidelines for slaughter houses to adopt the 'stunning' method to kill animals. Though the government is presently giving a diplomatic statement, the party is preparing for implementation, say sources. This move is expected to create further furour in the state, which is already facing the heat due to call for ban on halal cut meat.

Bengaluru | Agencies

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Minister for Animal Husbandry Prabhu Chouhan on Saturday said that he would look into the demand made by animal lovers who have written to the department that 'stunning' should be made compulsory in slaughterhouses.

'Stunning' is a process which ensures that the animal is made unconscious to pain before being killed in the slaughterhouse.

Prabhu Chouhan said he would take a call on making 'stunning' compulsory in slaughterhouses. "Stunning has not been made compulsory as of now and no order as such is being issued from the department. The letter says not to permit halal cuts, I will verify," he said. Sources in the BJP said that the party is

mullying to make the guideline mandatory as it would not allow halal and jhatka processes while slaughtering the animal illegal. If this happens, there would be a huge crisis like situation in the state as anything against halal would not go down well with minorities.

The central government has recommended a 'stunning' method under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act for slaughter houses. Umamathy, Joint Director of Animal Husbandry Department has stated that the department has received many complaints by animal activists in this regard. Despite the guideline, the slaughterhouses are not following rules, he said.

The case could be booked under IPC as well as the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act if slaughterhouses do not follow rules.

Even the public could also book a case in this regard. The shop owners will be fined for the first and for the second offence, they can be jailed. Presently, the fine amount is Rs 50. It is being appealed to increase it to Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh. The present imprisonment period is 6 months to 3 years. It has also been demanded to increase the imprisonment period, he explained.

Sudden lifting of curbs not wise: Covid-19 task force Member

■ The sudden lifting of Covid-19 Appropriate Behaviour and other related restrictions are not good as the pandemic is not yet over, Dr Sunila Garg, Member Lancet Commission and Covid-19 Task Force said on Saturday.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The sudden lifting of Covid-19 Appropriate Behaviour and other related restrictions are not good as the pandemic is not yet over, Dr Sunila Garg, Member Lancet Commission and Covid-19 Task Force said on Saturday.

"Mask mandates must continue at crowded places. Since everybody is tired of wearing masks, not fining them would lead to more people ditching it, which is not good as the pandemic is yet not over. Some parts of world are facing another outbreak threat", Dr Garg told IANS.

Dr Garg said that there should be an integrated approach on lifting the Covid restrictions. "Mask doesn't stop Covid infection only, but it also prevents other airborne infections, pollution and other respiratory illnesses. Masks must be continued", she said.

Removing mask mandates will bring the challenging burden of Tuberculosis and drug resistant TB as such incidents were under

control during last two years because of masks, added Dr Garg.

Despite a sudden surge in Covid infection globally, India continues on a downward trend. States like Maharashtra, Delhi, Telangana, West Bengal have announced relaxation of the Covid-19 norms starting from April.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority, in its order, on Friday said that no penalty will be imposed for not wearing mask from immediate effect in the national capital. However, it has advised its continued usage in crowded places.

"Now DDMA has decided that it is advisable for the public to wear masks in public places, however, no penalty will be imposed for not wearing them till further orders", said DDMA in its official order.

While speaking with IANS, Dr Jacob John, Epidemiologist at CMC Vellore, said that a mask can decrease the rate of infection, but it cannot prevent another wave. A mask can't prevent the new Covid variant from emerging.

"Fines are improper ways of controlling the people. Masks do decrease respiratory secretions and protect the people, but it should be recommended, not enforced", said Dr John, adding that it should be worn at crowded places as it is not only prevents Covid infection but also pneumonia, allergies, pollutants and several others ailments.

RIFT WIDENS FURTHER BETWEEN TELANGANA GOVERNOR, CM

The rift between Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao appears to have widened further with the latter staying away from Ugadi celebrations at the Raj Bhavan.

Hyderabad | Agencies

The rift between Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao appears to have widened further with the latter staying away from Ugadi celebrations at the Raj Bhavan.

Though the Raj Bhavan had sent invitations to the chief minister and his cabinet colleagues, none of them turned up at the celebrations hosted by the Governor on Friday evening.

Raj Bhavan had also invited MPs, MLAs and MLCs to the event but no one from TRS turned up. Even the senior civil and police officials did not attend the celebrations.

In another indication of deepening differences between the CM and the Governor, she has not received the invitation for the main official Ugadi



event held at Pragati Bhavan, the official residence of the Chief Minister, on Saturday. The Governor said that she welcomes those who come at her invitation and doesn't bother about those who don't turn up.

Soundararajan told reporters that she received the invite, she would have set aside the protocol and attended the event.

While stating that she knows her limitations, the Governor made it clear that no one could check her. She said she did not have ego and she believed in maintaining good relations with all. She also announced that 'praja darbar' would be held at the Raj Bhavan from next month to

hear public grievances. She maintained that the Raj Bhavan is meant for the public welfare and keeping this in view it set up a grievance cell to address the problems of the public by sending representations to the government. Soundararajan became Governor of Telangana in September 2019. The relations between the CM and Governor were initially cordial but differences cropped up last year after the Governor did not approve a file sent by the State Cabinet recommending appointment of P. Kaushik Reddy as a member of Legislative Council. She had told the media that since the nominated post falls in the category of social service, she is trying

to get information about Kaushik Reddy's social service works.

The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) government later had to send Kaushik Reddy to the upper House of the state Legislature under MLA quota. The CM and ministers had also not attended Republic Day celebrations at the Raj Bhavan. The rift was also visible when they had received President Ram Nath Kovind on his arrival in Hyderabad in February to unveil a gold statue of saint Ramanujacharya. The differences deepened further after the state government commenced budget session of the State Legislature last month without customary address of the Governor. Soundararajan had taken exception to this. However, the government argued that there was no need for the Governor's address as it was not a new session but continuation of the previous session. The Governor was also not invited for the reopening of Yadadri temple on March 28. The Chief Minister had attended the rituals to mark the reopening of the temple after renovation. She was also not invited to Medaram Jatra, the tribal fair held in February. She, however, visited Medaram but there have been allegations that the officials were not present to receive her.

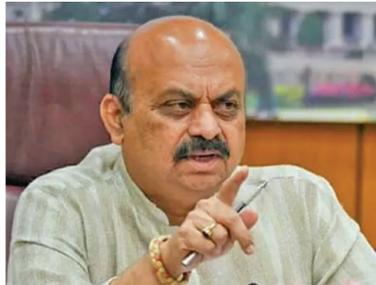
HALAL BAN ROW: K'TAKA CM DIRECTS ALL SPS, DCS TO BE VIGILANT, 7 HELD

■ Halal ban controversy in Karnataka has taken a serious turn in the state. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Saturday said that he has directed all Superintendents of Police (SP) and Deputy Commissioners to initiate strict action against elements who try to create problems during the festival.

Bengaluru | Agencies

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Karnataka is celebrating Ugadi festival on Saturday followed by 'Hosa tadukua' on Sunday. The people especially in south Karnataka feast on



non-vegetarian food en masse during this period. Hindutva activists are carrying out a full-fledged campaign that Hindus must not make purchase of halal cut meat.

Answering a question, Bommai said that he has directed to conduct peace meetings between leaders of communities and ensure that the law and order system is not disturbed in the state.

Meanwhile, Bhadravathi police in Shivamogga district arrested 7 persons for assaulting hotel staff demanding non-halal meat on Friday night. The arrested persons had gone to a chicken meat stall, abused and threatened the owner that he should not sell halal meat as 99 per cent of the population of the area follow Hindu religion.

The same group went to the Janata hotel and demanded jhatka cut meat. They insisted that the hotel should not sell halal cut meat. They quarrelled with a customer and assaulted one of the hotel staff. The hotel and meat shop owners had lodged a complaint with the police.

Shivamogga SP Lakshmi Prasad stated that based on two FIRs, Vadivelu, Savai Singh, Srikanth, Krishna, Gunda and other two persons were arrested.

Meanwhile, Shashikala Jolle, Minister for Muzarai and Wakf, stated on Saturday, "we are with Hindu activists who are carrying out campaigns against halal meat. I have to learn about halal and jhatka cut. Once I gather information, will talk to CM Bommai and he will take a call on it."

K'TAKA BAJRANG DAL ACTIVIST MURDER CASE: NIA EXPEDITES PROBE

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has expedited the probe in the murder case of Bajrang Dal activist Harsha after taking over from Karnataka police.

Bengaluru | Agencies

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has expedited the probe in the murder case of Bajrang Dal activist Harsha after taking over from Karnataka police.

Araga Jnanendra, Minister for Home on Saturday said that after finding about the background of the accused and the organisations behind them, it was felt appropriate to hand over the case to the NIA.

"The state has conducted an in-depth

investigation and it was found that it was intended to spark communal violence. Apart from this, I can't tell anything about the case as a Home Minister," he said. Lakshmi Prasad, SP of Shivamogga said that the local police have handed over all documents to the NIA and are cooperating in the investigation. Harsha was murdered by a gang in Shivamogga on February 20, triggering violence and the case made national headlines. The curfew was clamped in Shivamogga for 8 days to avoid violence. Later, the police arrested 10 persons in connection with the case and invoked the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against them. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said that it is more than a case of murder. The state government has provided Rs 25 lakh compensation to the family and the public have also donated large money.

NGT SUSPECTS WATER CONTAMINATION BEHIND DEATH OF CHILDREN IN GORAKHPUR

Expressing serious concern about the deaths and diseases of children in Gorakhpur district of which contamination of water is a possible cause, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary to undertake a visit to the site to take a stock of the ground situation.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Expressing serious concern about the deaths and diseases of children in Gorakhpur district of which contamination of water is a possible cause, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary to undertake a visit to the site to take a stock of the ground situation.

The principal bench of NGT chairperson

Adarsh Kumar Goel was hearing a grievance alleging contamination of water bodies and groundwater in Ramgarh Lake, Ami, Rapti and Rohani rivers in and around the district resulting in viral infections like brain fever and Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES).

The tribunal, in the order dated March 30, also directed a high-level team headed by an Expert in Neurovirology may also undertake a visit to the area within one month, accompanied by nominees of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Animal Husbandry and Medical Health and Family Welfare Departments, Uttar Pradesh.

The petitioner contended that Gorakhpur has a history of the death of hundreds of children at BRD Medical College, though the majority of patients come from different parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Such diseases at times prove fatal and if the patients survive, they suffer serious mental dis-



abilities. Sources of the virus are also said to be piggeries, water birds, and livestock which is further accelerated by contaminated water, it pointed out.

In the order, it was noted serious failure on the part of the authorities in controlling water pollution which is continuing.

Contributors to pollution are not merely private industries but also state authorities who have to manage the sewage, the order said.

"The state exists for the welfare of citizens and minimum guaranteed constitutional rights must be enforced. It is no satisfaction that some steps have been taken till pollution is completely

stopped and the health of the citizens and the source of water are secured under the public trust doctrine. Since we are assured by the Chief Secretary and the Additional Chief Secretaries that the situation will receive serious attention henceforth, we hope and expect meaningful, prompt and continuous action," the order read.

A serious concern is the deaths of children and diseases in the area of which contamination of water is a possible cause. Thus, the projects proposed in the form of Combined Effluent Treatment Plants (CETP) and sewage treatment plant (STP) need to be implemented on war footing so as to show the result on the ground, and to comply with the directions of the Supreme Court, it said. The Central Pollution Control Board also needs to monitor STPs in the context of Ramgarh lake, river Ami, Rapti, Ghagra, Rohini and to assess compliance with respect to fecal coliform and sewage utilisation plan, the green court directed.

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“ One can take the path of revolution but the revolution should not give a shock to the society. There is no place for violence in revolution.”



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MODI, DEUBA START RUPAY PAYMENT SYSTEM IN NEPAL, TRAIN SERVICES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepal counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba on Saturday jointly inaugurated cross-border passenger train services, RuPay payment system in Nepal and signed several Memorandums of Understanding.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepal counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba on Saturday jointly inaugurated cross-border passenger train services, RuPay payment system in Nepal and signed several Memorandums of Understanding.

The train services between Jainagar in India and Kurtha in Nepal was inaugurated on Saturday after delegates-level meeting

between the two leaders. The passenger train services have been built under India's Grant Assistance.

They also inaugurated Solu Corridor 132 KV power transmission line and sub-station in Nepal built under government of India's Line of Credit. Further, Nepal joined International Solar Alliance.

Both the leaders held delegation-

level meeting at Hyderabad House in Delhi on Saturday.

"Wide-ranging talks on our multi-faceted partnership are on the agenda," India's Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said.

Before reaching Hyderabad House, Deuba paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi and laid a wreath

at Raj Ghat. On Friday, Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Deuba in Delhi. He said, "I am confident that this visit will further strengthen our close neighbourly ties," he said.

Before that, Deuba visited the BJP headquarters and met party chief J.P. Nadda.

Deuba, his wife and four cabinet ministers of Nepal were part of the delegation that met Nadda. The meeting lasted for around half an hour. Nadda received Nepal Prime Minister Deuba at the BJP office.

After meeting, head of BJP overseas affairs cell Vijay Chauthaiwale had said that on party chief Nadda's invitation, Nepal Prime Minister Deuba, his wife and four cabinet ministers visited the BJP headquarters. "Discussion was held in a very cordial environment and the BJP chief briefed Nepal Prime Minister about the social works done by party workers during Covid," Chauthaiwale had said.

Deuba on Friday arrived in New Delhi on a three-day visit to India at the invitation of Modi.

Lavrov bats for actively developing Russia-India-China trilateral mechanism

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that he discussed with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar about actively developing the Russia-India-China trilateral mechanism in the interests of stabilising international relations and ensuring "equity in international affairs."



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that he discussed with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar about actively developing the Russia-India-China trilateral mechanism in the interests of stabilising international relations and ensuring "equity in interna-

tional affairs."

"This is especially true given that all the three countries - Russia, India and China - are now members of the UN Security Council. So we have a lot of plans," he said while responding to a query here on Friday over Moscow looking at Beijing and New Delhi to make up for a likely dip in its energy exports.

"We are close partners with both countries. The three of us participate in a number of international forums... There is our 'troika' - RIC (Russia, India, China)," he said while talking about

Moscow proposing an RIC summit earlier this year.

Lavrov left for Moscow on Friday after his two-day visit to India.

In Delhi, he called upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi and held discussions with Jaishankar over the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, crude oil and arms deal.

Lavrov briefed the Prime Minister on the situation in Ukraine, including the ongoing peace negotiations.

Modi reiterated his call for an early cessation of violence, and conveyed India's readiness to contribute in any way to the peace efforts.

Two Arunachal men shot at by security personnel due to 'mistaken identity'

In yet another case of "mistaken identity", the security personnel opened fire and injured two civilians in Arunachal Pradesh Tirap district before shifting them to the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) in Dibrugarh, officials said on Saturday.

Team Absolute | Itanagar

In yet another case of "mistaken identity", the security personnel opened fire and injured two civilians in Arunachal Pradesh Tirap district before shifting them to the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) in Dibrugarh, officials said on Saturday.

A district official said that the security personnel launched an operation between Hollam and Khowathong areas in Tirap district and opened fire injuring Nokphua Wangpan and Ramwang Wangsu, who were returning home after fishing late on Friday evening.

Doctors at the AMCH said that the civilians, who received bullet injuries in their legs and hands, are out of danger now.



Further details of the incident are awaited. The incident took place more than three months after 13 civilians were killed and several injured in a botched up army operation at Oting village in Mon district in Nagaland.

SOME PEOPLE UNABLE TO DIGEST INDIA'S GROWTH: VENKAIHAH NAIDU

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday said that some people are unable to digest India's growth.

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday said that some people are unable to digest India's growth.

He said that while India is being respected and recognised, some of the western media carry propaganda against it on small issues.

Naidu was addressing Telugu new year Ugadi celebrations at Swarna Bharat Trust at Muchintal on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

"The entire world is looking to India. India is being respected, recognised and being realised. Though some of the western media may carry propaganda against India on



small issues but larger public life, the value systems, the traditions and heritage of India are being respected everywhere," he said.

Some people, he remarked, were not able to

digest India's growth. The Vice-President also expressed concern over the decline in the conduct of some members in Parliament and state Assemblies. He said the kind of language being used was bringing bad name to the entire system.

Naidu, who is chairman of Rajya Sabha, said some incidents in Parliament and state legislatures were painful. He also found fault with the media for giving importance to such incidents. He said if the legislators speak well on issues it's not news for the media but if somebody creates commotion, uses bad language or resorts to personal attacks on others it becomes news.

"Good behaviour, good conduct and good delivery

is not a news," he said and advised media to realise its responsibility.

Naidu stressed the need to speak in one's own mother tongue. He said everybody should speak in their mother tongue at home and in the midst of those who understand that language and if he is with other Indians, he should speak in Indian languages.

"There is nothing wrong with learning foreign languages. You can learn any foreign language but you should speak in your mother tongue. This is our address and identity," he said.

Naidu also underlined the need for following the culture and traditions in daily life, including wishing others and the food habits.

Kashmiri Pandits hold grand prayer meetings in Srinagar on 'Navreh'

Team Absolute | Srinagar

Grand prayer meetings were held on Saturday by Kashmiri Pandits at the historic Durganag temple and the Mata Sharika Devi temple in Srinagar to celebrate 'Navreh', the first day of the new year, according to the Kashmiri Pandit calendar.

Kashmiri Pandits held special prayers at the Mata Sharika Devi temple situated on a hillock called the 'Hari Parbat' in the middle of the old city. This was the first such prayer meeting held on Navreh at the Sharika Devi temple 32 years after the migration of the local Pandits from their native land.

Before their exodus, local Pandits used to celebrate the beginning of the new year at this temple.

Those who had gathered



for the celebrations said the situation has improved in Kashmir in the last couple of years, and the number of terror incidents have also decreased.

People exuded confidence in the positive steps taken by the administration and the government and hoped to return to their homeland soon.

A grand Puja was also held at the Durganag temple in Dalgate area in Srinagar where a large number of people joined the prayers held for peace, prosperity and development of humanity in general and Kashmir in particular.

Murari Kaul, trustee of the Durganag temple trust, said the main purpose of

Saturday's Navreh prayers was to strengthen the traditional amity between the various communities of Kashmir.

"Huge damage has been caused to this brotherhood of ours by political forces of different shades. Despite their worst doing, the bond between the Muslim majority community and the Pandit minority community remains strong and vibrant as ever, and now there is a renewed effort to further strengthen this bond," Kaul said.

"Peace is gradually returning to the Valley and people are keen to safeguard the interests of the future generations. This year, Navreh coincides with the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan and this augurs well for the entire population of the Valley," Kaul added.

Chinese hacker group Deep Panda that hit several global firms is back

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A Chinese hacker group known as 'Deep Panda' that went into hibernation after attacking global entities some years ago, including in India, is back in action. Deep Panda has launched new attacks against finance, travel and cosmetic industries since last month, exploiting Log4Shell open source software vulnerability to deploy the new Fire Chili rootkit.

During the past month, FortiGuard Labs researchers detected a campaign by a Chinese advanced persistent threat (APT) hacking group that has been active for at least a decade, targeting government, defence, healthcare, telecom, and financial organisations for data theft and surveillance.

Following exploitation, Deep Panda deployed a backdoor on the infected machines. "Following forensic leads from the backdoor led us to discover a

novel kernel rootkit signed with a stolen digital certificate. We found that the same certificate was also used by another Chinese APT group, named Winniti, to sign some of their tools," the researchers said in a blog post.

The team attributed a series of opportunistic Log4Shell infections from the past month to Deep Panda. "Though previous technical publications on Deep Panda were published more than half a decade ago, new findings relate to a more recent report about the Milestone backdoor, which shows that their operations have continued throughout all these years," the researchers noted. Amid heightened border tensions between India and China, cybersecurity researchers last year revealed a concerted campaign against India's critical infrastructure, including the nation's power grid, from Chinese state-sponsored groups. The attacks, which coincided with the stand-

off between the two nations in May 2020, targeted a total of 12 firms, 10 of which were in the power generation and transmission sector. According to a report in Recorded Future, the victims included a power plant run by National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Limited and New Delhi-based Power System Operation Corporation Limited.

Investigators from the cybersecurity firm's Inskit Group revealed the malware deployed by the threat actor shared similar infrastructure with other Chinese groups APT41 (Winniti or Wicked Panda) and Tonto Team.

FortiGuard said that Although both Deep Panda and Winniti are known to use rootkits as part of their toolset, "Fire Chili is a novel strain with a unique code base different from the ones previously affiliated with the groups".

"The reason these tools are linked to two different groups is unclear at this time," they noted.

India, Nepal unveil joint vision in power sector

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India and Nepal on Saturday unveiled joint vision into bilateral cooperation in power sector and inked a few Memorandums of Understanding in this regard.

Indian Oil Corporation and Nepal Oil Corporation have signed two Memorandums of Understanding on Saturday during delegates level meeting at Hyderabad House, said Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla. The delegation level meeting was led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepal counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba. The Nepal Prime Minister is on three-day visit to India. The Memorandum of Understanding

have been signed for the renewal of the supply of petroleum products for a period of five years and sharing technical expertise. The secretary said that a joint statement for power trade was unveiled together.

Modi also conveyed to Deuba that their power export proposals have been cleared and it will contribute to Nepal's economic prosperity. "There was also a renewed commitment by both sides to move forward with Pancheshwar project," said Shringla during presser over both leaders' meeting.

Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further deepen the timeless linkages and bonds of geography, history, culture, commerce and people-to-people ties between the two countries.

In this context, both Prime Ministers noted the positive developments in each other's power sectors. India congratulated Nepal on its significant progress in the power sector including becoming a near power surplus country. Prime Minister Deuba appreciated India's recent cross-border electricity trade regulations that have enabled key partners like Nepal to access India's market and trade power with India.

He also acknowledged with appreciation India's contribution to developing Nepal's power sector, through capacity building and direct support to infrastructure projects related to generation and transmission. Both Prime Ministers agreed that there are unprecedented opportunities for expanding and fur-

ther strengthening mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in the power sector including joint development of power generation projects in Nepal, development of cross-border transmission infrastructure, bi-directional power trade with appropriate access to electricity markets in both countries based on mutual benefits, market demand and applicable domestic regulations of each country, coordinated operation of the national grids and institutional cooperation in sharing latest operational information, technology and know-how. To expand such cooperation to include their partner countries under the BBIN framework subject to mutually agreed terms and conditions between all involved parties, said joint

vision on power sector.

The statement said that Indian investment into Nepal's renewable power sector, in particular the Hydropower sector, has the potential to benefit both the countries by strengthening their economies generating employment, enhancing export earnings and contributing to further development of industrial and financial capacities, and mutually agreed sharing of other benefits.

Nepal invited Indian companies to invest in the development, construction and operation of viable renewable power projects, including in the Hydropower sector in Nepal, including storage-type projects, including through mutually beneficial partner-

ships. Recalling discussions during earlier high-level visits on the Pancheshwar Multipurpose project, including during the State Visit of Prime Minister of Nepal to India in August 2017, and recognizing the immense benefits for the people of both countries from this project, the two Prime ministers directed their concerned officials to expedite the bilateral discussions towards early finalization of the project's DPR.

Both Prime Ministers agreed to prioritize expeditious movement on projects and initiatives on the basis of this joint vision. They agreed to continue supporting each other's national growth and prosperity guided by mutual respect and equality.



Rumours being circulated to discredit Maharashtra: CM Uddhav Thackeray

The CM's statement comes amid rumours of a widening rift among MVA colleagues.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday lashed out against opposition parties for allegedly conspiring to defame Maharashtra.

Thackeray was speaking on the occasion of Bhumi Pujan ceremony of GST Bhavan building at Wadala on Saturday.

"An atmosphere is being created that there are rumours circulating somewhere in the government. But they are not true. We have named this government as Mahavikas Aghadi. Mahavikas is not just in our name, we are implementing it on the ground," Thackeray said via video conference.

"There are some people who want to create bitterness in us, I would like to say that if not for Maharashtra's contribution, the country's economy would be hit significantly," the CM added.

The CM's statement comes amid rumours of a widening rift among MVA colleagues. Dismissing speculations that Thackeray was not happy with Walse-Patil, the Chief Minister's Office quoting



Thackeray in a clarification said, "I have full faith in my cabinet colleagues and they are working very well. Such reports are baseless and misleading." CM also thereby made it amply clear that there was no plan to divest Walse-Patil of the home department or Shiv Sena taking the charge of the home department.

GOVERNMENT WORKING ON SIMPLIFICATION OF 'OFFICIAL MARATHI': CM

Many Marathi terms used in the official communication are difficult to understand, Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray conceded.

Mumbai: The state government is working on simplification of the 'official Marathi' which is at times nearly incomprehensible, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said here on Saturday. Speaking at the foundation stone-laying for the main centre of the Marathi Bhasha Bhavan on the occasion of Gudhi Padva (Maharashtrian new year), he noted that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was keen on the use of Marathi in his administration. Maharashtra had to "fight and shed blood" to get Mumbai as capital of their state, Thackeray said, adding, "Those who forget history have no future." Many Marathi terms used in the official communication are difficult to understand, the chief minister conceded. "Our government is working on simplifying it... Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj wanted our own language to be the medium of governance," he said.

"Knowledge of English is important. I don't hate other languages, but I will not tolerate insult to Marathi. There is no need to hate other languages, but there should not be encroachment by other languages too," the chief minister said. Thackeray also stated that his government will not tolerate "atrocities" against the Marathi-speaking population in Karnataka, with which Maharashtra has a long-standing border dispute. The chief minister also said that making the study of Marathi compulsory in schools in the state or mandating Marathi signs for shops and businesses did not amount to atrocity.

MALIK MOVES SC CHALLENGING BOMBAY HC ORDER

Maharashtra cabinet minister and senior NCP leader Nawab Malik has moved the Supreme Court, challenging the Bombay High Court, which declined his interim bail in a habeas corpus petition. Malik has claimed his arrest was completely illegal.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra cabinet minister and senior NCP leader Nawab Malik has moved the Supreme Court, challenging the Bombay High Court, which declined his interim bail in a habeas corpus petition. Malik has claimed his arrest was completely illegal.

On March 15, the Bombay high court rejected Malik's interim application seeking immediate release in a case of money laundering registered against him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Malik is in judicial custody till April 4 and he was arrested on February 23 based on an FIR registered against terrorist Dawood Ibrahim and his aides. The High Court held that Malik was arrested by the ED, and subsequently remanded to custody following due process and there was no reason for it to pass any interim order for his release.

Denying relief to Malik, the High Court had said that just because the special Prevention of Money Laundering Act

(PMLA) court's order remanding him in custody is not in his favour, it does not make it illegal or wrong.

Malik has claimed that the High Court refusing to grant him interim release is in violation of the settled position in Arnab Goswami vs Maharashtra government case. The plea contended that his petition was strictly on the law, and the High Court could not have given prima facie finding regarding Section 3 of PMLA, without giving reasons.

The ED has alleged that Munira Plumber's prime property in Kurla, worth Rs 300 crore as per current market value, was usurped by Malik through Solidus Investments Pvt Ltd, a company purportedly owned by his family members. The ED has claimed that this was done in connivance with Dawood's sister Haseena Parkar, her bodyguard Salim Patel and 1993 bomb blasts convict Sardar Shah Wali Khan.

In his plea in the top court, Malik claimed his arrest was illegal and violated his fundamental rights, as well as statutory provisions, and he was entitled to writ of habeas corpus.

NGT ASKS MAHA PCB TO CHECK ALLEGED GREEN VIOLATIONS OF THERMAL POWER STATIONS NEAR NAGPUR

The National Green Tribunal has directed the Maharashtra State Pollution Control Board to look into media reports against the violations of environmental norms by Koradi and Khaperkheda Thermal Power Stations near Nagpur.

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has directed the Maharashtra State Pollution Control Board to look into media reports against the violations of environmental norms by Koradi and Khaperkheda Thermal Power Stations near Nagpur. As per the plea, it was alleged that these Thermal Power Stations adversely affect the ground and surface drinking water in and around Nagpur city by discharging ash and effluents in the streams and rivers. n "Having regard to the allegations of violation of environmental norms by the Thermal Power Stations as mentioned above, we find it necessary to direct the Maharashtra State PCB to look into the matter and take further remedial action in accordance with the law." read an order passed by the principal bench of NGT headed by Chairperson Adarsh Kumar Goel. Accordingly, the application has been disposed of. "The copy of the order, also be forwarded to Maharashtra State PCB by e-mail for compliance," read the order dated March 30.



Police to probe cruiser raid witness Prabhakar Sail's death

Taking serious cognisance of the death of Prabhakar Sail due to a suspected heart attack, the Maharashtra government on Saturday ordered the police to probe his sudden demise.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Taking serious cognisance of the death of Prabhakar Sail due to a suspected heart attack, the Maharashtra government on Saturday ordered the police to probe his sudden demise.

After doubts were raised over the death of Sail -- a key 'panch witness' in the infamous Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) raids on the Cordelia Cruise ship last October, Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil has directed Mumbai Police to investigate.

Sail, in his mid-40s reportedly suffered a cardiac arrest at his home in Mahul, Chembur, according to his lawyer Tushar Khandare. His grieving



and aged mother Hiravati Sail told mediapersons that her son had been incommunicado for the past few days, and leaves behind two minor daughters. Earlier, on Saturday morning, the ruling ally Nationalist Congress Party and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) raised questions on the witness' death that stunned political circles on the auspicious Gudhi Padwa Day (Maharashtrian New Year).

Terming it as a 'suspicious development', NCP chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation probe.

BJP legislator Atul Bhatkalkar wondered whether Sail had meted a fate similar to the Thane businessman

Mansukh Hiran who was found murdered after the sensational case involving a SUV with 20 gelatin sticks was recovered near the home of industrialist Mukesh Ambani, erupted in February 2021. Soon after the October 2 raids aboard the cruiser, Sail had created a stir accusing then NCB Mumbai Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede of various irregularities, and hurled allegations of extortion from Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan whose son Aryan was among those detained and later arrested. Besides Aryan Khan, around 19 others were nabbed and two are still in custody, while the NCB has been granted two months' extension to file its chargesheet in the Cordelia Cruise ship swoop case. Sail -- who was described as a personal bodyguard of another independent witness and a BJP activist K.P. Gosavi, had later made several shocking revelations that raised serious questions on the NCB raids and Wankhede.

Incidentally, after the claims by Sail and later the serial exposes made by Minister Nawab Malik in the case, osavi came under a cloud and was arrested by the Pune Police in a cheating case.

CHANDRAPUR SCORES HIGHEST MAX TEMPERATURE ON THIRD CONSECUTIVE DAY

With 43.3 degrees Celsius, Chandrapur in eastern Maharashtra recorded the highest maximum temperature on the third consecutive day on Friday even as heat wave conditions prevailed in east Madhya Pradesh, southeast Uttar Pradesh, pockets of Himachal Pradesh, and west Rajasthan.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With 43.3 degrees Celsius, Chandrapur in eastern Maharashtra recorded the highest maximum temperature on the third consecutive day on Friday even as heat wave conditions prevailed in east Madhya Pradesh, southeast Uttar Pradesh, pockets of Himachal Pradesh, and west Rajasthan.

On Thursday, Chandrapur had recorded 44 degrees Celsius while on Wednesday, it was 44.2 degrees Celsius. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted heat wave conditions are very likely in



some parts of Madhya Pradesh for next five days, isolated heat wave conditions over next five days, and over Himachal Pradesh, southwest Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh on Saturday and over elangana on Saturday and Sunday.

CBI to bring Anil Deshmukh, others to Delhi in Rs 100 cr extortion case

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is set to take the custody of NCP leader and former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, Sanjeev Palande, Kundan Shinde and Sachin Vaze in connection with the Rs 100 crore extortion case involving former Mumbai top cop Param Bir Singh.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

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Sources close to the development said that all the four accused persons will be brought to Delhi for further investigation.

Deshmukh, Palande and Shinde were in the custody of a special ED court, while Vaze was in the custody of NIA court. Both the courts permitted that their custody be taken over by the CBI.

Deshmukh, Palande and Shinde are currently lodged at Arthur Road Jail, while Vaze is at Talaja Jail. The superintendents of the respective jails have been informed about the development.



On April 21, 2021, the CBI had filed an FIR against Deshmukh and had initiated a probe.

There are as many as five alleged corruption and extortion cases against Param Bir Singh. On May 4 last year, he went missing to avoid probe against him. Later, he appeared before the Mumbai Crime Branch to record his statement after the Supreme Court granted him relief that he will not be arrested. The CBI had earlier given clean chit to Deshmukh but they lodged an FIR later to further probe the matter.

The CBI has also rechecked the statements of seven persons, all Mumbai cops, who were reportedly deployed in the security of Deshmukh.

Deshmukh and Vaze used to talk over phone frequently. Between December 2020 and February 2021, Vaze allegedly collected around Rs 4.70 crore from the owners of Orchestra bar in Mumbai.

Deshmukh's PA Shinde allegedly collected the said amount from Vaze. Deshmukh's PS Suryankant Palande allegedly passed instructions on behalf of Deshmukh.

Nagpur lawyer Satish Uke, brother sent to ED custody till April 6

A Mumbai court on Friday sent Nagpur-based lawyer Satish Uke, who targeted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and his brother Pradeep Uke to the custody of Enforcement Directorate (ED) till April 6 in an alleged money-laundering case.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Mumbai court on Friday sent Nagpur-based lawyer Satish Uke, who targeted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and his brother Pradeep Uke to the custody of Enforcement Directorate (ED) till April 6 in an alleged money-laundering case.

The siblings were arrested after the ED raided their homes at Parvati Nagar early on Thursday, seized laptops, documents, mobiles and other material, detained them and then flew them to Mumbai late last night.

The brothers were produced before Additional Sessions Judge G.B. Gurao, who remanded them to six days ED custody for fur-

ther investigations in the case. The ED has contended that the case concerns a 1.5 acre land deal in Nagpur worth around Rs 11.50 crore which the Uke brothers allegedly bought on the basis of forged documents. Advocate Satish Uke has been in the limelight for filing several cases against BJP leaders, including a couple of election cases related to the current Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis. Uke had also moved the Bombay High Court (Nagpur Bench) seeking a probe into the 'suspicious and untimely' demise of a CBI Judge B.H. Loya in 2014, and compensation for his family members, among many other high-profile cases. Recently, the lawyer was appointed by Maharashtra Congress President Nana F. Patole for fighting his Rs 500-crore defamatory suit filed in Nagpur against senior IPS officer Rashmi Shukla and others involved in the illegal phone tapping scam. The Ukes' arrest sparked off another war with the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) allies Shiv Sena, Nationalist Congress Party and Congress slamming the BJP for blatantly misusing central investigative agencies to hound political opponents and all those who dare to expose the misdoings and speak out against the BJP or the Centre.

With COVID restrictions lifted, Gudhi Padwa celebrated with gusto in Maharashtra

All restrictions including the mask mandate would be lifted from April 2, the state government had announced two days ago.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After two years, people across Maharashtra celebrated Gudhi Padwa, the start of the Marathi new year, with pomp and fervor as there were no pandemic-related restrictions to worry about.

All restrictions including the mask mandate would be lifted from April 2, the state government had announced two days ago.

The auspicious day marks the start of the Hindu new year for Marathi- and Konkani-speaking people.

Processions of women and men decked up in traditional attire and jewelry, absent from the celebrations in the last two years due to the pandemic, returned to the streets this year. The highlight of the processions in Marathi-dominated areas in Mumbai and neighbouring Thane and Dombivali were



women wearing nine-yard sarees and turbans riding motorbikes, accompanied by dhol-tasha bands. Gudhi Padwa is celebrated on the first day of the Hindu month of Chaitra.

The hallmark of the day is the 'Gudi' or 'Gudhi', an upturned silver or copper vessel mounted on top of a bamboo stick, draped in a piece of cloth and garlanded with strings of flowers, mango and neem leaves and sugar crystals, erected outside houses.

While delicacies like Puran Poli and Shrikhand are prepared on this day, partaking of a mixture of bitter neem leaves and sugar is also a part of the day's rites.

Attempts made to topple Maharashtra govt, no unrest among allies: Thackeray

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has refuted rumours of differences among the alliance partners in the Maharashtra government and said attempts were being made to topple the government.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On the day of the Marathi new year, Gudhi Padwa, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said the talks about differences among the alliance partners of the state government were just rumours and that the alliance was standing firm, adding that attempts were being made to



topple the government.

Thackeray said the state government would hit back at attempts to topple it. He further alleged that a conspiracy was being hatched to discredit the state and said the country would suffer if Maharashtra is discredited as the state contributes the most to the country's economy. He said just as the name of the alliance suggested, the government was all for the development of the state and its people. Uddhav

Thackeray said that due to the pandemic, not much development work could be carried out, but the government was serious in its commitment and believed in working on ground zero and not just making announcements.

Thackeray said several facilities for the police department were being inaugurated. The Chief Minister spoke about the Marathi Bhasha Bhavan and the new metro lines as the symbol of Marathi identity.

Over the last couple of months, the BJP alleged that all was not well within the state government. State BJP leaders said the Sena was being used by the Congress and the NCP and wasn't even aware of it.

On Friday, the office of the Chief Minister refuted the charges of the BJP that Uddhav Thackeray wasn't

happy with the working of the Home Department and wanted the same from the NCP so that it could act tough against the BJP.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's office has issued a statement in response to media reports suggesting that the Shiv Sena is upset with state Home Minister Dilip Walse Patil for 'being soft' on the BJP. The statement was issued after a meeting between CM Thackeray and Patil on Friday.

The leaders of the BJP had also pointed out that the Congress too wasn't happy with the alliance. The Common Minimum Programme, under which the MVA government was formed and the three alliance partners had come together. The Congress leaders, however, said there were no differences within the alliance.



GAURAV DIWAS TRADITION STARTED TO CONNECT PEOPLE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES AND VILLAGES : CM CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the celebration of Gaurav Diwas has started in the state to ensure people's participation in the development of cities and villages. Today the entire Nasrullaganj city is coming on one platform and writing a new chapter of development. Chouhan called upon the residents of Nasrullaganj to make their city the number one city of the country in collaboration with the government.

Chief Minister said that from April 21, Kanya Vivah Yojana will be started again in the state and Rs. 55,000 will be given for marriage and family arrangements. He also announced the creation of industrial area and setting up of new industries in Nasrullaganj. Chouhan was addressing the Nagar Sabha on the occasion of Gaurav Diwas of Nasrullaganj on Saturday. Chouhan said that next year, Nasrullaganj will observe a 3-day Gaurav Diwas celebration, in which sports competitions would be organized along with cultural programme. Chief Minister said that Nasrullaganj tehsil would be declared Water Plus with cleanliness while bringing it to the top in the category of small towns. He said that construction and development works worth Rs 38 crore have been dedicated and bhoomi-pujan has been performed to equip the city with infrastructure. Decision has been taken to waive off electricity bills of the poor people during Corona period. For this, the gov-



ernment has deposited Rs 21 thousand crore. In Nasrullaganj tehsil, electricity bills of Rs 34 crore of the poor will be waived.

Chouhan said that Ladli Laxmi Diwas will also be celebrated on May 2. State government will pay the fees for the higher education of girls to educate them and make them self-reliant. Reiterating his government's commitment to the safety of women, especially daughters, the Chief Minister said that the birth of daughters should be celebrated.

Chouhan said that if the society pledges not to consume liquor, then the government can

also shut down liquor shops. He said that he believes that the society will have to be aware and take a pledge for the prohibition of drug addiction. Drugs destroy the society. Without preparing the society, prohibition of alcohol increases the business of illicit liquor, which is even more dangerous. He also talked about increasing public awareness while administering oath for de-addiction to the residents of Nasrullaganj. Referring to the meeting with cobbler Shri Arun during the city tour, Chief Minister said that the society along with the government will have to worry about the poor

and downtrodden. He said that all such families should be made financially capable by benefiting them from the street vendor scheme. The Chief Minister said that efforts are being made to empower self-help groups and women of Aajeevika Mission and provide market for their products. We want that the income of every woman should be at least Rs 10 thousand per month.

Chouhan said that the society will also have to play a role in the campaign being run by the government to end malnutrition among children to save children. He also appealed to the citizens to adopt Anganwadi. Chief Minister urged the farmers and able people to participate in improving the city's Anganwadis. The Chief Minister said that now the children of the poor would study in modern CM Rise schools, where besides providing them education in a good environment, buses will also ply to bring pick and drop them. Chief Minister said that connecting youth with employment and self-employment is also in the priority of the government. For this, Mukhya Mantri Udyami Kranti Yojana is being started from April 5, which will prove to be a milestone in the direction of self-employment. Chouhan urged the residents to participate in development and make a committee of 10-12 people at each ward level and monitor every work including cleanliness. He said that there has never been a shortage of funds for the development of the city, but development can be improved with public cooperation.

MP gov't reshuffles bureaucracy; Malay Shrivastava appointed chairman of PEB

In a reshuffle of senior IAS officers, the Madhya Pradesh government on Friday appointed Malay Shrivastava as the new chairman of the Professional Examination Board (PEB), sources said.

Engineering, the sources said. Senior IAS officer SN Mishra has been posted as the Vice Chairman of NVDA in place of Keshari.

Mishra will continue to hold charge as Additional Chief Secretary, Water Resources and Transport, besides heading NVDA, the sources said.

Another senior IAS officer and Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture, Ajit Kesari, has been given the additional charge as Director General (DG) of RCPV Naronha Academy of Administration.

Senior IAS officer and Principal Secretary, Personnel, Deepthi Gaud Mukherjee will be relieved from the additional charge of DG, RCPV Naronha Academy of Administration, sources said. In a separate order, the state government has given the additional charge of Legislative Affairs to ACS, General Administration, Vinod Kumar.

Besides, senior IAS officer and Principal Secretary, Finance, Manoj Govil, has been promoted to the rank of Additional Chief Secretary, the sources added.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In a reshuffle of senior IAS officers, the Madhya Pradesh government on Friday appointed Malay Shrivastava as the new chairman of the Professional Examination Board (PEB), sources said.

Shrivastava succeeded senior bureaucrat ICP Keshari who retired from service on Thursday. Keshari was also serving as the Vice Chairman of the Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA) at the time of his retirement.

Shrivastava will continue to hold the charge of Additional Chief Secretary in the Public Health

Energy Minister Will Undertake Padyatra from Gwalior to Datia

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Energy Minister Pradhyan Singh Tomar will travel on foot from Gwalior to Datia from 4 to 7 April. In between of his travel Tomar will resolve electricity related problems of electricity consumers in upcoming cities, villages and Majre tolls. Jan Choupals and Grievance Redressal Camps will be organised in the big cities during the padyatra. It is worth mentioning that Tomar has done many padyatras before and has resolved the problems of the consumers.

During the padyatra, while starting from Koteswar Temple, Gwalior at 8 am on April 4, the first day padyatra of Energy Minister will pass through Ghasmandi Square, Qila Gate, Hazira, Padhav Sindhia Girls School, Basant Vihar, Chetakpuri, Jhansi Road Police Station, Vicky's Factory and conclude at Empire Resort. Jan Choupal and Grievance Redressal Camp will be organised at

Venus Marriage Garden Wiki Factory at 5:00 pm and after that at Empire Resort from 8 pm. He will make the night halt here. On the second day of the yatra, on April 5 passing through Empire Resort at 6 am, after holding Jan Choupal and grievance redressal camp at Jurassic Park, Jaurasi at 10 am, the redressal of consumer complaints will be resolved at Jan Choupal and grievance redressal camp at Tekanpur at 8 pm at Hotel Sheela.

Jan Choupal and Grievance Redressal Camp will be organised on the third day of padyatra at Dabra at 10 am at Jalsa Marriage Garden and at 8 pm at Gauraghat at Rangla Punjab. Departing from Gauraghat on 7th April, the last and fourth day of the padyatra, a Jan Choupal and Grievance Redressal Camp will be organised at Blue Star in Datia. Energy Minister Shri Tomar will leave for Gwalior after having a darshan of Pitambara Mata at 4 pm, ending the padyatra at 6 pm.

The Managing Director of Madhya Kshetra Vidyut Vitran Company Ganesh Shankar Mishra has said that the Chief General Manager, General Manager and Deputy General Manager level officers of the company will be present in the Jan Choupals and grievance redressal camps to be organised during the padyatra of the Energy Minister from April 4 to April 7. Complaints of electricity consumers will be redressed. He said that the State Government and the company are committed to ensure uninterrupted and quality power supply to the electricity consumers. The Managing Director has appealed to the consumers of Gwalior region that for redressal of any kind of complaint related to electricity bill and electricity supply to the consumers, they can get their grievances redressed by reaching the Jan Choupals to be organised during the padyatra of the Energy Minister from Gwalior to Datia from April 4 to April 7.

'No cheers': BJP leaders react to MP gov't's new excise policy

The Madhya Pradesh government's new excise policy for the financial year 2022-23, which allows the sale of liquor at all airports in the state and select supermarkets in four big cities, has come into effect on Friday.

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The Madhya Pradesh government's new excise policy for the financial year 2022-23, which allows the sale of liquor at all airports in the state and select supermarkets in four big cities, has come into effect on Friday.

With the implementation of the new excise policy, alcohol will now be cheaper in Madhya Pradesh as the state government has announced to slash retail prices of liquor by 20 per cent. Besides, a home bar licence will also be issued at an annual fee of Rs 50,000 to applicants having an annual individual income of Rs 1 crore or more. However, the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led government's decision has come under severe criticism from the opposition Congress, as well as some Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders including former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Uma Bharti.

With the price slashed -- a first in almost a decade -- the Madhya Pradesh government implemented the new excise policy claiming it will help to prevent smuggling from neighbouring states and bring down the sale of illicit liquor, which has led to numerous deaths in the state in 2021. Senior BJP leader Bharti, who has been vocal against liquor trade and has been campaigning against it, has opposed the new excise policy.

"Today, we have implemented a new liquor policy in Madhya Pradesh. The new rules aim to ensure more alcohol is available to people and more liquor is served at liquor shops. The rules are being opposed by the women of the state," she said. In another tweet, Bharti said: "I am with the women and daughters of Madhya Pradesh. I am also concerned for the sons who have become victims of alcohol abuse. I am ashamed that we are

earning revenue by playing with their honour and life."

The state Congress leaders took a sarcastic jibe while congratulating the BJP-led state government for implementing the new excise policy.

Madhya Pradesh Congress General Secretary (media), K.K. Mishra took a jibe at Bharti spelling 'Madya Pradesh' ('madya' means madira or liquor) instead of Madhya Pradesh. "Congratulations Uma ji. Today onwards, milk and medicines are expensive, alcohol is cheaper in Madya Pradesh," Mishra tweeted.

It was, however, surprising that some BJP leaders too are opposing establishment of new liquor shops in their respective constituencies.

BJP leaders such as Krishna Gaur, the daughter-in-law of former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Babulal Gaur, have opposed opening of new liquor shops in the state. Gaur, a BJP legislator from



Govindpura seat in Bhopal district, stood in support of women from her constituency to oppose a new liquor shop opened in Barkhera Pathani area, the locality where Uma Bharti two weeks ago had smashed a liquor shop. However, the new liquor shop in Barkhera Pathani area is being opened by a person who is said to be close to the BJP. The new liquor shop was intended to operate from April 1, but a large number of women sat on a protest at the site since Thursday evening. Another BJP legislator K.P. Tripathi protested against opening of a new liquor shop in Rewa district. Though, Tripathi is an MLA from Semariya (an Assembly constituency in Rewa district), he protested against it in Rewa as the new liquor shop belongs to a local Congress leader Abhay Mishra.

CM PLANTED CASSIA AND MOULSHREE SAPLINGS



Bhopal: Chief Minister Chouhan planted saplings of Cassia and Moulshree along with the representatives of Sindhu Sena in Smart City Park. Chouhan conveyed Chetichand greetings and best wishes to the representatives of Sindhu Sena. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Rakesh Kukreja, Darshan Kukreja, Anil Tharwani, Narendra Thakur, Sunil Sarathe and Atul Ghentat of Sindhu Sena planted saplings. The representatives presented a cap symbolizing Sindhi culture to Chief Minister Chouhan. Moulshree planted today is also called Kesav in Sanskrit, Moilsari or Bakool in Hindi. It is a tree of medicinal importance, which has been used in Ayurveda for centuries. The bark and leaves of Cassia are used in making Ayurvedic medicines.

CHIEF MINISTER INSTALLED GUDI ON GUDI PADWA

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan along with wife Sadhna Singh installed Gudi at his residence on the occasion of Indian New Year Gudi Padwa. This Gudi is used as an auspicious symbol and a victory sign. There is a tradition of installing Gudi at the door of the house on the day of Gudi Padwa. It is more prevalent in Maharashtra. In Indian cultural tradition, auspicious works begin with Gudi Padwa. Chouhan has wished for the welfare of the people of the state.

CM Pays Tribute to Dr. Hedgewar on His Anniversary

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid homage to the founder of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, on his anniversary. Chouhan garlanded his portrait in the auditorium at his residence office.

Hedgewar was of revolutionary nature since childhood, he hated the British rulers. He founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in 1925 on Vijayadashami. Hedgewar was of the opinion that we became disorganised and weak due to the caste discrimination and untouchability. As a result, we



had to lose at the hands of a handful of robbers. Had to bear the curse of slavery. Along with strengthening the

nation, his top priority was to make the society organised, disciplined and powerful.

More than 384 Crores Allocated under PMAY (Urban)

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Urban Development and Housing Minister Bhupendra Singh has informed that a total of Rs 384 crore 38 lakh 13 thousand has been allocated for the approved houses in the approved BLC component projects under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban). Singh has said that the construction of houses should be completed soon by utilizing the allotted amount.

Additional Commissioner-Mission Director Urban

Administration and Development Satendra Singh has informed that an amount of Rs 156 crore 55 lakh 67 thousand has been released as first installment for one lakh 26 thousand 59 houses, Rs 70 crore 97 lakh 21 thousand as second installment for one lakh 47 thousand 292 houses and Rs 156 crore 85 lakh 25 thousand as third installment for one lakh 17 thousand 750 houses. The houses are being constructed in various urban bodies.

"Kindra" is IGRMS' Exhibit of the Month

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under its popular museum series 'Exhibit of the Month,' Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), a traditional object is displayed in the appearance for a whole month. The exhibit for the month of April, 2022 - "Kindra" - A String Instrument of Pando Community from Village: Sukhari, Tehsil: Ambikapur, District: Surguja, State: Chhattisgarh, is on display in the indoor exhibition building - Veethi Sankul. The 'exhibit of the month' was inaugurated by Shri Rakesh Kumar Bhatt, Assistant Curator, IGRMS, renowned people present on this occasion. This exhibit of the month had been collected by Smt. Rashmi Shukla, Assistant Keeper and composed by Shri Mohan Lal Goyal, Museum Assistant.

About the exhibit displayed in the exhibition Mohan Lal Goyal, Museum Assistant told that Kindra is an ancient string instrument of Pando tribe of the Chhattisgarh made of bamboo and tooma (dried gourd). It is also known as Kindra or Tambura in Madhya Pradesh and Tambura in Karnataka. The Kindra prepared by covering tooma with Goh skin (Indian monitor lizard) is held with the left hand and played with a thick iron wire with the right hand. Ghungroos (small metallic bells) are also attached to this wire. The



sound of these bells create a wonderful effect when combined with the song. The sweet sound of tin bhinn bhinn emanates from Kindra. Kindra is played by moving around while dancing or keeping it up right in standing position in the lap. It is also a favorite instrument of Bhajan singers and Pandwani singers. The length of the Kindra is about three to four feet. It consists of a long bamboo stick, which is attached to a round tooma (dry gourd). After becoming part of the Kindra, the tooma is known as Tabli. It consists of three strings, which are attached to the nail on the side of the tooma and three separate pegs

on the other side. These strings pass over a wooden bridge over the tooma and are tied to their respective pegs at the other end running parallel to the entire bamboo stick. The top part of the kindra is decorated with peacock feathers. Made of bamboo, tooma and Goh skin, this instrument is played while singing hymns and other songs. A rope is attached to the kindra to hang it on the wall or to carry it on the shoulder from one place to another. Kindra is one such major string instrument, which is widely used in Chhattisgarh on various occasions such as entertainment, rituals, festivals and singing of

goddess hymns. Black bangles are used to protect from evil eye. A peacock feather is also attached on the upper part for beautification. To keep the upper end steady while playing, it is held with one hand. The player plays it according to his song and dance, emitting different types of sounds from the kindra. Kindra is also used among many other communities. Eminent Pandwani singer Teejan Bai, Shanti Bai Chelak, Ritu Varma and Jhaduram Devangan etc. have an important role in getting this instrument a place on the world stage. Kindra has several parts: 1. Tabli- To make it, the upper part of the tooma is cut and a bamboo stick is fixed in it towards the opening. 2. Keel- A nail is put on the bamboo stick coming out of the lower part of the tabli to tie the strings. 3. Bamboo stick (Dandi)- This bamboo sticks about 3 to 4 feet long and about 3 to 4 inches thick. 4. Bridge- It is a thin strip made of wood. The bridge is a device that supports the strings as well as keep them separate. 5. Tuning pegs- These pegs are made of wood and three in numbers. Pegs are used to tighten or loosen the strings to achieve the correct pitch. 6. Tangni- A rope called tangni tied in kindra, which is used to hang it from the shoulder. 7. Pointed ring- It is made of a thick iron wire. Holding it in the right hand, the strings of the kindra are struck with it to produce the sound.



Actress-singer Rachel Zegler, who received accolades for her work in Steven Spielberg's, 'West Side Story' is set to lend her voice to the lead character of Princess Ellian in the musical feature, 'Spellbound', reports 'Deadline'.



RACHEL ZEGLER TO VOICE CHARACTER OF PRINCESS ELLIAN IN 'SPELLBOUND'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress-singer Rachel Zegler, who received accolades for her work in Steven Spielberg's, 'West Side Story' is set to lend her voice to the lead character of Princess Ellian in the musical feature, 'Spellbound', reports 'Deadline'.

As per 'Deadline', Ellian's character is described as a tenacious princess who must go on a journey to save her family and kingdom after a mysterious spell transforms her parents into monsters and threatens to cover Lumbria in darkness forever. Apple Original Films and Skydance Animation's 'Spellbound', is being directed by Vicky Jenson with Lauren Hynek & Elizabeth Martin and Linda Woolverton penning the script. The original score for the film hails from Academy Award-winner Alan Menken, with lyrics by Glenn Slater. Chris Montan serves as executive music producer. John Lasseter, David Ellison, Dana Goldberg and David Lipman are producing for Skydance Animation.

'Spellbound' adds to the expanding lineup of Apple Original Films and Skydance Animation projects, alongside upcoming titles such as the animated series 'Wondra'.

Talking about Zegler's work in 'West Side Story', the film earned her critical acclaim and played a big part in her landing the huge role as the titular character in Disney's new 'Snow White', which is currently in production. She will be seen next alongside Zachary Levi, Helen Mirren, and Lucy Liu in DC Comics' 'Shazam! Fury of the Gods'.

Singer Shawn Mendes' new song 'When You're Gone' was inspired by his breakup from girlfriend and singer Camila Cabello and it helped him "process" the idea of being alone again.

Shawn Mendes' new song was inspired by his split from Camila

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Shawn Mendes' new song 'When You're Gone' was inspired by his breakup from girlfriend and singer Camila Cabello and it helped him "process" the idea of being alone again. He said: "I think, in a lot of ways, it was just me kind of processing what it feels like to be on my own again, and processing what it feels like to learn how to cope and be there for myself."

"The original song was really a sad ballad and it ended up turning into an upbeat tempo kind of song, so it's interesting... I think if you can surround a song in a sonic soundscape that makes people excited, it allows people to listen more."

The Stitches hitmaker went on to explain that "sharing vulnerable lyrics" has always been "important" to him in his songwriting as it helps people connect, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

He told ETOnline: "Sharing music and sharing vulnerable lyrics has always been important to me, because

potentially there's someone who's going through the exact same thing. I think that it's kind of creating a world where somebody can feel related to and less alone."

The popstars initially announced their breakup to fans towards the end of 2021, claiming that while their romantic relationship was over, their love for each other was "stronger than ever." In a joint statement, they said: "Hey guys, we've decided to end our romantic relationship but our love for another as humans is stronger than ever. We started our relationship as best friends and will continue to be best friends."

We so appreciate your support from the beginning and moving forward. Camila and Shawn."



Chris Pine loves taking ballet lessons

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Chris Pine regrets not starting the ballet classes "years ago" and described it as an "incredible" form of exercise. The 41-year-old actor told People magazine: "I love it. I wish I'd done it years ago. It's an incredible workout. I just find it so beautiful because you have to be so strong and kind of masculine, so to speak, but also very gentle and feminine with your arms and your hands. It's just a very difficult art form." Pine got the idea from watching a ballet dancer perform alongside the musician Hozier at a gig, reports femalefirst.co.uk. He said: "One, it's artistic, but a lot of vanity. I had watched this video of this great Russian dancer dancing to Hozier in this church. I was like, 'Who is this guy?' I was like, 'I want to look like that.' He's a ballet dancer. And I was like, 'I should take ballet.'" On

Wednesday, 'The Contractor' star shared that he knew only knows who Kim Kardashian and her boyfriend Pete Davidson are because he "just got an iPhone," and is already missing not having a smartphone - which he brands as a "crack machine". Pine said that he could "tell you everything about Pete Davidson and Kim Kardashian", but "couldn't tell you a f***** thing about literature", lamenting that he read up to 15 books a month before getting the phone. He said: "I had a flip phone for four years or three years and then I just got an iPhone because I felt pummelled by how difficult being analog [was]. It was very difficult, but having just gotten this crack machine, it's really bad." "These things are really, really bad. I may immediately go back to a flip phone. I don't know if I can handle it. I don't know if my soul can handle it."

Jerrod Carmichael officially comes out as gay on his special 'Rothaniel'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Comedian Jerrod Carmichael -- who is hosting 'Saturday Night Live' on April 2 -- has officially come out in his new HBO special, which premieres Friday night.

'Rothaniel', which was taped in February at the Blue Note Jazz Club in New York City, weaves stories of Carmichael's family history in with his own coming out process, reports 'Variety'.

At times contemplative, buoyant, and occasionally heartbroken, Carmichael talks about the weight of keeping this secret throughout his life and career, and how coming out has changed his relationships with his friends and family for both the better and the worse.

After telling a story about realising his father had been cheating on his mother for years, Carmichael takes a beat and looks out at his audience.

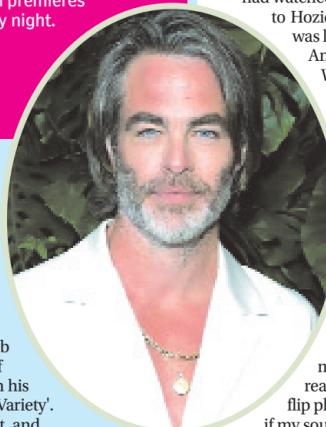
"After that was out in the open, I was left alone feeling like a liar, because I had a secret," he says. "One that I kept from my father, my mother, my family, my friends, and you. Professionally, personally."

And the secret is that I'm gay." After a long silence, the audience claps, to Carmichael's visceral relief. "I'm accepting the love, I really appreciate the love. My ego wants to rebel against it." Later, he adds, "I rebelled against it my whole life. I thought I'd never, ever come out."

"At many points I thought I'd rather die than confront the truth of that, to actually say it to people. Because I know it changes some people's perceptions of me."

I can't control that." Carmichael came to prominence in the Los Angeles stand-up comedy world. He also created the brilliant-but-cancelled sitcom 'The Carmichael Show', which ran for three seasons on NBC, and was both topical and semi-autobiographical.

Comedian Jerrod Carmichael -- who is hosting 'Saturday Night Live' on April 2 -- has officially come out in his new HBO special, which premieres Friday night.



Chad Smith, the drummer of rock band 'Red Hot Chili Peppers', shared a special tribute video for his friend and 'Foo Fighters' drummer, Taylor Hawkins, who passed away on March 25 at the age of 50, Variety reports.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Chad Smith, the drummer of rock band 'Red Hot Chili Peppers', shared a special tribute video for his friend and 'Foo Fighters' drummer, Taylor Hawkins, who passed away on March 25 at the age of 50, Variety reports.

As per Variety, the video is a compila-

tion of Smith and Hawkins' most memorable moments together captured on camera, including many clips from touring. 'Foo Fighters' first opened for the 'Red Hot Chili Peppers' in 1999 on the latter's 'Californication' tour.

During the tour, Hawkins and Dave Grohl pulled off a prank on Smith as they dumped pasta on his head while he was drumming. Ever since, the two

CHAD SMITH PAYS TRIBUTE TO TAYLOR HAWKINS IN SPECIAL VIDEO

drummers kept up a playful yet sincere friendship, which is displayed in the video.

Smith can be heard during an interview clip at the beginning of the video as he says, "Taylor's my good buddy whom I've known forever."

The footage shows Smith and Hawkins playing the same drum set and goofing around backstage as 'My Hero' by 'Foo Fighters' blasts off in the background.

"I think we're going to make a lot of other rock bands a little jealous," Hawkins tells Smith in one clip.

The video ends with Smith's tribute to Hawkins during the Red Hot Chili Peppers' Hollywood Walk of Fame ceremony on March 31 where Smith said in his speech, "I have to give a shoutout to my brother Taylor Hawkins. I love you, Taylor. He would laugh and make a smart ass comment about this whole thing."

The video was put together for Smith by Daniel Catullo, who directed the 2017 'Foo Fighters at the Acropolis' series on PBS that Smith hosted.

Michael Buble ended wedding night with hamburgers instead of getting intimate

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Michael Buble has revealed his wife Luisa Lopilato was so "hammered" on their wedding night in Vancouver that they ended the evening eating hamburgers rather than getting intimate.

However, the Vancouver nuptials didn't quite go to plan for the 'I'll Never Not Love You' singer because Luisa got "hammered" and opted to eat fast food rather than make love once the reception was over, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Appearing on the 'Table Manners with Jessie and Lennie Ware' podcast, he spilled: "We had two weddings... this might be controversial but I think people who put on destination weddings are a*****... For the family that couldn't afford to come, that couldn't pay to come... I put on a thing for them too. So we did the wedding in Buenos Aires, it was beautiful; it was like a Cinderella wed-

ding... She got everything she wanted. She's so famous that when we came down the street, all the streets were closed off and there were people in the balconies throwing -- it was like a movie."

Recalling how his second wedding night vastly differed, he added: "My wife was hammered and she kept saying to people at the party, 'We are going to have sex or we are going to have hamburgers,' and I kept saying, 'Babe stop telling people that.' Our wedding ended, that night, with her eating this hamburger."

Buble also opened up on how he and Luisa met, and he is convinced that fate brought them together because after thinking he would never see the blonde beauty again following a brief chance encounter, the 'Casados con Hijos' star ended up asking him for a photo at his hotel in Buenos Aires back in 2008.

The music star, who had been in a rela-

tionship with British actress Emily Blunt, said: "I was doing a show in Buenos Aires and I had come out of a really bad break-up, you know, and I had my grandpa with me and he was my best friend... As I was coming out of the theatre of the basement, I saw this girl from across the street."

"I looked at my grandpa and I said, 'Grandpa, I've just seen the most beautiful woman I've ever seen in my life and I'm sure I'm never going to see this woman again.'"

"Hours later I was getting hammered in a hotel restaurant after the show and I was well lit. My friend Susan said, 'Michael there's some people here that wanted to have pictures, it's Argentina's most famous movie star.'"" And I said, 'You know, Susan I'm hammered. I don't really want to meet anybody and look a fool.' And she said, 'I think you might want to meet this person', and there she was, with the most handsome dude you've ever seen."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Addison Rae





IPL 2022: BUTTLER'S TON, ASHWIN, CHAHAL BOWLING POWER RAJASTHAN TO 23-RUN WIN OVER MUMBAI

Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal struck crucial blows in successive overs as Rajasthan Royals beat Mumbai Indians by 23 runs in the ninth match of IPL 2022 at the DY Patil Stadium on Saturday.

Team Absolute | Navi Mumbai

Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal struck crucial blows in successive overs as Rajasthan Royals beat Mumbai Indians by 23 runs in the ninth match of IPL 2022 at the DY Patil Stadium on Saturday.

After Jos Buttler's scintillating 68-ball hundred propelled them to 193/8, Rajasthan struck hard in the final few overs as Mumbai could manage only 170/8. Fifties from Ishan Kishan and Tilak Varma were not sufficient to deny Rajasthan their second successive win while handing Mumbai their second straight loss of the season.

Mumbai lost captain Rohit Sharma and Anmolpreet Singh cheaply in the power-play. But Kishan, who got an unbeaten 81 against Delhi Capitals, began from where he left off. After getting Mumbai off the mark with a smash through cover off Trent Boult, Kishan hit Navdeep Saini with a pulled six over fine leg, followed by a loft over mid-off on a no-ball and hitting the next ball through the same region. Though Kishan slowed down after the power-play, Varma stepped up to be the aggressor. Varma began by pulling Ashwin between short fine leg and deep backward square leg. The standout shot from the youngster's innings was his sweetly-timed loft down the ground off Saini. Varma's impressive show continued when he jumped down the ground and tonked Chahal over deep mid-wicket for six followed by a four swept through fine leg.

Kishan earned a reprieve at 41 when Yashasvi Jaiswal ran across and timed his dive well to take the catch at deep mid-wicket. But as soon as his elbows landed on the ground, the ball popped out of his hands. After



bringing up his fifty with a straight drive off Boult, Kishan's knock ended at 54 as Saini took a screamer at deep square leg but his head hit the ground hard and left the field immediately, ending the 81-run partnership off 54 balls for the third wicket. Verma marched forward to bring up his maiden IPL fifty in 28 balls and followed it up with a nice pull off Chahal. After reverse-sweeping Ashwin for six over third man, Varma went for the sweep but he missed a slower delivery and saw his stumps knocked over.

In his final over, Chahal trapped Tim David lbw with a ripping leg-break and took out Daniel Sams by tempting him to hole out to deep mid-wicket. The leg-spinner missed his hat-trick as Karun Nair spilled a catch at slip. Kieron Pollard whipped Boult for a four and six through leg-side and was given a life at 14 when Jaiswal spilled a simple catch at deep cover. With 29 needed off the final over, Pollard crunched a four through extra cover off Saini. But the pacer kept his calm to bowl four dot ball and got the big-hitter out on the final ball as Buttler fittingly took the catch

at deep extra cover. Earlier, with 11 fours and five sixes, Buttler was a treat to watch while registering his second IPL century and first of this season. His first fifty came off 32 balls and the next 50 runs arrived off 34 balls. He was ably supported by captain Sanju Samson's 21-ball 30 and Shimron Hetmyer's whirlwind 35 off just 14 balls.

With Buttler's onslaught, Rajasthan were expected to touch 200. But some excellent death bowling from Jasprit Bumrah and Tymal Mills in the last two overs meant Mumbai prevented them from finishing the innings on a high. Rajasthan lost Yashasvi Jaiswal and Devdutt Padikkal cheaply inside the powerplay. But Buttler looked in excellent touch. From the time he got his first boundary off Bumrah in the opening over, Buttler gave the feel of being an unstoppable force on a bright Saturday afternoon.

Buttler gained momentum from the fourth over when pacer Basil Thampi erred in his length. Buttler hit him for three fours and two sixes in a 26-run over. Such was the effect of Buttler taking Thampi to clemence that the pacer wasn't given another over

throughout the match and Sharma had to bring in Pollard to bowl.

It didn't make much of a difference as Buttler reached his fifty in 32 balls with back-to-back fours through point followed by the gap between keeper and short third man off Sams in the eighth over.

He continued to toy with the bowling attack, punishing leg-spinner Murugan Ashwin with a boundary when he strayed down leg too often. Ashwin continued to be wayward as Buttler hit him for a six over extra cover followed by reverse sweeping past short third man.

Supporting him from the other end was Samson, who shared a stand of 82 with Buttler for the third wicket. After Samson fell to Pollard, Hetmyer went big in his critical cameo of 35 off just 14 balls, 26 of which came in Pollard's final over through two fours and as many sixes. He then thrashed Mills for a four and six in the next over. Buttler had a nervous moment at 99 when he got an inside edge on his pad from a Bumrah yorker. After replays confirmed that Buttler had survived the lbw review, he reached his century in just 66 balls. Though Bumrah triggered a late wobble by getting Hetmyer and Buttler out followed by the run-out of Ashwin, Rajasthan were able to reach a competitive total despite losing two more wickets in the final over, proving to be enough in the end.

Brief scores

Rajasthan Royals 193/8 in 20 overs (Jos Buttler 100, Shimron Hetmyer 35; Jasprit Bumrah 3/17, Tymal Mills 3/35) beat Mumbai Indians 170/8 in 20 overs (Ishan Kishan 81, Ishan Kishan 54; Yuzvendra Chahal 2/26, Navdeep Saini 2/36) by 23 runs

IPL 2022: Gujarat Titans beat Delhi Capitals by 14 runs



Pune | Agencies

A fantastic knock by Shubman Gill followed up by a clinical bowling performance effort by Lockie Ferguson helped Gujarat Titans beat Delhi Capitals by 14 runs in an IPL 2022 match at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium, here on Saturday.

Opening the batting, Shubman played a sparkling knock (84 off 46) and pro-

elled Gujarat Titans to 171-6 in 20 overs. It was also Gill's highest T20 score. Apart from Gill, skipper Hardik Pandya (31 off 27) and David Miller (20 not out off 15) also made valuable contributions with the bat for Gujarat, who were invited to bat first.

On the other hand, Mustafizur Rahman (3/23) was the highest wicket-taker for Delhi Capitals while Khaleel Ahmed (2/34) and Kuldeep Yadav (1/32) also

chipped in with wickets.

In reply, Ferguson (4/24) rattled the Delhi Capitals' batting line-up with his sheer pace. Apart from him, Mohammed Shami (2/30) also picked wickets at crucial junctures for Gujarat.

The likes of Rishabh Pant (43), Lalit Yadav (25) and Rovman Powell (20) tried hard but it was not enough as Delhi Capitals were restricted to 157-9 in 20 overs, losing by 14 runs.

Brief scores

Gujarat Titans 171/6 in 20 overs (Shubman Gill 84, Hardik Pandya 31; Mustafizur Rahman 3/23) beat Delhi 157/9 in 20 overs (Rishabh Pant 43, Lalit Yadav 25; Lockie Ferguson 4/24) by 14 runs

FIH Hockey Women's Jr World Cup: Lalrindiki hits brace as India beat Wales

Forward Lalrindiki scored twice on Saturday to help India start their campaign in the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup 2022 with a clinical 5-1 win over Wales, here.

Potchefstroom (South Africa) | Agencies

Forward Lalrindiki scored twice on Saturday to help India start their campaign in the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup 2022 with a clinical 5-1 win over Wales, here.

Lalrindiki scored in the 31st and 57th minutes while seasoned Lalremsiami (3rd min), Mumtaz Khan (4th min) and Deepika (57th min) contributed a goal each as the Indians easily overcame the challenge posed by Wales for whom Millie Holme scored the lone goal in the 25th minute.

The Indians played aggressive hockey, dominated possession and were held 1-1 at half-time before scoring twice each in the third and fourth quarters to seal



the victory. Of their five goals, two came off penalty corners.

India took an early lead in the match delayed by heavy showers at the NorthWest University Academy turf when Lalremsiami deflected into the goal Sangita Kumari's drive from the edge of the box. The Indians, for whom Deepika took the first shot at goal when she tested Welsh goalkeeper Horrell Ffion with a powerful drag-flick in the

second minute, made some good attacks in the first quarter but could not succeed in adding to their score as the quarter ended 1-0 in their favour.

Wales players were a bit more adventurous in the second quarter and ventured out in counter-attacks, one of which led to Millie Holme levelling the score in the 25th minute.

With skipper Salima Tete taking charge of the midfield, the Indians continued to dominate the second half and were more successful as they scored four goals.

Lalrindiki scored her first goal of the match in the 31st minute when she bundled the ball home off a goalmouth scramble to make it 2-1.

Nine minutes later, midfielder Mumtaz Khan made it 3-1 while Lalrindiki added her second goal of the match in the 56th minute when India made an indirect conversion off a penalty corner after they could not complete the routine properly in the first attempt.

A minute later, Deepika blasted home a drag flick to complete the 5-1 scoreline.

Fed Cup athletics: Kartik Kumar, Sanjivani Jadhav win 10,000m crowns in personal best times

Calicut (Kerala) | Agencies

Long-distance runners Kartik Kumar and Sanjivani Baburao Jadhav came up with personal best efforts to claim gold medals on an action-packed opening day of the 25th AFI Federation Cup Senior Athletics Championships here on Saturday. Pole Vaulter Rosy Meena Paulraj also won gold and in the process became only the fifth Indian woman to clear 4.00 metre at the C.H. Muhammed Koya Stadium here.

Kartik Kumar and Sanjivani Jadhav won the men's and women's 10,000 metres gold medals respectively.

Kartik established himself as one of India's brightest long-distance runners with a maiden Federation Cup 10,000m gold medal by clocking 29:20.21s. A bronze medalist in the Asian Junior Championships in Gifu, Japan in 2018 and 12th in the World U20 Championships in Tampere later that year, he clocked his personal best time to achieve a fine victory on Saturday.

Services' runner Kartik produced the fastest time by an Indian in AFI competitions since Murlu Kumar Gavit's 28:38.34 in the Asian Championships in Doha in



April 2019. Maharashtra's Adesh Yadav, who set an Inter-University record of 28:15.46 in Moodbidri on January 4 this year, had not entered the Federation Cup competition. The 22-year-old positioned himself in the lead bunch through the race, pulling away with four laps to go and building a sufficient lead to hold back a late sprint by Sawan Barwal (Himachal Pradesh). The effort on the final lap got Barwal past Kartik Kumar's team-mate Gulveer Singh but left him with no reserves to break the beam in the first place. Kartik Kumar finished sixth in 2019 and second to Abhishek Pal last year

but establishe' the year's fastest time by an Indian over the distance when he won the National Open Championships in Warangal. In the women's 10,000m, Sanjivani Babur Jadhav pulled away from Seema (Himachal Pradesh) after 10 laps to get a personal best time. Her previous best was 33:14.16 clocked in the inter-university championships in Guntur in December 2017. On Saturday, the 25-year-old finished 1 minute 3 seconds off the 32:10.18 set by AFI as the Asian Games qualifying mark. Rosy Meena Paulraj (Tamil Nadu) also came up with her best effort in the pole vault, clearing 4.00m to win gold from her team-mate Baranica Elangovan, beating her by 10cm. Haryana's Pooja, with a personal best of 3.95m earlier this year, cleared 3.80m to take the bronze and watch the two Tamil Nadu athletes battle for top honours. Aishwarya Mishra of Maharashtra ran a sensational r'ce in the women's 400m heats, clocking a personal best time of 52.41 seconds. Running her first national-level race in more than a year since she finished fourth in the Federation Cup in Patiala last year when she clocked her previous best of 54.60, she left Jisna Mathew in her wake.

Thailand Open: Boxer Minakshi to begin Indian challenge; Amit Panghal, Ashish return to international circuit

Indian women boxers were given relatively tough draws compared to men in the 2022 Thailand Open International Boxing tournament, beginning in Phuket on Sunday, with Minakshi kickstarting the country's challenge on the opening day against Jutamas Jitpong of Thailand in the 51kg first-round bout.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian women boxers were given relatively tough draws compared to men in the 2022 Thailand Open International Boxing tournament, beginning in Phuket on Sunday, with Minakshi kickstarting the country's challenge on the opening day against Jutamas Jitpong of Thailand in the 51kg first-round bout.

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) has fielded a 15-member squad in the tournament, which will be played till April 10. It will also be the first tournament for the 2019 World Championship silver medallist Amit Panghal (52kg) and Ashish Kumar



(81kg), who won the gold medal in the last edition in the 75kg, since the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Panghal and Ashish will open their campaigns against opponents from Thailand, Thanakon Aonyam and Aphisit Khankhokhruea, respectively in the quarter-finals. The reigning national champions Rohit Mor (57kg) and Sumit (75kg) will also have easy starts to their challenge in the Last-8 stage. While the Indian contingent consists of eight men and seven women, Govind Sahani (48kg), Ananta Chopade (54kg), Varinder Singh (60kg) and Pooja (69kg) are the four pugilists who will begin in the semi-finals. In the women's section, Monika (48kg) will

face two-time world championships medallist Josie Gabuco of the Philippines in the opening round. Among other women boxers, who will start against strong opponents are: Manisha and Renu.

While the 2019 Asian Championships bronze medallist Manisha (57kg), who recently qualified for both the upcoming World Championships and Asian Games, will be up against two-time youth Asian champion Porntip Buapa of Thailand, Renu (54kg) will take on U-22 European champion Italy's Sirine Charaabi. With the participation of 130 boxers including 74 males and 56 females, the tournament will witness high voltage com-

petition in presence of top boxers from Asia, Europe, Oceania and Africa.

In the last edition of the Thailand Open, held in 2019, the Indian contingent signed off with eight medals - one gold, four silver and three bronze.

Indian squad:
Men: Govind Sahani (48kg), Amit Panghal (52kg), Ananta Chopade (54kg), Rohit Mor (57kg), Varinder Singh (60kg), Sumit (75kg), Ashish Kumar (81kg) and Gaurav Chauhan (91kg)
Women: Monika (48kg), Minakshi (51kg), Renu (54kg), Manisha (57kg), Monika (63kg), Pooja (69kg) and Bhagyabati kachari (75kg)

Chennai | Agencies

India is expected to have a larger say in the International Chess Federation, commonly known as FIDE, if the incumbent management led by former Russian Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich wins the polls, chess officials said.

The elections for FIDE Congress will be held in August this year on the sidelines of the 44th Chess Olympiad to be held at Mahabalipuram near here in July-August. It is learnt that the officials of the chess administration in the national federation normally get a relatively higher number of posts in FIDE.

This time around, the All India Chess Federation (AICF) is on a stronger wicket to claim a better representation in FIDE.

It was AICF that came to the rescue of FIDE to hold the Olympiad after the latter decided to shift it out of Moscow following Russia's military operation in Ukraine.

Given the geopolitical situation, Dvorkovich's nationality and his past position in the Russian government, he and his team would prefer a neutral venue for holding the FIDE Congress.

And Mahabalipuram near Chennai is an ideal location. On Friday, five-time world chess champion Viswanathan Anand had said: "I have agreed to support Arkady Dvorkovich. We have discussed this, but we haven't decided yet as to in what role or capacity I will be involved.



The team led by Dvorkovich has done a lot for the sport. "We have discussed that Anand will be a huge part of our team," Dvorkovich said.

Interestingly, Anand was appointed as Asia's Continental Assistant to FIDE President by Dvorkovich in 2019. A senior FIDE official told IANS: "The role to be allocated to Anand will be decided after the elections." Queried about AICF asking for a couple of critical posts for its nominees to contest, a senior FIDE official, not wanting to be named, told IANS: "I would assume you are right."

"At the FIDE elections, the Olympiad hosting nation normally gets some additional posts," a former senior AICF official told IANS preferring anonymity. While some of the existing Indian officials will exit FIDE, more Indians are likely to enter the international chess body. "My term as FIDE Zone 3.7 President will come to an end in August.



'Poo Sandi Varan': Brilliant horror film sends shivers down your spine

Director JR Vicky's 'Poo Sandi Varan' is a brilliantly made Tamil horror film that leaves you both shaken and impressed by the time it ends. The film is special for more reasons than one. Firstly, this is a Malaysian Tamil film which is to say that it has been made by Tamils residing in Malaysia. The film has been shot entirely in Malaysia and features several Malaysian artistes.

The narration is taut and the plot is gripping. There are no song and dance sequences like you would normally expect in a Tamil film. The film depends only on the skill of its actors and the strength of its plot.

Although the film is basically Malaysian, the crew seems to have made certain changes to its format to enable the audiences here to enjoy the film. For instance, Malaysian Tamil films generally don't have an intermission. However, 'Poo Sandi Varan' has an intermission. An Indian journalist called Murugan (Ramana) writes for a Malaysian publication that is interested in events, artefacts, episodes or anything pertaining to the supernatural. Sensing the possibility of a potential story, Murugan meets Shankar, a man who has had a scary occult experience. Shankar discloses that one night, he and his friends, Anbu (Logan Nathan), a physically challenged person, and Guru (Ganeshan Manoharan) decided to play a game called 'Spirit of the Coin'. Not knowing much about the game, the three

friends chose to play the game with an ancient coin picked from Anbu's collection of coins.

They try calling out to spirits and one answers. Initially, the conversation, which they have by way of a board containing letters written on it, is amiable and friendly. Eventually, the conversation starts getting serious with each of them looking to use the spirit to get ahead in life. While Shankar asks the spirit to disclose the numbers of the winning lottery ticket for him to emerge a millionaire, Anbu wonders if the spirit can give him back his legs. While the men are under the impression that they are the ones who are looking to use the spirit to gain what they want in life, little do they know that it is actually the spirit that is getting them to do what it wants...

What happens then is what 'Poo Sandi Varan' is all about. The film is gripping from the word 'go'. There are no unnecessary distractions like comedy or songs. The pace at which the plot moves keeps you on the edge of your seat and makes you chew your nails in anticipation. Although the film is about spirits and exorcism, the story that is narrat-



ed is steeped in realism and history, thereby making it easy for audiences to relate to the plot. The background score for the film is just apt. No unnecessary noises, no high pitched screeching voices or sudden sounds to induce fear. The story genuinely triggers fear and the background score only looks to deliver what is necessary. Dustin Riduan Shah deserves a round of applause for this music.

Asalisham Bin Mohammad Ali's camerawork too is neat and professional. The lighting is just about right.

Nothing about 'Poo Sandi Varan' is artificial or exaggerated. It looks like a story that could have happened in your place and that is what sends a shiver down your spine. Without doubt, J.R. Vicky's 'Poo Sandi Varan' is a must watch!

STAR CAST DOESN'T HELP 'IDIOT'; IT FAILS TO IMPRESS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Director Rambhala, who is known to have delivered some comedies that actually worked before, fails miserably in his mission to entertain the masses with his 'Idiot'.

The Tamil film has a wafer-thin story, if one can even call it that, and a truckload of poor jokes that are so horribly bad, that forget laughter, one can't even manage a smile by the time the film ends.

Some of the so-called "funny" dialogues in the film are either absolutely annoying or dangerously close to being termed obscene.

Members of a royal family are murdered by two generals, who then usurp their wealth. The spirits of the dead royal family members haunt the place, looking to take revenge. The story then cuts across to a different time period. Here, we are introduced to Raasu Gundour (Anandaraj), a money-minded landlord who is basically an idiot, and his wife Parimalam (Urvashi).

Their son, Chinnarasu (Mirchi Shiva), is a harsh critic of his dad. To cut a long story short, Chinnarasu walks out of his home after a fight, loses his mental balance after

suffering a blow to his head and is admitted to a mental hospital in which Smitha (Nikki Galrani) is a doctor.

The hospital has a bunch of weird characters, including a sorceress called Neelakandi (Akshara Gowda), and a funny patient called Burfi (Redin Kingsley). This apart, there is a gang of kidnappers headed by Thiru Don Sekar (Ravi Maria), which is looking to kidnap Smitha and demand a ransom for her. Do the spirits get their revenge? Do the kidnappers manage to kidnap Smitha? Does the sorceress succeed in her mission? Will Chinnarasu become normal again?

'Idiot' is actually neither engaging nor entertaining. When a film's high on good humour, audiences might be willing to forgive a flimsy story. Sadly for 'Idiot', neither its story, nor its jokes seem to work. On the contrary, they only annoy. Redin Kingsley as Burfi and Mirchi Shiva as Chinnarasu try to salvage the situation, cracking an occasional joke, but sadly, their efforts fall miserably short and the film comes across as a drag.

Vikram Selva's music and Raja Bhattacharjee's cinematography are just about okay. Despite having a big star cast, 'Idiot' fails to impress.

'Attack - Part I': John Abraham delivers an earnest performance

Team Absolute | Mumbai

It involves a com-

It's the straightforward origin story of the artificially induced super soldier Arjun Shergil. The prologue shows us a random successful "comb the area and capture the target" operation of a highly efficient platoon of the Indian Army headed by the diligent soldier Arjun in circa November 2010. The target is the notorious terrorist Rehman Gul (Habib Airdroos).

Then we are transported to the present day, where we witness Arjun meeting air hostess Ayesha (Jaqueline Fernandes) and as their romance blossoms, on one fateful day, in a terror attack at the Mumbai airport, Ayesha loses her life and Arjun lies injured on the floor. This action-packed scene in the first act of the film sets the ball rolling. What next?

We soon learn that Arjun, who is nursed by his mother Shanti Shergil (Ratna Patak Shah), has damaged his C1 and C2 vertebrae, and is rendered paralysed for life.

Meanwhile, as a result of constant treats from terrorists, the government is on tenterhooks and VK Subramaniam (Prakash Raj), a high-ranking official, emulating America, Russia and Israel, promotes the human testing of the 'Artificial Intelligence Super Soldier Programme', which is home-designed by scientist Saba Qureshi (Rakul Preet Singh).



chip being inserted into the brain after an invasive surgery. The chip recalibrates the neural bonding in the brain. This invention, though, has its own limitations, which works as a *deus ex machina* (or an unexpected power that saves what seems like a hopeless situation) in the plot. The only person who fits Saba Qureshi's bill to undergo the human trial of the AI Super Soldier Programme is Arjun Shergil. So, when Parliament is infiltrated by terrorists helmed by Rehman Gul's son Hamid (Elham Ehsas), Arjun is called in. Though this is an action thriller --

intense and frenetic, the writing of the film is taut and well-balanced. Some of the dialogues are crisp and noteworthy, especially when Subramaniam takes potshots at Home Minister Digvijay (Rajit Kapur).

The film is slickly shot and the director wastes little time getting to the action. He deploys every trick in the VFX toolkit in an attempt to dazzle, but a frustrating over-reliance on sub-par digital frames means that much of the film's big-ticket action appears grainy and of mediocre quality.

With an author-backed role, John Abraham delivers an earnest performance and is aptly supported by the rest of the cast with equal fervour. Jacqueline and Rakul have limited screen time and they

are sincere in their delivery. But the two actors who stay in your mindspace after the film is over are Rajit Kapur, who essays the role of Digvijay, the Home Minister, and Elham Ehsas, the antagonist Hamid Gul. Both shine in their own respective manner on screen.

Serena Wallia's voice is effectively used as IRA, the computer voice that communicates with Arjun. Overall, the film is well-written, but the story seems to be an amalgamation of many sci-fi English films. The main crux of the terrorist attack seems to be inspired by Hollywood -- Gerard Butler's 'Fallen' series, especially the 2013 film 'Olympus Has Fallen'.

Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, who has helmed acclaimed streaming projects such as 'Break Point', the story of the flawed Leander Paes-Mahesh Bhupathi bromance for ZEE5, and co-directed 'Ankahi Kahaniya' for Netflix, says that OTT portals have taken over the content game and changing it for the better.

OTT platforms are a medium for storytellers, says 'Break Point' maker

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, who has helmed acclaimed streaming projects such as 'Break Point', the story of the flawed Leander Paes-Mahesh Bhupathi bromance for ZEE5, and co-directed 'Ankahi Kahaniya' for Netflix, says that OTT portals have taken over the content game and changing it for the better.

"It is purely a storytellers' medium where it is the story that counts and everything else is secondary," added the talented young filmmaker from Mumbai.

"We have so much international content," said the maker of the critically acclaimed romantic comedy 'Bareilly Ki Barfi' and the comedy drama 'Nil Batte Sannata', which won her the Filmfare Best Debut Director Award. "In this day and age, when we can watch all kinds of movies in different languages, if we feel there is merit in adapting a film in the region we are living in, it is possible now."

"CODA is an adapted screenplay, and a story with strong content and characters will always tug at your heart," said Iyer Tiwari about the Oscar best picture winner, which is an adaptation of the 2014 French-Belgian film, 'La Famille Belier'. She added: "Creators are chasing only good stories that can inspire, make people aspire or change thought processes."

Iyer Tiwari's next project is the web film, 'Faadu', an "intense poetic love story" she's making for SonyLIV. "Stories told most of the time are a reflection or a result of an ever-



changing society. They explore the grammar of social thinking that can make a point as a thought starter," she said.

Delving deeper into the story-writing process, she said: "We are still in the entertainment business, but we do have the ability to touch hearts and create an after-thought or a surge of emotions that can be a step towards a new way of thinking in society."

Talking about how the OTT space has made a difference to filmmakers and writers, Iyer Tiwari said: "It allows them the freedom to tell different stories fearlessly in a language they are most comfortable with. It also gives them an opportunity to be experimental and choose different actors who bring life to characters."

She continued: "The writing has changed. The style of direction has become more fearless. A lot of young minds are getting their own stories, and today, there are not just a few filmmakers or writers making films, but a whole ecosystem where new ideas are being constantly churned and new talent is getting an opportunity to tell a story from a platform where it fits in." Iyer Tiwari also believes that the OTT space is a level playing field, which is open to everyone who has a story to tell. "As more and more storytellers are venturing into the OTT space, there are many ideas across multiple genres that are being made into content being helmed by different creators, from newbies to established names," she said. And she concluded by saying: "The beauty of it is that everyone has a playground to tell their stories in varying budgets and it has opened up opportunities for everyone who has a story to tell."

REMO D'SOUZA: 'FALTU' FOR ME WAS A BIG DEAL IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Marking his 11th year in the world of cinema as a director-choreographer, Remo D'Souza tells why his debut movie 'Faltu' was a big deal for him in more ways than one.

Commemorating 11 years of 'Faltu', Remo and actor-producer Jacky Bhagnani came up with a fun video. Talking about 'Faltu', his 11 year journey as a director and his collaboration with Pooja Entertainment, D'Souza says, "Celebrating 11 years of my debut film Faltu takes me back to my most lasting memory of that word."

'Faltu' for me was a big deal in more ways than one. This word has been attached to me since I was young as people thought the path I'd chosen for myself in life was, well, 'Faltu'. Being my first film and the fact that it resonated so well with our storyline, I was very keen to go with 'Faltu' as the title. "More importantly, it was my way of telling all those naysayers that no life choice made by anyone is ever 'Faltu', especially when those are the unconventional ones. Many other major directors advised me against this title and I really had to fight for it." "The only person who saw my vision and stood by me for the film and this title was Vashuji. I'm really thankful to him, Jacky, Deepshikha and the entire Pooja Entertainment team for being not just my support system but also for being my family for the last 11 years"



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sunny Leone