

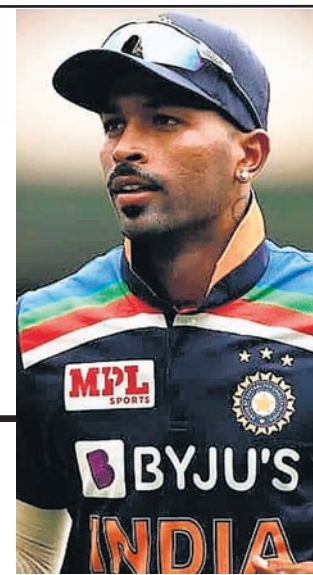
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INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION TELLS CENTRE TO UPSCALE PREPAREDNESS OF COVID

PREVENTION is better than cure

In the wake of Christmas and New Year celebrations, states are advised to ensure that people wear masks, use sanitizers and maintain social distancing along with increasing awareness for precautionary doses. However, 5.9 lakh daily average cases have been reported globally since the past six weeks.



PM EMPHASISES ON INCREASED TESTING

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday emphasised on genome sequencing and increased testing, while cautioning states against any complacency towards the threat of rising Covid cases. Modi expressed these views in a review meeting amid reports of a spike in cases in countries like neighbouring China, the U.S., Italy, Japan and South Korea.

The Prime Minister called for maintaining strict vigil and emphasised on the need for strengthened surveillance with focus on genome sequencing and increased testing. States were also advised to ensure operational readiness of hospital infrastructure in case of spike in cases in the country. He also advised adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour including wearing masks, and also stressed on precaution dose vaccination for elderly and vulnerable population groups.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid sudden surge of coronavirus cases in some countries, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Thursday urged public to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour and told Centre to upscale preparedness to combat virus.

The IMA urged the Central Government to upscale the preparedness for any such situation as seen in 2021 by issuing necessary instructions to the concerned Ministries and Departments to make available the emergency medicines, oxygen supply and ambulance services.

It issued the advisory to its state and local branches to take necessary preparatory steps in case of COVID outbreak in their areas and to work proactively as done in the past to combat the outbreak. As of now, the situation is not alarming and therefore there is no need to panic.

The IMA urged to wear face masks in all public places and to maintain social distancing along with regular hand washing and public gatherings like marriages, political or social meetings etc. to be avoided. The medical body has also urged for the COVID vaccination including precautionary dose at the earliest.

"With the robust infrastructure in public as well as in private sector, dedicated medical manpower, proactive leadership support from the Government and availability of sufficient medicines and vaccines, India will be able to manage any eventualities as done in the past", the IMA said in a statement.

The IMA said that as per the available reports, nearly 5.37 lakh new cases have been reported in last 24 hours from major countries like the US, Japan, South Korea, France and Brazil. India has reported 145 new

60% INDIANS AVOIDING COVID BOOSTER DUE TO HEART ATTACK FEARS

New Delhi: As the country gears up to tackle fresh Covid wave concerns amid infection surge in China, a survey revealed on Thursday that over six in 10 Indians (64 per cent) are reluctant to take the Covid booster dose and rising cases of heart attacks in young people have largely contributed to this hesitancy.

While 53 per cent of those surveyed have not taken booster shots and don't plan to take it, 9 per cent have still not taken any Covid vaccine shots and don't plan to do so.

About 2 per cent are still to decide on whether to take the booster shot or not.

The latest survey received over 19,000 responses from citizens located in 309 districts.

While several people, especially in tier 2, 3 and 4 and rural districts, believe Covid is long gone and there is no need to take any more doses, a spate of cases of heart attacks and brain strokes that have occurred in people's own networks and those reported in the media are leading a section of the population to believe that the vaccine is causing side effects.

cases in last 24 hours out of which four cases are the new China variant - BF.7.

With more than 3.5 lakh medical practitioners across the country, the IMA is committed to fight the dreaded disease and assure the government its full cooperation and participation in all activities of preventive and curative measures.

India, China agree to maintain security, stability on ground along LAC in Western sector

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India and China have agreed to maintain security and stability on ground along LAC in Western sector during 17th round of Corps Commander level talks.

The meeting was held at Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on the Chinese side on December 20, 2022, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement on Thursday.

Building on the progress made after the last meeting on July 17, 2022, the two sides exchanged views on the resolution of the relevant issues along the LAC in the Western Sector in an open and constructive manner. "They had a frank and in-depth discussion, keeping in line with the guidance provided by the State leaders to work for the resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest which would help in restoration of peace and tranquility along the LAC in the Western Sector and enable progress in bilateral relations," the defence ministry added.

"In the interim, the two sides agreed to maintain the security and stability on the ground in the Western Sector," it added.

The two sides agreed to stay in close contact and maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest.



The 17th round of the meeting was the first one after the December 9 stand-off. Around 300 soldiers of the People's Liberation Army of China attempted to transgress the LAC in Yangtse in the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh which resulted in a clash.

A source informed that both Indian and Chinese soldiers suffered injuries during the clash. Six of the injured Indian jawans had been admitted to the military hospital at Guwahati, but casualty or serious injury was not reported.

According to the sources, China has been repeatedly trying to take control of the 17,000 feet high peak. Sources in Indian Army said that India has a firm control over the peak, which provides commanding view on both sides of the border.

Country's atmosphere not right for Muslims, told my children to settle abroad: RJD leader



Team Absolute | Patna

Senior RJD leader Abdul Bari Siddiqui triggered a row on Thursday after he said that the country's atmosphere is not livable for Muslims, adding that he has asked his children to settle

abroad. The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), however, clarified that it is Siddiqui's own statement made in his personal capacity, and the party has nothing to do with it. Siddiqui made the remark at an event organised by an Urdu daily to honour the newly-elected Chairman of Bihar Legislative Council, Devesh Chandra Thakur.

Addressing the gathering in the presence of Thakur, Siddiqui said: "I have a son and a daughter. The former is studying at Howard University in the US while the latter has passed out from the London School of Economics. I have told my son and daughter to get jobs abroad, and if possible, get citizenship there as well. The atmosphere in India is not right now."

Reacting to Siddiqui's comments, Nikhil Anand, the national general secretary of BJP's OBC wing, demanded slapping sedition charges on the RJD leader for his remarks which he termed as 'anti-India'.

5 INJURED IN FIRE AT TN THERMAL POWER PLANT, 1 CRITICAL

Chennai: Five persons were injured in a fire mishap at Unit II of Neyveli New Thermal Power Station (2x500 MW) in Cuddalore district on Thursday.

Sources in the Neyveli Lignite Corporation (NLC) told IANS that the technical team of NLC is trying to ascertain the exact cause of the mishap. The accident, according to some workers in plant, occurred at 11.30 a.m. on Thursday during the lignite burning process at Unit II.

N. Suresh, K. Suresh, S. Thirunavukarasu and D. Senthil Kumar, who were working for the Industrial Cooperative Service Society (ICSS) attached to the Neyveli Lignite Corporation, along with an employee, R. Dakshinamoorthy, were injured in the fire that erupted in the auxiliary lines of a boiler. The condition of Tirunavukarasu, who suffered 80 per cent burns, is stated to be critical. The others have suffered 30-40 per cent burn injuries and have been admitted to a private hospital in Cuddalore.

It may be recalled that the fire mishap at the Neyveli Lignite Corporation is the third in the past two-and-a-half years.

Prashant Kishor hits back at Piyush Goyal over remark on Bihar

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Political activist from Bihar Prashant Kishor hit back at Union Minister Piyush Goyal for the remark "Inka bas chale toh desh ko Bihar hi bana de" which was later withdrawn by the minister.

Responding to the statement, Kishor said, "Today the word Bihari is like abusing. It is a word that has become an abuse. When the minister (Piyush Goyal) said it, you came to know, whereas in other states Biharis mean idiots, labourers. The minister should know that Bihar has been a land of knowledge. Gods have also got knowledge by coming here. Today the leaders here have made the system a factory to make labourers. The minister who said this should explain that Bihar has given 39

out of 40 MPs to the NDA in the Parliament."

He added, "When the Prime Minister comes here, he bows down to the public and talks sweetly with the people and takes votes. Then his ministers are making fun of the same Bihar."

Goyal made the remark on December 20 when RJD leader Manoj Jha said the government should devote equal attention to the poor and corporate houses, Goyal responded by saying "Inka bas chale toh desh ko Bihar bana dein (if they have their way, they will turn the country into Bihar)."

After the Opposition members from Bihar protested against his "objectionable" remark about their state, Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal was forced to withdraw his statement.

MUMBAI AIRPORT ACHIEVES TOP ACI RATING, AMONG 31 IN THE WORLD

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) has achieved the highest-level 4+ Transition of Airport Carbon Accreditation program of the Airport Council International, to join only 31 such airports worldwide, an official said here on Thursday. Director-General, ACI Asia-Pacific, Stefano Baronci lauded the CSMIA for the 'remarkable achievements' leading to reducing carbon emissions and setting an example for other airports in the region.

The CSMIA has prepared a comprehensive roadmap for Carbon Management for the targets of 2029, plans and investments on emission and energy consumption reduction projects, a green procurement policy for eco-friendly and less-polluting services and materials, etc.

It has implemented 100 per cent green sources for energy consumption, an onsite



renewable power generation plant augmentations to 4.65 MW capacity, installed unique vertical axis wind turbine and solar PV systems with a capacity of 10KWp this year, with four more units to be set up next year, 6 electric vehicle charging stations, plastic waste management, and many other eco-friendly initiatives across the airport and outside.

INFLATION (18 PER CENT OF EMPLOYERS) AND ONGOING LAYOFFS (15 PER CENT OF EMPLOYERS) ARE THINGS TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR IN 2023, RESPECTIVELY.

IN THE COMING YEAR, EMPLOYERS WILL ALSO BE KEEN TO STEP UP THEIR HIRING PRACTICES.

ABOUT 35 PER CENT OF EMPLOYERS LOOK FORWARD TO ADOPTING AI/DIGITAL/SOCIAL MEDIA FOR TALENT ACQUISITION AND 26 PER CENT PLAN TO EXPLORE HYPER-LOCAL/NICHE JOB BOARDS, THE FINDINGS SHOWED.

THIS YEAR, ABOUT TWO OUT OF EVERY THREE EMPLOYERS (64 PER CENT OF THOSE SURVEYED) HIRED BETWEEN OCTOBER TO DECEMBER.

THIS MARKS A SIGNIFICANT DIP (DOWN FROM 78 PER CENT) AND REFLECTS A SLOWER PACE OF HIRING ACTIVITY COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS TWO QUARTERS, LIKELY CAUSED BY GLOBAL ECONOMIC SHIFTS, SAID THE REPORT.

Over 6 in 10 Indian job seekers depressed over layoffs, not giving 100% in current jobs



Bengaluru | Agencies

About 65 per cent of jobseekers (more than 6 in 10) in India feel that the ongoing layoffs may hinder their willingness to go the extra mile in their jobs, a report showed on Thursday.

Given the market uncertainties and economic climate, jobseekers are hesitant in their current work, demotivated by layoffs and are not willing to fully commit to their current job as well, according to the survey by leading job portal Indeed.

More than half of the employees (57 per cent) are unenthusiastic or bored about their current jobs in India, with over 50 per cent of them preparing for new opportunities by

reskilling/upskilling.

About 28 per cent of those looking for jobs said that they will prioritise happiness and flexibility and 19 per cent indicated that a good work life balance is a priority, the findings showed.

"Going into 2023, it is evident that employees are prioritising mental wellbeing and work life balance amidst the various fluctuations that are occurring in the world of work," said Sashi Kumar, Head of Sales, Indeed India.

As organisations wait to see how global movements affect the Indian jobs landscape, it'll be integral for them to also relook at workplace culture and the current sentiment at work, in order to retain talent," Kumar added. Employers are, however, optimistic about their hiring activity during 2023, with 45 per cent of them foreseeing up to a 20 per cent increase in hiring.



BJP TAKES U-TURN AFTER ANNOUNCING SUSPENSION OF 'JAN AAKROSH YATRA' IN RAJ



Jaipur | Agencies

In view of the alarming spike in the number of Covid cases and deaths in China, Rajasthan BJP had on Thursday afternoon postponed its 'Jan Aakrosh Yatra' in the state. However, the party changed its stand hours later and said that the Yatra will continue. Rajasthan BJP President Satish

Poonia had tweeted at 3.04 p.m.: "Corona is again spreading its wings in the world. In such a situation, we have stopped the 'Jan Aakrosh Yatra' for the time being. In the future, again under the new strategy, BJP will go among the people and raise their voice against the misrule of the Congress government. At present, due to the instructions of the Central government, we have postponed the

Yatra." At 5.38 p.m., Poonia again tweeted: "At present, no guidelines have been issued by the Centre or the state government regarding Corona. In such a situation, there was some confusion regarding the postponement of the Yatra. For the time being, it has been decided not to postpone the Yatra. Our 'Jan Aakrosh Yatra' will continue. However, the Corona pro-

ocols will be taken care of at the meetings to be held during the Yatra. At the same time, the journey will not be postponed until a guideline is issued by the Centre or the state."

Earlier in the afternoon, BJP's Rajasthan in-charge Arun Singh had told the media in Delhi about postponing the 'Jan Aakrosh Yatra'. Leader of the opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly, Gulabchand Kataria, had also told the party workers not to gather in large numbers as he cautioned them against the virus. It may be noted that citing concerns after a spike in cases in China, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had written to Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday, requesting the Congress leader to suspend his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', which was passing through Rajasthan, "in the national interest" if protocols could not be followed.

Ever since, Congress leaders in the state have been raising questions over BJP's 'Jan Aakrosh Yatra' in Rajasthan.

BJP President J.P. Nadda had kicked off the 'Jan Aakrosh Yatra' at a public meeting in Jaipur on December 1. On December 3, the state BJP started the campaign by sending 51 chariots to 200 Assembly constituencies in the state.

SC to pronounce judgment on Jan 2 on pleas challenging demonetisation



New Delhi | Agencies

The Supreme Court would pronounce its judgment on January 2 on a clutch of petitions challenging the Centre's 2016 decision to demonetise currency notes of Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 denominations. A five-judge constitution bench, headed by Justice S.A. Nazeer, is scheduled to pronounce the judgment on January 2. Justice Nazeer will retire on January 4. On December 7, the Supreme

Court had directed the Centre and the RBI to bring on record relevant records in connection with the government's 2016 demonetisation decision for its perusal and reserved the judgment. The bench - also comprising Justices B.R. Gavi, A.S. Bopanna, V. amasubramanian, and B.V. Nagarathna - said: "Counsel of the Union of India and Reserve Bank of India are directed to produce the relevant records."

Attorney General R. Venkataramani represented the Centre, senior advocate Jaideep Gupta represented the RBI, and senior advocates P. Chidambaram and Shyam Divan appeared for the some of the petitioners. The AG had contended that he would submit the relevant records in a sealed cover. During the hearing on the matter, Justice Nagarathna had said the courts will not go into the merits of the decision, but it can always go into the manner it was taken, as the two things are totally different.

2% of passengers in flight to undergo random post-arrival testing at airport: Health Ministry

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid rising Covid scare across many countries, the Union Health Ministry has asked the Civil Aviation Ministry to ensure a sub-section of 2 per cent of total passengers in the flight undergo random post-arrival testing at the airport on arrival.

In a letter to Civil Aviation Secretary Rajiv Bansal, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said: "It has been decided that Ministry of Civil Aviation in coordination with airport operators and Airport Health Offices (APHOs) shall ensure a sub-section of 2 per cent of the total passengers in the flight shall undergo random post-arrival testing at the airport on arrival." He also said that such travellers in each flight shall be identified by the airlines concerned and be preferably from different countries. Such travellers will submit the samples and shall be allowed to leave the airport. "A copy of the positive report shall be shared with Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme at shoc.idspp@ncdc.gov.in by the concerned testing laboratory (besides sharing with the APHOs) to be in turn shared with con-



cerned state/UT for further follow-up action. In case, any such travellers are tested positive, their samples should be sent for genomic testing at the designated INSACOG laboratory network." While the testing may be coordinated by Ministry of Civil Aviation, cost of testing shall be reimbursed by this Ministry on submission of duly certified bills to respective Airport Health Offices (APHOs). Ministry of Civil Aviation is requested that this testing may be done at a subsidised and uniform rates across all international airports," Bhushan said in the letter. This arrangement will come into practice with effect from 10 a.m. on Saturday (December 24).

5 YEAR-OLD GIRL RAPED IN DELHI'S OUTSKIRTS

New Delhi | Agencies

A girl aged around 5 years was kidnapped and then raped in outer north Delhi's Bhalswa Diary area.

A senior official said that the police have leads on the accused and they are hopeful to nab the accused in next 24 hours.

The official said that the girl was abducted on Wednesday evening, when she was playing near her house. She was later found in a nearby park on Thursday morning. According to the police, information was received regarding the disappearance of a girl child aged 4-5 years on Wednesday night and subsequently a case under section 363 (kidnapping) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered. "Three teams were formed to trace the child. Announcements were also made at the mosque and a photo of the child was circulated to all police officers.

Mother of boy beaten to death by teacher succumbs to her injuries

Gadag (Karnataka) | Agencies

In a tragic development, the mother of a nine-year-old boy, who was beaten to death by his teacher, succumbed to her injuries sustained after being attacked by the same teacher, at the KIMS Hospital in Hubballi on Thursday.

The shocking incident took place at the Government Model Primary School at Hadli village in Gadag district on December 17. While the nine-year-old boy, Bharat Barakeri, succumbed to his injuries on Monday, his mother Geetha Barakeri, a teacher in the same school who was attacked with a shovel by the guest teacher, Muttappa Yallappa Hadagali, died on Thursday. Hadagali had beaten Bharat to death and then threw him off the first floor of the school. The accused had also attacked Geetha, who had rushed to save her son. Hadagali has been arrested by the



police, who had formed a special team to nab him after he had disappeared after the incident. Gadag SP Shivaprakash Devaraju said that preliminary inquiries revealed that the accused teacher had committed the crime to vent his anger on Geetha. Geetha was reportedly close to the other staff of the school during a tour, which angered Hadagali who couldn't

tolerate her closeness with others. As result of this, the accused teacher first vented his anger on the child before assaulting the mother, Devaraju said. However, the exact cause for his tardy act is yet to be ascertained, Devaraju added. The accused and Geetha had fought during a recent tour with students. Geetha was maintaining distance from him since then, sources said.

BHOPAL COURT AWARDS 5-YEAR RI TO MD OF PVT FIRM IN PMLA CASE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A special PMLA court in Bhopal on Thursday awarded five-year rigorous imprisonment to Ramakant Vijayvargiya, the Managing Director of Distinct Infrastructure Ltd, in connection with a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), besides slapping a fine of Rs 50,000 on him.

The accused had generated proceeds of crime by selling plots to people claiming that he had obtained the necessary approvals from the Madhya Pradesh government to build a colony.

The court also ordered confiscation of the properties attached by the ED in this case.

The ED had initiated a money laundering probe on the basis of an FIR filed by the Bhopal Police under Sections 420, 467 and 471 of the



Indian Penal Code in 2010. Distinct Infrastructure Ltd (DIL), through its MD Vijayvargiya, had cheated people by selling plots in a colony named 'Panchavati Enclave' in Bhopal. The company had made

agreements with farmers for purchasing their land and developing the same into a residential colony. Subsequent to the agreements drawn, Vijayvargiya forged an outlay of the colony, proposed to be built on

the said piece of land, without actually having the ownership and possession of the land and without securing government sanctions required for the development of the colony.

He then sold plots to various persons by falsely claiming that DIL had the approval from the Town and Country Planning department for the said colony.

He thus sold 243 plots of the said colony for a consideration of Rs 16.60 crore.

During the course of investigation, it came to light that part of the proceeds of crime was invested in two immovable properties, purchased in the name of DIL.

These two properties, totally valued at Rs 39.89 lakh, were traced and provisionally attached by the ED in 2013. The ED then filed a charge sheet in the case in 2015.

SETBACK FOR ROBERT VADRA: RAJASTHAN HC DISMISSES PETITION, STAYS ARREST FOR TWO WEEKS

Jaipur | Agencies

The Rajasthan High Court on Thursday rejected the plea by Robert Vadra which sought to quash an alleged money laundering case against him. The court, however, stayed his arrest for two weeks.

A single bench of Justice Dr. Pushpendra Singh Bhati court delivered its verdict in the alleged money laundering case related to buying of land in Bikaner involving Robert Vadra and his mother Maureen Vadra.

The petition had been filed by Skylight Hospitality Company, run with partnership between Robert and his mother. Skylight Hospitality and Mahesh Nagar also challenged the ED investigation.

The court has also stayed the arrest of both of Robert Vadra and his mother for two weeks. The whole matter is related to the sale and purchase of the company's land in Kolayat,



Bikaner. Earlier on Wednesday, the hearing was completed.

VIRAL MESSAGE ON COVID XBB VARIANT IS FAKE: UNION HEALTH MINISTRY

New Delhi: Amid the sudden Covid scare that has erupted across many countries, a WhatsApp message has been making its rounds claiming that the newly discovered XBB subvariant of Omicron is five times more virulent and has a higher mortality rate than the Delta variant.

However, the Union health ministry has rejected the claim and has termed the message fake. "This message circulating in many WhatsApp groups regarding XBB variant of Covid 19 is FAKE and Misleading", said the health ministry on Thursday.

The viral message claims that "the new variant of the COVID-Omicron XBB coronavirus is different, deadly and not easy to detect correctly. The symptoms of the new virus COVID-Omicron XBB are - there is no cough and there is no fever."

"COVID-Omicron XBB is 5 times more virulent than the Delta variant and has a higher mortality rate than it," the viral message claims further.

In view of the recent surge in Covid-19 cases in China and other countries, the Centre has asked states to step up vigil and gear up genome sequencing of positive case samples to track existing and emerging variants.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting to review the Covid-19 situation in India and preparedness of the public health system for surveillance, containment and management of the virus in view of the recent spike in cases in some countries. The meeting was attended by Minister of State Health Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Member (Health) NITI Aayog, Dr V.K. Paul and other senior officials.

NTPC'S TANDWA PLANT TO START POWER GENERATION AFTER 23-YEAR WAIT

Ranchi | Agencies

The National Thermal Power Corporation's (NTPC) North Karanpura power plant will start power generation after a long wait of 23 years.

The trial of 660 MW power generation and transmission at full load from the first unit of this plant was successful on Tuesday. The generated electricity was sent to the National Grid.

The plant, located at Tandwa in Jharkhand consists of three units and has a total capacity of 1980 MW.

Regular production in the first unit is said to start in February, 2023 after an expenditure of about Rs 15,000 crore.

Modern technology is being used for generating power in the project.

Marking a first, water consumption will be reduced to just 20-25 per cent due to the technology based on Air Cool Condensed System.

Along with Jharkhand, many states including Bihar and Bengal will benefit from the project.

NTPC's Public Relations Information Officer Saibal Ghosh, said that the technology being used in the plant reduced water requirement by about 80 per cent as compared to conventional power generation stations.

The project's foundation stone was laid by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on



March 6, 1999 with the hope to bring development to the area infamous for Maoism and backwardness. The then target for completion of the project and production of electricity was set for 2002-2003.

But disputes regarding compensation, rehabilitation and jobs etc. for the villagers

whose land was acquired to build the plant persisted from its beginning.

Land from six villages was taken for the project when the old land acquisition law was in force.

Subsequently, a new law regarding land acquisition was enacted which stated that the acquired land would be returned to the farmer if the project did not start in five years.

When work under the project started after seven years due to delay in land acquisition among many other reasons, questions on compensation policy, rehabilitation arrangements, jobs to the affected etc. came to the fore.

The work kept getting affected by dharmas, demonstrations and agitations by the people. The last 23 years have recorded more than a hundred clashes between the NTPC, administration, police and the displaced farmers, with innumerable incidents of firing, baton charge and violence.

In March, a violent clash took place between the displaced people and the police, where the protestors torched 56 vehicles of Simplex, a company associated with NTPC.

A total of 27 people from both sides were injured in the clash. The dispute remained unresolved despite several agreements reached between the NTPC, the administration and the villagers.

Significantly, most of the displaced have been provided compensation.



"GOVERNMENT RELEASED COVID VIRUS" TO STOP RAHUL GANDHI YATRA: TEAM UDDHAV

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena faction slammed the Centre over its letter sent to Rahul Gandhi and Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot urging them to consider suspending or postponing the Bharat Jodo Yatra if Covid protocols could not be followed.

"Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has suggested either follow Covid protocol in the Bharat Jodo Yatra or stop the foot march. Rahul Gandhi has completed 100 days of his Bharat Jodo Yatra and is receiving mass support on a large scale. The government could not stop it by law or by conspiracy so it seems the Union government has released the 'Covid-19' virus," an editorial in the Thackeray camp said.

"The fear of rising in Covid cases due to the rush of the 'Bharat Jodo' yatra is right. But three years ago when Corona wreaked havoc, you were the one who invited the then US President Trump to Gujarat and gathered lakhs of people in his honour," the magazine said further.

Earlier on Tuesday, Union Health



Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had written to Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot asking them to strictly follow the COVID-19 guidelines during the party's Bharat Jodo Yatra.

"Follow the COVID guidelines strictly during Bharat Jodo Yatra which is going on in Rajasthan. Use of masks-sanitiser should be implemented. Only vaccinated people

should participate," the Health Minister said in the letter. Mandaviya has also requested postponing the foot march if the Congress is unable to follow protocol. "If following COVID protocol is not possible then the Bharat Jodo Yatra be postponed in the national interest, taking note of the public health emergency," the letter further stated.

The letter triggered a heavy back-

lash from the Congress Party with Rajasthan Chief Minister Gehlot claiming that the letter was written because the Modi government got alarmed by the huge turnout in the Bharat Jodo. "The BJP and the Modi government are so alarmed by the huge turnout in the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Rajasthan that they are writing letters to Rahul Gandhi to follow the Covid-19 protocol in Rajasthan," Gehlot said on Wednesday while talking to the reporters.

He further accused that the step of writing the letter was not in the interest of the public but "politically motivated". "PM Modi did rallies in Tripura two days ago where no COVID protocols were followed. During the second wave of COVID also, PM had mass rallies in West Bengal. If the Union Health Minister's objective is not political and his concern is justified, then he should have written the first letter to the Prime Minister," Gehlot said. Later on Wednesday, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel attacked the Centre government over the Health Minister's letter and said that the BJP is looking for reasons to stop the Congress' Yatra.

Mobile ban in schools to curb sexual crimes, says Devendra Fadnavis

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis informed the legislators that the schools have been told to strictly implement the ban on mobile phones on school premises. The government has taken the decision after legislators expressed concerns over a series of sexual offences committed by school students. Fadnavis, who is also the in-charge of the state's home department, was responding to the calling attention motion moved by BJP legislator Uma Khapre and others, in the Upper House. He said the government is also working to rein in the ecosystem of paan shops, cafeterias and the presence of anti-social elements in the proximity of schools. MLC Khapre reminded the House of the gang rape of a girl in a school in Matunga. The offenders were her school-mates, Std VIII students, who assaulted her inside a classroom. Also of an incident involving a nine-year-old girl from Kalyan, who was raped, killed and dumped.

The Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs) have said that teenagers are using their phones to watch sexual content on the Internet. "The teenagers are accessing obscene videos on the Internet through mobile phones. The content creates attraction towards violence and produces a sense of revenge," Khapre said. She demanded mobile



jammers in schools and formation of a task force to ensure safety of girl students.

NCP's MLC Shashikant Shinde demanded a scrutiny of school van drivers, too. Fadnavis ensured a check on this illegal ecosystem and installation of CCTV cameras in all schools in a phased manner.

He said cyber laboratories removed and blocked obscene content and an initiative like 'Police Didi' has been started to counsel girls about bad touch and good touch. He added that cyber laboratories, armed with the latest technology, were effectively investigating cyber complaints.

Kannada people will repulse Maha like Indian Army: CM Bommai

Team Absolute | Mumbai/Belagavi (Karnataka)

Reacting strongly to the statement of Maharashtra senior leader Sanjay Raut that his people should enter Karnataka like the Chinese Army, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai stated that if they come like Chinese army, Kannada people would push them back like the Indian Army.

Speaking to reporters at Belagavi, CM Bommai stated that everyone knows what importance should be given to Sanjay Raut. He always gives provocative statements, he said.

Commenting on the demand by Maharashtra MLA to increase the height of dams and not letting the flow of water into the state, CM Bommai stated that the opposition members in Maharashtra had made the statement. "We are living in a federal structure. Water does not belong to one state. It flows in three to four states and there is an inter-connection. There is Water Disputes Act, tribunals, there are Supreme Court judgments," he said. "Nowhere has it been done and nowhere has this kind of statement been



made. Certainly, I am telling them to restrain from making the statements. There is no use in stubborn statements. No one can implement such things. It is just a political talk," CM Bommai maintained. "The relationship between one state and another is always going to be there. The border dispute is in the Supreme Court. If they have so much power, let them fight there. We have confidence. As per the constitution, we have a strong case and submit our arguments efficiently there," he said.

GOVT ORDERS SIT TO PROBE DISHA SALIAN DEATH CASE

AFTER A MORNING OF PANDEMONIUM IN THE LEGISLATURE, MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER DEVENDRA FADNAVIS ANNOUNCED THAT THE MUMBAI POLICE WILL FORM A SPECIAL INVESTIGATION TEAM TO PROBE THE DEATH OF DISHA SALIAN, HERE ON THURSDAY.

Team Absolute | Nagpur

There will be a probe by a SIT into the Disha Salian death case. If anybody has any evidence in this matter, they can furnish it to the police," Fadnavis said in the Assembly.

He added that since the Salian case was never probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), there was no 'closure' in it -- referring to cer-



tain alleged reports claiming the CBI had closed that file. Fadnavis said that only the Bollywood actor

Sushant Singh Rajput case was investigated by the CBI in which there was a purported 'closure report', but the Salian case shall be probed in an impartial manner with any new evidence that has come up in the matter. The Deputy Chief Minister -- who holds the home portfolio -- made the statement after Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Nitesh Rane and Balasahebchandra Shiv Sena (BSS) MLA Bharat Gogavale raised the issue and demanded a CBI inquiry into the matter in which Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray has been targeted. Reacting, former minister Aditya Thackeray said that this was another attempt to divert attention from other major issues, shield the Governor for insulting icons and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who is facing the heat in the alleged Nagpur land scam, favouring certain builders.

"The truth in the Salian case must come out. It is still with the Mumbai Police and not probed yet by the CBI. The final autopsy report has also not yet come and several pages of a book have not been recovered," Rane claimed. Contending that it is still unclear how Salian fell from the building, he reiterated the demand for Aditya's narco-test.

A week after Salian's death, Rajput was also found hanging in his Bandra flat on June 14, 2020, and the final probe report of the CBI is awaited.

BJP MLA and Lokmanya Tilak's kin Mukta S. Tilak dies at 57

Team Absolute | Pune

Bharatiya Janata Party's aggressive MLA Mukta S. Tilak passed away following a prolonged battle with cancer at a private hospital here, a close family member said here on Thursday.

She was 57 and breathed her last at the Galaxy Hospital. She is survived by her husband Shailesh Tilak, son Kunal and daughter Chaitrali.

"She had been under treatment for the past couple of years. She was rushed to the hospital on December 5 where she breathed her last today," Dr. Ujjwala Mehendale said.

A former and first BJP Mayor of Pune (2019-2019) and later a MLA (2019 onwards), Mukta Tilak was the great-grand-daughter-in-law of



the legendary freedom fighter Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

On December 4, she attended her son's wedding and the following day was rushed to the hospital where her condition deteriorated in the past couple of days, Mehendale added.

Her mortal remains shall be kept for public viewing at the family's ancestral home Kesariwada and the last rites will be performed at the Vaikunth Crematorium around noon, said the family in a statement later.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis and other senior leaders from different across the political spectrum condole the demise of Mukta Tilak and recalled her contributions to public life.

GANG-RAPE CASE: POLICE CUSTODY OF NINE ACCUSED EXTENDED

Mumbai: The police custody of nine persons held for allegedly gang-raping a teen girl in Maharashtra's Palghar district was extended till December 28 by a local court on Thursday. The Satpuri Sagri police had sought extension of remand citing time to complete the probe, which was granted by the court. They were held under Indian Penal Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act for allegedly raping a 16-year-old girl in an unoccupied house in Mahim area of Palghar in the intervening night of Friday and Saturday last week.

NCP's Jayant Patil suspended for derogatory remark against Speaker

Team Absolute | Nagpur

In a major development, the state President of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Jayant Patil, was suspended for the remainder of the winter session of Maharashtra Assembly.

The decision was taken by Speaker Rahul Narwekar after Patil allegedly made an 'unparliamentary' remark against the former. Patil's utterance led to a huge ruckus in the Assembly with the ruling Balasahebchandra Shiv Sena (BSS) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members demanding suspension of Patil for one year for the alleged slur aimed at the Speaker's chair. BJP's Parliamentary Affairs Minister Chandrakant Patil later moved a resolution to suspend Patil, which was accepted.

Thereafter, at least three meetings were held with the Speaker, in the presence of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis and Opposition members, followed by the decision to suspend Patil for the remaining duration of the Assembly session. Soon after this, NCP, Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) walked out of the House and



staged a protest outside the legislature. Patil, 60, is among the senior most politicians in the state having been elected from Islampur for seven consecutive times. He was the youngest minister in 1999 to present the state Budget at the age of 39, and later for a record 10 times from 1999-2008.

Police arrests man who issued rape, death threats to Uorfi Javed



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Social media influencer Uorfi Javed, who is currently in Dubai, was recently threatened by a person online as he issued death and rape threats to the social media personality. Uorfi is known for her off-beat sartorial choices that often don't sit well with the hardliners.

According to a report by a daily newspaper, the Police in Goregaon area of Mumbai have arrested a man by the name of Naveen Giri. Meanwhile, the social media influencer was reportedly

detained by the police for allegedly shooting a video in a revealing outfit in Dubai.

However, the actress later clarified that her clothes had nothing to do with the Dubai police landing on the sets of her shoot, but rather, it was some miscommunication by her production team regarding the timings of the shoot at the public place.

Uorfi is known to stir controversy with her choice of clothing. She had also called out a group of teens on social media a few weeks back for allegedly calling and texting her abuses and threats.

Aspiring 'grooms' ride on horses to Solapur Collector, demand 'brides'

Team Absolute | Solapur

This was one 'marriage procession' without parallels -- some 50 young-to-middle aged single-men, clad in full glittering wedding attire, taking out a procession on horsebacks to the Solapur Collector, demanding -- of all things, brides!

The unusual march, organised by NGO Jyoti Kranti Parishad (JKP), evoked curiosity, leers and even cheers, but highlighted a major problem gnawing at the rural hinterlands of Solapur and other districts, where there is a stark 'shortage' of girls for marriage to the bachelors, in the age group of 25-40, and even older hopefuls.

All the 'single-grooms' sported the shining wedding attire of a sherwani or kurta, pyjama, a red headgear (pheta), a dangling sword, on the customary well-decked white horse, carrying placards around their necks, and single-mindedly raising slogans to draw the government's attention to their sole concern in the one-km long procession.

The placards read, "Wanted a Wife, A Wife! Anybody can give a Girl to Marry



Me!", "Government, come to your senses and talk to us. You will have to take note of our plight!", and a flustered 12-year-old kid Vicky Sadigle led the procession carrying a poster "In future, Will I get married or Not?!"

JKP President Ramesh Baraskar said that all the despairing bachelors at the Wednesday procession were aged between 25-40, mostly well-educated and from respected middle-class families, including some farmers, a few working in private companies, etc.

The procession terminated near the Collectorate where the 'single-grooms' squatted and narrated their heart-rending predicament, and submitted a memorandum addressed to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to the surprised Solapur Collector Milind Shambharkar.

Pune's Dr. Ganesh Rakh, who launched the 'Beti Bachao' (Save the Girl Child) movement in January 2022, said that the official male:female ratio in India is 1,000 boys:940 girls, and in Maharashtra it is 1,000 boys:920 girls.

"Barring Kerala's 1,000 boys:1,050 girls, the figures for the rest of the country are misleading. There are huge problems in rural areas or the middle and lower-middle class boys who don't get girls. The situation will worsen if urgent remedial measures are not initiated now," Dr. Rakh cautioned.

"There are some 100-150 unmarried men in most villages and more in towns. Now, there's a flood of support and people are asking us to have similar processions in other districts. We are planning a state-level morcha of such bachelors in Mumbai in summer 2023," said Baraskar.

Hospital, Pharma Company, booked for selling 'fake iron deficiency' injections

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Police in Mumbai have registered a case against six persons, a hospital, a pharma company and a medical supplier for selling fake 'iron deficiency' injections. A Pune-based pharmaceutical company that manufactures injections for iron deficiency complained to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) department in July that "fake injections" were being sold in the market with their brand name. "There were also complaints that some patients had died after they were administered the injections," police sources said. Acting on the complaint, FDA's intelligence division led by inspector Shashikant Yadav investigated a kidney dialysis center at Kanchnpada in Malad West. The center was asked to immediately stop the sale of the injection, said an officer. "Some samples were collected from the dialysis center and were sent for lab testing,"

the officer said, adding that the lab testing report revealed that the "injection was fake".

Upon questioning the dialysis center revealed that the injection was purchased from a pharma company in Borivali, Kalyan, who had purchased it from a biopharmaceutical company in Bhiwandi, the officer said. After days of investigation, it came to fore that a pharma company in Palghar was manufacturing the injections. An FDA official who investigated the company and injections said that the company was manufacturing fake injections. A case was registered in Malad police station against Apex Kidney Care private limited Malad, DIATX BIOTECH PRIVATE LIMITED (Dahisar), Medical Parma private limited (Borivali), Medigram special-ist (Grugram), Vishva Traders (Ahmadabad) and unknown persons under sections 34, 420, 465, 468, 471 and 473 of IPC.



EDITOR'S SPECS

BSP gives up on Brahmins

It has been more than six months since Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MP Satish Chandra Mishra has been missing in action. Initially, it was said that he was not active in party affairs because of ill health but now it seems that he has been side-lined because the Bahujan Samaj Party no longer wishes to focus on upper caste, mainly Brahmins. The BSP is firmly rooting for Dalits, OBCs and Muslims, and Mishra is not required for this action plan. Mayawati has already sacked former cabinet minister Nakul Dubey and then another Brahmin leader, Anil Pandey. Dubey joined the Congress and is now a zonal president of the party. Nakul Dubey, incidentally, was said to be a protege of S.C. Mishra. According to a senior party functionary, Mayawati received feedback that the party's Dalit cadres were 'upset' at the 'overbearing presence' of Satish Chandra Mishra in the party and his role in decision-making. "Dalits were naturally upset at being ordered around by an upper caste person. Behenji (Mayawati) has now restricted Mishra's role to legal issues in the party," the functionary said. Mishra's name, significantly, was not included in the list of star campaigners of the BSP for the bypolls in Azamgarh and Rampur, earlier this year. Mishra rose to an exalted position in 2007 when the BSP played the Brahmin card under his leadership and Mayawati formed her first government with an absolute majority. However, thereafter, the BSP graph has been on the downside and Brahmins deserted the BSP for BJP when the Modi era began. The party touched its nadir in the 2022 Assembly polls when it could manage to win only one seat.

CAG REPORT ON 'SABKA VISHWAS LEGACY DISPUTE RESOLUTION SCHEME' DISCLOSES DEFICIENCIES

The CAG's Performance Audit report on "Sabka Vishwas Legacy Dispute Resolution Scheme 2019" has revealed certain deficiencies, mainly related to inadequacies in designing the online system, following legal provisions, CBIC instructions, disposal of disputed cases, and keeping the tax evaders in the tax net. The Comptroller and Auditor General's Performance Audit Report on 'Sabka Vishwas Legacy Dispute Resolution Scheme 2019' (Report No. 14 of 2022) on Goods and Services Tax, Central Excise and Service Tax, tabled in the Parliament on Wednesday, found that irregular relief of Rs 109.81 crore in 28 declarations was extended to declarants who sought



relief with respect to ineligible goods.

This Performance Audit was conducted in 52 selected Commissionerates.

As per the report, the Designated Committees irregularly processed 21 declarations, involving tax dues of Rs 7.01 crore under the 'Voluntary Disclosure' category,

though the declarants were subjected to enquiry, investigation, audit, and filed returns. The Designated Committees rejected 14 eligible declarations, also resulting in probable loss of revenue of Rs 8.72 crore, it said.

The CAG report said that irregular processing of 17 declarations under the 'Litigation' category instead of 'Arrears' resulted in excess relief amounting to Rs 5.1 crore to the declarants. In 65 declarations involving tax dues of Rs 90.51 crore, evidence of pre-deposits or deposits had not been verified properly, after due linking with the cases concerned.

The audit report said that the SVLDRS portal accepted multiple declarations in 208 cases involving tax dues of Rs 273.53 crore, which

resulted in processing of certain cases multiple times.

The CAG recommended that the Department may take effective steps to pursue, in a time bound manner, those cases which were rejected under the scheme as well as the 28,825 cases for which Discharge Certificates could not be issued, especially due to non-payment of the estimated payable amount. In particular, Voluntary Disclosure Cases where liability was not discharged should be vigorously pursued to protect the interest of the revenue. Arrears are confirmed demands and have no expiry date and it is possible that many of the declarants might have migrated to the GST regime as assesses, and therefore recovery actions are pursuable, it said.

Ray's 'Pather Panchali' only Indian film on 'Variety' 100 Greatest Movies of All Time

Satyajit Ray's neo-realist classic, 'Pather Panchali', is the only Indian film to feature in 117-year-old 'Variety' magazine's first-ever '100 Greatest Movies of All Time' list.

The list is important because it has been put together by more than 30 editors and writers of the magazine that invented the word 'showbiz'. They include Manori Ravindran, the London-based international executive editor, and Rajinikanth's biographer and 'Variety' contributor Naman Ramachandran.

Topped by Alfred Hitchcock's slasher masterpiece, 'Psycho' (1960), the list's top five movies are 'The Wizard of Oz' (1939), 'The Godfather' (1972), 'Citizen Kane' (1941) and 'Pulp Fiction' (1994).

Also included are memorable classics that are on the syllabus of every respectable film institute -- from Charlie Chaplin's 'City Lights' to 'Casablanca', 'The Rules of the Game', 'Singin' in the Rain', 'All About Eve', 'It's A Wonderful Life' and 'Seven Samurai'.

What makes the list a collector's item is that it provides a link to the review carried by 'Variety' at the time of the release of each of the included films, which range from Ann Bancroft-Dustin Hoffman classic 'The Graduate' at No.100, to genre-defining sci-fi films such as 'Alien' (1979), Steven Spielberg's 'E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial' (1982) the second 'Star Wars' movie, 'The Empire Strikes Back' (1980) and Stanley Kubrick's '2001: A Space Odyssey' (1968), to blockbusters like 'Gone With The Wind' (1939), 'Silence of the Lambs' (1991), Lawrence of Arabia (1962), King Kong (1933), 'My Best Friend's Wedding'

(1997) and the James Bond movie 'Goldfinger' (1964).

Also included are memorable classics (listed here in the ascending order) that are now musts on the syllabus of all respectable film institutes -- from Charlie Chaplin's 'City Lights' (1931) to 'Casablanca' (1942), 'The Rules of the Game' (1942), 'Singin' in the Rain' (1952), 'All About Eve' (1950), 'It's A Wonderful Life' (1946) and 'Seven Samurai' (1954).

In their comment on why they included 'Pather Panchali' (ranked No. 55), the jury noted: "Long before Richard Linklater's 'Boyhood', there was Satyajit Ray's exquisitely paced and structured Apu Trilogy, the holy peak of all chaptered coming-of-age narratives."

"Restrained but also universally relatable, the Bengali filmmaker's debut is the first of those three movies, which put Indian cinema on the international art-house map. Like a regional riff on Italian Neorealism, the inherently humanist 'Pather Panchali' is both a loving portrait of a mostly matriarchal upbringing and an awe-inspiring vision of rural life, as reflected through the impressionable eyes of its young protagonist."

"The film's captivating images include chasing after a passing train and playing in a monsoon, which add up to a pure and soul-nourishing experience."

Back in its time, Ray's film, based on Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay's 1929 novel of the same name, featured a little-known cast and was produced by the Government of West Bengal on a shoestring budget. It won the 1955 National Award for best film and was named the best human document



at Cannes in 1956.

At that time, 'Variety' had commented: "The film ... poetically and lyrically unfolds a tender but penetrating tale of coming of age in India, a land of poverty but also of spiritual hope. Two adolescents, a boy and his sister, grow up in this atmosphere. The film fuses all aspects of picture making into a moving whole that shows India perceptively for the first time to a Western audience."

"The treatment of old age is one of the most profound ever seen on the screen. An old woman lives and dies among the budding children with a dignity and beauty that counterpoints the growth and experiences of the children. Acting, lensing and all other aspects are masterfully orchestrated by Ray into a document on life in India."

international

BIDEN APPROVES MORE MILITARY AID AS ZELENSKY VISITS WASHINGTON

Washington | Agencies

US President Joe Biden pledged to his visiting Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky to offer military aid, mentioning in particular the Patriot surface-to-air missile battery he just approved for Ukraine in a new tranche of security assistance totaling \$1.85 billion.

The weapons package approved by Biden, according to a list from the Pentagon, also included "precision aerial munitions", which it didn't explain in detail regarding the type and quantity, reports Xinhua news agency.

According to US media reports, they might be the so-called "Joint Direct Attack Munitions", which would transform the unguided "dumb" bombs into "smart" bombs by the addition of fins and a precision guidance system.

Arriving in the US Wednesday for a visit, his first trip abroad since Russia launched its ongoing invasion of Ukraine on February 24, Zelensky told Biden he wished to "come earlier" but was unable to because of the once difficult situation in his war-torn



nation that has now been under control.

Although Zelensky was effusive in his praise for Biden, he didn't mince words when it came to the Patriot battery -- the most advanced weapon system the US has offered and something Zelensky has long asked for.

He told his counterpart that just one such item is not enough for Ukraine.

"We would like to get more Patriots," Zelensky said to laughter from Biden, who stood next to him during a joint press conference held

after their bilateral meeting. Biden stressed that the US is committed to ensuring that Ukraine continues to have the ability to defend itself "as long as it takes" during the press conference.

Zelensky told reporters that he floated to Biden the idea of a "global formula for a peace summit" and offered "very specific steps what America can do to help us implement them". He didn't elaborate further.

The Ukrainian leader said later while delivering a speech at a joint session of Congress that the peace

plan he proposed contains "10 points", that the summit "can be held", and that "President Biden supported our peace initiative today".

However, John Kirby, the National Security Council's coordinator for strategic communication, told CNN during a live coverage prior to Zelensky's congressional speech that while Biden "obviously wants to seek a just peace in accordance with what Ukrainian President Zelensky desires", as regards the peace summit, the administration will have to "study that a little bit more".

In his address to lawmakers, Zelensky requested for more weapons from the US, saying: "We have artillery, yes, thank you. Is it enough? Honestly, not really."

On Tuesday morning, the House Appropriations Committee released the "Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023", which will provide Ukraine with \$45 billion in emergency assistance.

It is contained in a \$1.7 trillion omnibus spending bill to fund the federal government through fiscal year 2023.

Japan sees 8th wave of Covid pandemic, logs 206,943 new cases

Tokyo | Agencies

Amidst an ongoing eighth wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, Japan registered 206,943 new cases, marking the first time that the single-day tally has surpassed the 200,000-mark since August 25, health authorities have confirmed.

According to the Health Ministry, this is an increase of 16,100 new cases from the same day a week earlier, reports Xinhua news agency.

Of the total infections, Tokyo confirmed 21,186 new cases, with the figure for the capital rising week-on-week for a 16th straight day, and up by 2,374 cases the same time a week ago, the Ministry said on Wednesday.

The figure also exceeded 20,000 new infections in Tokyo for a second consecutive day, according to the data, with the capital on Wednesday also reporting 20 deaths.

The number of patients considered severely ill and needing the assistance of



ventilators or extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) machines in medical care facilities or intensive care units (ICUs) in Tokyo, increased by seven on Tuesday, to total 44, the ministry also said.

Elsewhere in Japan, Osaka prefecture reported 12,225 new Covid cases, Kanagawa 11,833 new infections, Aichi 12,894 cases and Saitama prefecture logged 10,989 infections, the Ministry reported.

Tottori prefecture in southern Honshu, meanwhile, recorded 1,582 new cases of

the virus, which was the highest number for the prefecture, the least populous in Japan, since the outbreak of the virus here.

The Ministry said there were 530 people considered severely ill nationwide and receiving emergency respiratory assistance or otherwise being treated in ICUs.

The number of severely ill patients climbed by 37 compared to a day earlier, the data showed, with the daily number of nationwide Covid-19 related deaths reaching 296.

Texas braces for freezing temperatures

Houston | Agencies

The arctic blast is expected to hit the US state of Texas, bringing freezing temperatures that will last through Christmas.

In northern Texas, temperatures could fall to -6 degrees Celsius by Thursday afternoon, joined by 45-mph winds, the National Weather Service forecast. In Houston, the largest city in the state, five warming centres will open to the needed from Thursday, according to the office of Mayor Sylvester Turner. Each centre will offer chairs, blankets, water, meals-ready-to-eat, PPE, and comfort kits, the office said. The Electric Reliability Council of Texas said the state's power grid should withstand arctic weather without major outages despite the potential for the coldest temperatures since that dis-

astrous 2021 winter storm. The temperatures won't stay as cold for as long, and ice isn't a factor this time around, the agency's CEO Pablo Vegas said during a board meeting on Tuesday. "We expect that high demand period to occur on Friday morning," he said. "There's a low probability scenario where there's very high peak load and extreme outages of generation units and extremely low wind that shows that there could be a shortfall. But again, this is a very low probability scenario."

"So we continue to expect adequate supply with reserves for the approaching cold weather conditions," Vegas said.

The winter storm in 2021 killed more than 200 people across the state and pushed the Texas grid to the brink of total failure.

ROADSIDE BOMB KILLS 4 PRO-GOVT SOLDIERS IN YEMEN

Aden (Yemen) | Agencies

A roadside bomb killed four soldiers of Yemen's Southern Transitional Council (STC) in the country's southern province of Abyan, a local government official said.

The bomb went off near a military vehicle in Al Mahfid district of Abyan, killing four new recruits and wounding three others aboard, the official added on condition of anonymity on Wednesday.

Following the explosion, the STC troops, who are affiliated to the Yemeni government and backed by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, vowed to continue their anti-terror campaign aimed at securing Yemen's south-



ern provinces, he said.

Last month, military units of the Aden-based STC announced that they had launched "a qualitative anti-terror operation and succeeded in raiding a key hideout of al-Qaida in Abyan". With support from the UAE, the STC troops

have made important progress after expelling terrorist groups from several Yemeni provinces over the last few weeks, Xinhua news agency reported.

However, in the past 24 hours, members of the Yemen-based al-Qaida branch tried to impede the

progress of the anti-terror troops on-ground through ambushes.

Al-Qaida militants frequently use hit-and-run tactics against Yemeni government forces while hiding out in rocky terrains and mountainous areas of Abyan and other neighbouring provinces.

The Yemen-based al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula network has exploited years of deadly conflict between the Yemeni government and the Houthi militia to expand its presence in the war-ravaged Arab country. It has carried out many high-profile attacks against the security forces in the country's southern provinces.

RUSSIA TO CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN ARMED FORCES: VLADIMIR PUTIN

Moscow: The combat capability of the Russian armed forces is "increasing day by day" and Russia will certainly step up this process, President Vladimir Putin said.

"Today, our goal is to implement the entire scope of necessary measures to achieve a qualitative renewal and improvement of the armed forces," Putin added on Wednesday at an expanded meeting of the Russian Defence Ministry Board. He ordered the military to maintain and improve the combat readiness of the nuclear triad, which is "the main guarantee that our sovereignty and territorial integrity, strategic parity and the general balance of forces in the world are preserved".

The level of modern armaments in Russia's strategic nuclear forces has exceeded 91 per cent and "we will carry out all of our plans" to equip the strategic forces with the latest weapon systems, he said.

Putin also stressed the importance of increasing the numbers of fighters and bombers operating in the zone covered by modern air defence systems, and called it "a pressing task" to upgrade drones, Xinhua news agency reported.



CONG'S NO-TRUST MOTION AGAINST BJP GOVT DEFEATED IN ASSEMBLY, SESSION ADJOURNED

Leader of Opposition Dr Govind Singh who had moved the motion was not present in the House as he was unwell. Kamal Nath was also absent for both days during the discussion on the motion.

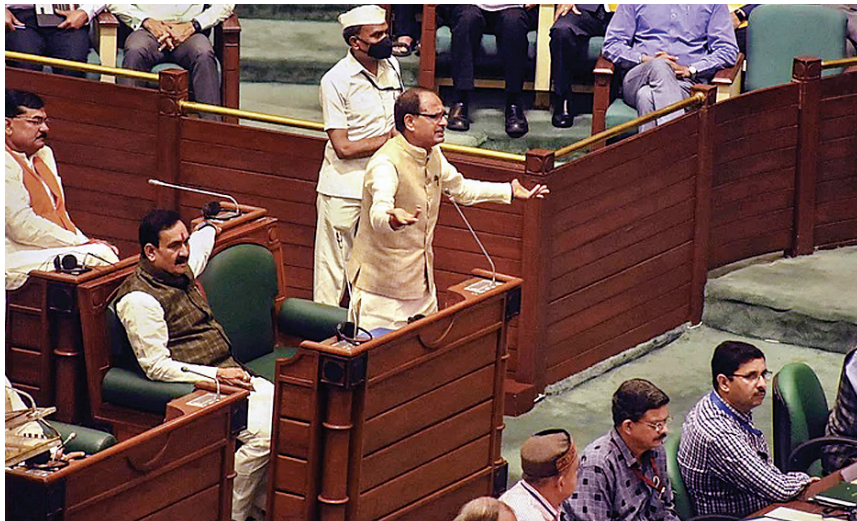
Team Absolute | Bhopal

The no-confidence motion moved by the opposition Congress against the BJP government in state was defeated by a voice vote in the state Assembly on Thursday with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan launching an attack on the grand old party and its erstwhile dispensation headed by Kamal Nath for the "sins" it committed.

After the motion was defeated, Speaker Girish Goutam adjourned the winter session of the Assembly sine die ahead of its schedule. The Congress had moved the motion on Wednesday, targeting the Chouhan government over law and order, unemployment, inflation, corruption, 'discrimination' against the opposition legislators, atrocities against women and tribals, farmers' problems and other issues.

However, during his reply on the motion on the second day, CM Chouhan refuted all the charges against his government and said the Kamal Nath dispensation collapsed (in March 2020) due to the "five great sins" it committed, including corruption in transfers.

As the House assembled for the day, the Congress demanded an apology from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Rameshwar Sharma and higher education minister Mohan Yadav for their remarks on Lord Ram and Goddess Sita and created a ruckus. They did not allow the chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to reply to the no-trust motion till they apologised for their remarks. Legislative Affairs Minister Narottam Mishra later said, "Lord Ram and Goddess Sita belong to us as well as others.



If any member of the House is hurt due to the remarks, then I express regret over it." Chouhan began his reply to the no-confidence motion. On Wednesday, a 12-hour long discussion was held on it which ended at 12.35 am on Thursday.

"The Congress's Nath government committed five great sins, when the opposition members created a ruckus over Chouhan's allegations and sought evidence, the CM said he had all the proof with him and was speaking in the House with full responsibility. Nath government stopped many welfare schemes like Sambal Yojana started by the BJP government. They also deleted the names of 75 lakh poor beneficiaries, he said. Chouhan also pointed out the Nath government stopped the distribution of laptops to meritorious students. "What was their

fault?" he asked. Chouhan said his government implemented the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act in

The debate on the motion saw several heated exchanges. It started around 12.20 pm on Wednesday and continued till 12.35 am without a break, for more than 12 hours and ended with the walkout staged by the Congress legislators. A total of 45 members from both sides including 31 from the opposition camp and 14 including eight ministers from the ruling party took part. The five-day Assembly session, which began Monday, was scheduled to conclude on December 23.

the state to ensure the development of tribal areas to protect their rights.

Speaking on the Congress government's loan waiver scheme, Chouhan said Rahul Gandhi had promised that farm loans will be waived within 10 days of his party coming to power in the state. "But everybody knows what happened to that scheme," he said. The Congress members in the House, however, refuted the charge.

"THE CONGRESS'S NATH GOVERNMENT COMMITTED FIVE GREAT SINS,

1. Corruption in the transfer-postings of collectors and superintendent of police (SPs), which led to its fall.
2. In a span of 165 days, more than 450 Indian Administrative Services and Indian Police Service officers were transferred, and more than 15,000 transfers of other officials were done by the Congress government which turned the mantralaya into a "den of corruption".
3. Nath had no time for his own MLAs when he was heading the government.
4. The irrigation relaxed rules in favour of a particular contractor and made a payment of Rs 877.57 crore.
5. the then government stopped many welfare schemes started by the previous BJP government, including payment of Rs 1,000 to tribals belonging to Baiga, Saharia and Bharia tribes.

Common people should be aware and cautious about Corona: CM Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that once again the common man needs to be more alert towards his health. Citizens are appealed to use face-masks as per requirement. Chief Minister Chouhan said that those citizens who have not yet got their booster dose, should take the initiative to get it administered.

Chief Minister Chouhan said in context of Corona cases spreading in China that every citizen needs to be careful. The state government has also issued instructions to all chief medical and health officers to be alert. In view of the threat of Corona, Chief Minister Chouhan will hold review meeting every week to ensure that the government machinery and citizens remain aware. Chief Minister Chouhan said that during the

Corona period, the government made every possible effort to manage the arrangements and overcame the situation. All necessary arrangements were made. By working hard day and night, the people's representatives, responsible officers-employees of the administration and common citizens normalized the difficult situation with collective efforts and did not allow the infection to spread. Madhya Pradesh also became an example for many states. Chief Minister Chouhan said that more than 550 meetings were held in connection with Corona control and related arrangements. In view of the onset of the new variant of Covid, the central government has also given instructions to the states. Madhya Pradesh government is alert about necessary measures and arrangements. There will be no shortcoming in these efforts.

Challan on those who smoke in public places

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the National Tobacco Control Program (NTCP), challan action was taken under COTPA (cigarette and other tobacco products act) in state capital. Citizens found smoking and spitting tobacco in railway station, bus stand, hospital premises were challaned. Under which a fine of Rs 210 was imposed on 6 people and instruction was given not to

smoke in public places.

The action was taken by the district team of NTCP under the direction of Chief Medical and Health Officer Bhopal Dr. Prabhakar Tiwari.



During the proceedings, when a person obstructed, the police intervened. In order to discourage the use of tobacco and create awareness about not smoking in public places, activities under the COTPA will be organized continuously in the district.

Exotic macaw found in Indore, shifted to zoo after disputed ownership

Team Absolute | Indore

An exotic macaw parrot was found lying abandoned in Indore city with different people coming forward and claiming to be its owner, a local zoo official said.

The local administration has rescued it and decided to keep the bird in the zoo here till the dispute of its ownership is resolved, the official said. "It seems the blue and golden colour macaw parrot was kept as a pet by someone in the city and the bird flew away from the person's house," Indore's Kamla Nehru Zoo in-charge Dr Uttam Yadav told reporters.

He said different people have claimed to be the bird's owner. "When the dispute



escalated, the police and the forest department were informed about the macaw parrot. It has been rescued and brought to the zoo. The bird was seen under stress as some people had tried to catch it," the official said. The bird will be kept in the safe environment of the zoo till

its real owner is found, he said. Yadav said exotic parrots cannot be released in the open due to a threat to their life from local animals and birds. "We will hand over the parrot to the person who presents the bird's valid documents before us," he said.

State Level Educational Talk organised on "Checking the copy and worksheet of the children in the class"

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the CM Rise Teacher Professional Development Programme, the fifth State Level Educational Talk was successfully organised by the School Education Department, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh on the subject of "Checking children's copy and worksheet in the classroom", in which selected participants from five districts directly participated in the EDUSAT of the Rajya Shiksha Kendra. DIET members, district project coordinators, additional project coordinators, academic resource persons, state and district level resource persons of all the districts of Madhya Pradesh participated online. In the discussion, the participants focused on the "Need of checking



the notebook, the information about the student from the notebook, the

regularisation of the use and checking of the notebook and the prob-

lems related to the checking of the notebook, etc. Teachers from different districts participated in the dialogue with eagerness and enthusiasm through many positive suggestions. The dialogue was mainly attended by the Additional Director of Rajya Shiksha Kendra IAS Lokesh Jangid, Controller Curriculum Dr. Ashok Pareek, Controller Teacher Education Cell Mr. Manoj Guha and members of Peepul, a cooperative organisation in teaching training. It is notable that the new courses started in Diksha and the courses conducted under Mission Ankur are being completed by the teachers across the state. According to the letter issued by the State Education Center, district level educational dialogue will be organised in the coming days.

Government hospital better than any private hospital

Team Absolute | Jabalpur

About 40 Kilometres away from Jabalpur district headquarters of Madhya Pradesh, in Chargawan Hospital patients are getting better facilities than private hospitals. The villagers don't have to go to the city for treatment; they are getting free treatment at Chargawan Arogyam Kendra under the schemes received from the government. Under the Rejuvenation Campaign in Madhya Pradesh, all health centres are being made neat and clean. The aim of the administration is to provide all the facilities to the patients under one roof.

Along with all arrangements for treatment made in the sub-health centre, the premise is elevated with attractive paintings and motivating slogans on the walls to encourage positivity. Special care has also been taken for cleanliness



and hygiene. Two separate dustbins have been placed to segregate dry and wet waste. There is also a small garden. Dr. Indu Rajput, BMO of Chargawan Health Center said, "Special care is taken for the treatment of the patients coming here. Staff is also deployed in the hospital for 24 hours. Due to which the delivery of pregnant women is done safely. In this government hospital, all the facilities including eye test, X-ray, blood tests are provided to the patients.

FIVE INCLUDING THREE WOMEN INJURED IN ATTACK BY A GROUP OF YOUTH

Indore: Five people including three women were injured after they were allegedly attacked by a group of youth following an altercation between them in Dwarkapuri area, police said. The complainant alleged his daughter was being teased by one of the accused who along with his friends attacked his family members when he went to tell the accused's parents about the matter. According to the police, the father of the 14-year-old girl informed the police that he is a supplier of LED items in the city. His daughter was being teased by a youth named Nimesh in the area and the father asked Nimesh not to indulge in this practice. After that the complainant reached the accused's place and complained about the same.

The parents told the girl's father to go home and they would talk to him there. When the complainant reached home Nimesh along with his friends attacked the girl's father, her mother, uncle and two women of the family.

Meeting will be called soon to resolve problems of mill workers: CM Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Workers and employees associated with Jiyajirao Cotton Mill Limited, Gwalior met Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at his residence today along with Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar. The delegation handed over a 4-point suggestion letter to CM. He said that a meeting will be called soon regarding the suggestions received.

A delegation of Khangar Kshatriya Social Service Development Association,



District Niwari met Chief Minister Chouhan at his residence today under the leadership of National President Shri Ramesh

Khangar. Chief Minister Chouhan was invited for the Garhkundar Festival to be held from 27 to 29 December.

A STAGE DANCER GANGRAPED IN SHIVPURI

Team Absolute | Shivpuri

A 35-year-old lady who is a stage dancer by profession was allegedly gangraped in Khaniyadhana police station area of Shivpuri district. The lady performs along with her husband in several events in the village. According to the information received, the stage dancer woman was going to perform with her husband on a bike. The victim woman told the police that she had just left Khaniyadhana and reached a short distance when two people stopped her bike at Jera Valley. After which both the people beat up her husband and snatched his bike. Later, the lady was forceful-



ly taken to the forest by them. Both the accused assaulted her, threatened and raped her in turn. After the incident, the woman somehow escaped from the clutches of the accused. The victim along with her husband reached the police station and lodged a report of the incident.

The Sub-Inspector of Khaniyadhana police station KP Sharma said that on the report of the victim woman, a case was registered against the two accused in other sections including gangrape. Soon the police will arrest the accused in this case.

AWARENESS MEETING ON PESA ACT HELD IN SHIVANYAPANI VILLAGE

Team Absolute | Sendhwa

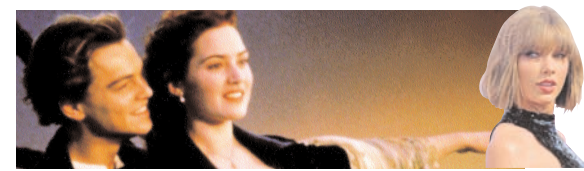
Under the aegis of Jan Abhiyan Parishad, an awareness meeting on Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) was conducted in Shivanyapani village in Sendhwa tehsil of Barwani district on Thursday. Kapilesh Sharma, block coordinator, Avankur Sanstha Sarvodaya Shikshan Committee while addressing the meeting said that the aim behind the Act is to preserve the tribal population from exploitation with active involvement of the Gram Sabha. With the enactment of the PESA Act, the long-standing demand of the tribal society has been fulfilled by



the government and tribals have been empowered with constitutional rights to reap the benefits of natural resources from the forest areas where they live.

Dara Singh Chauhan, block coordinator, gave detailed insight of the act and elaborated on government schemes run by the central government for tribal people. The committee agreed to open a public information centre in the village.

Various activities related to the Act will be conducted in the village. Shambhu Davar, Ilam Singh, Mansharam Davar and other committee members were also present. Field worker Balram Davar extended a vote of thanks at the end of the meeting.



Meghan's New Year Resolution: Wants to get pregnant



Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Meghan Trainor, who is married to 'Spy Kids' actor Daryl Sabara and has a son Riley with him, hopes to welcome another little one next year before hopefully expanding her brood to four in total.

"Hopefully, I'll be pregnant. I'm trying to make four children, so I've got to get on it! After having a baby, I was like, there's nothing I can't do. So now I'm just trying to knock off all my dreams on my dream list," she said when asked about her plans for 2023, reports.

Meanwhile, the 'Made You Look' hitmaker added that when it comes to Christmas, she has bought Riley a total of eight outfits for the holiday season even though it has been "tough" to source to find little boy outfits for the festive period.

She said: "I got him eight outfits. Its tough finding cute boy outfits for Christmas. I wanted to make him a reindeer, but I cannot find that outfit yet. I want it to be cute, but also embarrassing, so one day he can look back, like, 'Oh my God, how cute was I?' I can't wait!"

The 'I Believe in Santa' songstress, who released her fifth studio album 'Takin' It Back' in October, said she wanted to get pregnant "months ago", but has been too busy with work commitments and was hoping to be expecting again by December.

"If I could've got pregnant months ago, I would've. We're just busy and I don't want to be, like, nauseous while doing all this fun stuff. I'm about to travel the world really quick. But November, December, I'm going to be trying to get knocked up," she added.

JENNA ORTEGA REVEALS WHY HER CHARACTER CRY ONCE IN THE MOVIE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Jenna Ortega has shared as to why her character Wednesday Addams only cried once in the highly streamed Netflix series 'Wednesday'.

It only happened once in all of season one, after Ortega's Wednesday rushed Thing to be saved by Uncle Fester after the disembodied hand was found stabbed to Wednesday's Nevermore Academy dorm room wall. "It's also a really important moment for Wednesday," Ortega said. "I think it's the only time we really see her cry." Wednesday is seen wiping away tears after Fester manages to magically save Thing's life. As she explained, seeing Wednesday get emotional elevated the scene to another, very impactful level. "I'm glad it was over him, though," Ortega said about her tears. "I don't think it would have made sense over anything else." Joy Sunday, who plays fellow Nevermore Academy student Bianca Barclay, echoed a similar sentiment about the scene, saying, "This is the first time you get to see Wednesday really being frantic, so you could tell she really cares about Thing, which is sweet." There's nothing like the love between a girl and her sentient five-fingered bestie.

As it turns out, Thing manages to look so lifelike on the show because he's actually a hand! Hand actor and performer Victor Dorobantu plays Thing on Wednesday, serving an integral role in the affecting scene. "That was Victor," Jenna explained, "a blue man under the table."

Kate Winslet detailed 'abuse' as fans called her 'too fat'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Kate Winslet detailed horrifying body shaming from "borderline abusive" fans following the release of the iconic Hollywood-hit 'Titanic'. The actress slammed the "bullying" she received from some viewers who said she was "too fat" while she battled feeling "deeply insecure", reports. Speaking of the comments made from movie buffs about that pivotal scene in a recent episode of the Happy Sad Confused podcast, she said: "Apparently I was too fat."

"Why were they so mean to me? They were so mean. I wasn't even f****g fat," she explained.

She explained how she wishes she had replied to the horrible comments at the time, adding: "I would have responded. I would have said, 'Don't you dare treat me like this. I'm a young woman, my body is

changing, I'm figuring it out, I'm deeply insecure, I'm terrified, don't make this any harder than it already is'.

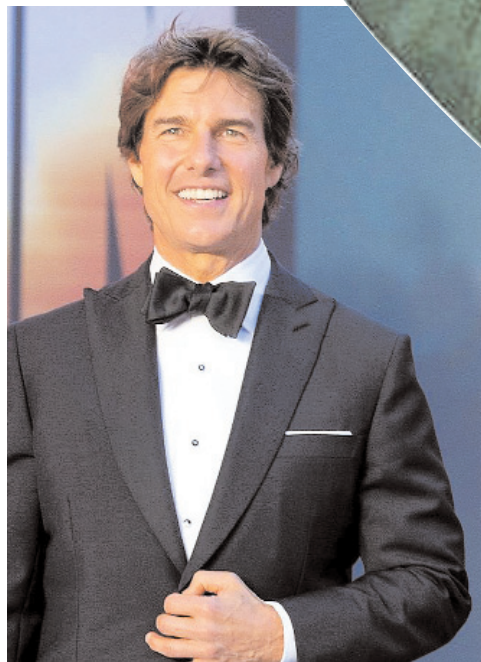
"That's bullying, you know, and actually borderline abusive', I would say." Winslet has openly discussed body shaming in the past as she revealed she was cruelly told to settle for "fat girl" roles during her time at acting school. She said: "It can be extremely negative. People are subject to scrutiny that is more than a young, vulnerable person can cope with. But, in the film industry, it is really changing. When I was younger my agent would get calls saying, 'How's her weight?' I kid you not. So it's heartwarming that this has started to change."

TOM CRUISE NEVER TRIED THE FAMOUS 'WHITE CHOCOLATE CAKE'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Tom Cruise is said to have never tried the famous white chocolate cake he spends a fortune sending to hundreds of his friends every Christmas.

The actor is renowned for adding people to his ever-growing list of recipients of the \$50 White Chocolate Coconut Bundt Cake from Doan's Bakery in Woodland Hills, Los Angeles, each December, reports. His friend James Corden has now claimed the actor has never tried the dessert, even though he said it is the "most extraordinary" one he has ever eaten. Outgoing "The Late Late Show with James Corden" host James said: "It's unbelievable, I would say almost everybody he meets who works on 'The Late Late Show' gets one of these cakes. It's like our head writers, Ian and Lauren (get one) - you know, different people that he's met." "He's just so gracious and generous. But here's the most amazing thing. He's never tried it! On my life! I said to him once, 'This cake is the most extraordinary cake I've ever eaten in my life,' and he went, 'That's what everybody says!' Cruise has said about his workout regime that stops him indulging in the dessert, "I love sugar, but I can't eat it because when I'm training, I'm doing all these movies - so I send it to everyone. I wait for the calls, like, "Tell me about it."



DEMI MOORE ENTERS 'UNHINGED GRANDMA ERA'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actress Demi Moore will soon be a grandmother. The 'Charlie's Angels' actress' daughter, Rumer Willis, is expecting her first baby with boyfriend Derek Richard Thomas, the couple revealed in a joint Instagram post. Already playing the role of proud grandmother, Moore shared their announcement post on her own Instagram, reports. "Entering my hot kooky unhinged grandma era," Moore wrote alongside the couple's photos.

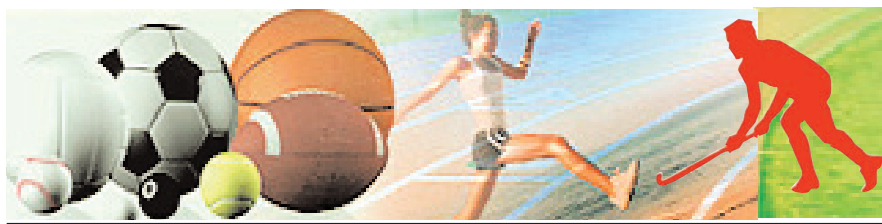
"So happy for you my love!" she later added in the comments. Emma Heming Willis, who is married to Rumer's father Bruce Willis, also shared her excitement for the mom-to-be. "Baby news is happy news!! she wrote on Instagram. According to the reports, Rumer and Thomas made the special announcement with a carousel of bump photos. In the first snap, the father-to-be wrapped his hand around her growing belly and gave it a sweet kiss while Rumer smiled. She also showed off her pregnant silhouette as she stood near a window in another image. A photo that featured a very excited Thomas rounded out the set of pictures.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Danielle Lloyd



2nd Test, Day 1

INDIA SKITTLE BANGLADESH FOR 227

Dhaka | Agencies

Umesh Yadav and Ravichandran Ashwin picked four wickets each to India in pole position on day one of second Test against Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium on Thursday.

Pushed into bowling first, India made use of conditions and pitch having seam movement, turn and extra bounce to bowl out Bangladesh for 227 in 73.5 overs, including losing last five wickets for 14 runs. For the hosts', a returning Mominul Haque was the lone ranger with a stroke-filled and calm 84.

Each of the Bangladesh batters got starts, but barring Mominul, none could convert it into a big score. They had five partnerships in double digits, but none of them were able to touch a half-century.

Captain KL Rahul and Shubman Gill held their nerve towards the end of the first day to be not out on three



Brief Scores

Bangladesh 227 all out in 73.5 overs (Mominul Haque 84, Mushfiqur Rahim 26; Umesh Yadav 4/25, Ravichandran Ashwin 4/71) lead India 19/0 in eight overs by 208 runs.

victory at Chattogram.

In the final session, Mehidy hit a couple of boundaries before nicking behind to Pant off Umesh. The pacer had another wicket in quick succession when he got one to come in and trap Nurul Hasan lbw. Umesh had his fourth wicket when Taskin Ahmed went for a drive and leading edge was snapped by point.

Ashwin came in and had Mominul chasing a wide carrom ball outside the off-stump. But the ball sneaked in and brushed his glove as he tried to leave late, and was caught by Pant. A ball later, Ashwin got his fourth wicket when Khaled Ahmed whacked a full toss straight to deep mid-wicket.

and 14 respectively, taking India to 19/0 in eight overs at stumps, trailing Bangladesh by 208 runs.

In the morning, India gave Zakir Hasan a reprieve when Mohammed Siraj dropped a diving catch at fine-leg off Umesh. Siraj and Umesh were getting bit of lateral movement, and were beating the edge of Zakir and Najmul Hossain Shanto constantly,

even squaring them up on a few occasions.

Apart from Umesh and Ashwin, Jaydev Unadkat picked two wickets and impressed with his accuracy and ability to extract extra bounce on his return to Test cricket after 12 years, especially after he was included in place of Kuldeep Yadav, who was the player of the match in India's 188-run

Pandya to get India white-ball captaincy in future: Reports

New Delhi | Agencies

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is mulling handing over the responsibility of India's white-ball teams to all-rounder Hardik Pandya, reports said.

BCCI top brass has discussed the plan with Pandya and the Gujarat Titans captain has sought some time to respond, stated a report.

"A decisive call will only be taken after consultation with the new senior selection committee after it is formed. The BCCI has this plan and has discussed it with him. The all-rounder has asked for some days to respond. Let's see what he thinks of it. No decision has been taken regarding this but yes the officials (BCCI) are in the thought process to give him the cap-



taincy of white-ball cricket. Let's see how things go further," it said.

Rohit Sharma led India at the T20 World Cup, a year after the Virat Kohli-led side crashed out in the Super 12 stage. India managed to go past the Super 12 stage in Australia but they were hammered by England in a one-sided semi-final.

NEW FIFA WORLD RANKINGS SEE MOROCCO CLIMB TO 11TH SPOT

Rabat, Morocco: Morocco has climbed from 22nd to 11th in the latest FIFA world ranking released on Thursday, after their heroics at the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

The Atlas Lions were eliminated by France 2-0 in the semifinals at the World Cup before losing 2-1 to Croatia in the third-place playoff, ending their journey with a memorable fourth place as the first ever African side to reach the World Cup semifinals. Morocco is now the highest-ranked team in Africa, ahead of Senegal (19th), Tunisia (30th), Cameroon (33rd) and Nigeria (35th), reports. Brazil maintained their first position since February, followed by Argentina, France, Belgium and England. The Netherlands, Croatia, Italy, Portugal and Spain complete the top 10.

TATA Steel Tour Championship 2022

MOHD AZHAR SHOOTS 67, SURGES INTO HALFWAY LEAD

Jamshedpur | Agencies

Mohd Azhar from Vikarabad, Telangana, shot a second round of five-under 67 to surge into the halfway lead at the Rs 3 crore TATA Steel Tour Championship 2022 at the Beldih and Golmuri Golf Courses.

Azhar, who hails from the Vooty Golf County and is playing only his second season as a professional, totaled 12-under 132 for two days to move up two spots from his overnight third position and enjoy a one-shot advantage over the rest of the field.

Shiv Kapur, a four-time Asian Tour winner, carded a 69 to be placed tied second along with Delhi's Kapil Kumar (70) at 11-under 133.

Mohd Azhar (65-67), currently 53rd in the TATA Steel PGTI Rankings with one top-10 this season, kept firing it close to the pins during his whirlwind front-nine that featured an eagle, five birdies and two bogeys. Azhar, who turned professional in 2020, landed it within five feet on five occasions on the front-nine.



Azhar had a relatively quieter back-nine where he picked up two birdies in exchange for a double-bogey on the 17th.

Shiv Kapur (64-69), lying overnight second, stayed in touch with the lead after a round that featured six birdies and three bogeys. Kapil Kumar (63-70), the first round

leader, dropped one spot to join Kapur in tied second. Kapil came up with four birdies and a double-bogey on Thursday.

TATA Steel PGTI Rankings leader Manu Gandas returned a 68 to be tied fourth at 10-under 134 along with Karandeep Kochhar (67) and Kartik Sharma (67).

Goa to host first ever World Table Tennis Series event in India

Panaji | Agencies

Goa will host India's first ever World Table Tennis (WTT) series event from February 27 to March 5, it was announced here on Thursday.

The top tier WTT Star Contender Goa 2023 will take place at the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor stadium, located at the Goa University Campus.

Stupa Analytics, a home-grown sports analytics firm, will be the tournament host with active support from the Goa government.

"Goa is the nation's biggest tourist destination and I am overjoyed to welcome WTT to our shores as they announce WTT Contenders



Goa 2023 as the first event of the WTT Calendar. We are happy that Goa has been chosen as the host for a WTT event for the very first time in India," said state tourism minister Rohan Khaunte during the press conference.

WTT Series is the official professional table tennis series of events, with the world's best players facing

each other off in various category tournaments throughout the year with the four Grand Smashes being the ultimate prize to win.

The six Star Contender events pit 48 men and women in the respective singles main draws, with the top 30 world ranks eligible to play, four among whom will compulsorily have to be in

the world top 20.

Star Contender events also boast of a 16-team doubles main draw and an eight-team mixed doubles main draw. Eight qualifiers each in singles and four in doubles also get to scrap with the best while host countries are also provided with sufficient wildcard entries in both singles and doubles.

Rehan Ahmed to miss New Zealand Test series for IPL 2023

London | Agencies

England's teenage spin-sensation Rehan Ahmed will not be touring New Zealand in February for a two-Test series and will instead take part in a T20 league to gain experience of franchise cricket.

Ahmed is one of the England players that will go under the hammer during Friday's IPL Auction for the 2023 season which is expected to start in March.

Ahmed, who became the youngest player to take a five-wicket haul during England's victory against Pakistan in the third and final Test at Karachi recently, will sit out the series in New Zealand as head coach Brendon McCullum and the selectors have decided to juggle the squad to give players rest ahead of the Ashes



series and the ODI World Cup in India later in 2023.

McCullum was full of praise for young spinner Ahmed after the Pakistan series but said they had to be careful how he was managed.

"It is a great story. He's a young kid, but he has a tremendous attitude. He has a high ceiling in terms of skill level, a bit of x-factor and he has the potential to wow the world, which is pretty cool," McCullum said.

"We have to look after him, encourage him to get as much experience of conditions and franchise tournaments with different coaches and players to allow that talent to come out.

"To see a young kid given the chance at 18 to live his dream and dominate in a test match, it might just spark one or two to stay away from the things kids that age are doing, and we might see more coming through. If that happens, Rehan is a pioneer," said McCullum.

PARIS 2024: MEN NOW ELIGIBLE TO COMPETE IN ARTISTIC SWIMMING AT OLYMPICS

Lausanne (Switzerland): Men have been given the go-ahead to compete in Olympic artistic swimming for the first time in history at the 2024 Paris Games, World Aquatics said on Thursday.

As per World Aquatics, the IOC approved male participation in the artistic swimming team event, with a maximum of two male competitors per team.

While artistic swimming has been on the Olympic programme since 1984, until now it has always been a female-only sport. However, all of that is set to change at Paris 2024 where 10 teams are expected to compete for the gold medal at the Olympic Aquatics Centre.

The addition of male athletes to the artistic swimming competition represents another step in the IOC's mission to provide gender parity at the Games, with Paris 2024 featuring as many female athletes as male for the first time in history.

World Aquatics President Captain Husain Al-Musallam was equally enthusiastic about the new development. The artistic swimming competition at Paris 2024 will include 96 athletes, with five events contested between 5 and 10 August 2024. The events include free duets, Technical duets, Finale duets, free teams and Technical teams.

I-League

Mumbai Kenkre stuns Real Kashmir with fine comeback win

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai Kenkre FC recorded a remarkable 2-1 victory against Real Kashmir FC in their Hero I-League 2022-23 fixtures at the Cooperage Stadium here on Thursday. Justin George gave the away side the lead early in the first half but it was short-lived as Aman Gaikwad levelled the score quickly. In the dying moments, Ahmed Faiz Khan scored from the spot for the Mumbaikars as they recorded their first home win of the season and lifted themselves out of the relegation zone ahead of the winter break.

The start of the first half was one-sided as Real Kashmir dominated proceedings and



created a number of scoring chances.

Fellow Ghanaian Ibrahim Nurudeen was inches away from scoring the opener as he hit the post from 15 yards. However, the pressure paid off three minutes later as the Snow Leopards finally took the lead. George opened the scoring from Girik Khosla's corner kick, heading the ball into the ground as it

looped over the keeper and nestled in the net.

The setback came as a bolt of lightning for the hosts, as they sprang into life and intensified their pressing. A moment of brilliance from Gaikwad gave them the equalizer in the 24th minute. Substitute Samuel Kynshi fired wide from the edge of the penalty area in the 76th minute and Nuhu could only find the side netting from close range two minutes after.

Despite Real Kashmir putting pressure during the lengthy eight minutes of stoppage time, Mumbai Kenkre managed to see the game out without a hitch, ensuring that they bag three crucial points while condemning the visitors to their third successive defeat.

SUDEVA AND MOHAMMEDAN SPORTING PLAYS DRAW

New Delhi | A change of coach, bringing in Sankarjal Chakraborty, meant a change in fortunes for Sudeva Delhi FC as they scored their first point of the I-League 2022-23 seasons after playing out 1-1 draw against a 10-man Mohammedan Sporting at the Chhatrasal Stadium.

In a game where everything unfolded in the final minutes, Sudeva Delhi took the lead in the 86th minute through Theko Hriivei Carlos Pao, which was later cancelled out in injury time by a thumping volley from Abiola Dauda.

At the brink of half-time, Mohammedan lost the ball in their own half to Lawmnasanzuala, who fed the ball to Carlos Pao as the midfielder went on to roll the ball into the back of the net, but was caught offside.

With around 13 minutes of regulation time left on the clock, Sukhandeep Singh showed the ultimate commitment that kept the home side in the hunt. Mohammedan striker Marcus Joseph pounced on an error by Sudeva keeper



Sachin Jha inside the box, but Sukhandeep was on hand to get his body in the way of what would have been a goal into an empty net. An airborne Sukhandeep headed it away off the line.

It was Pao who ultimately gave Sudeva the lead with just four minutes of regulation time left. Francis Nwankwo went past his marker, entered the box and sent a grounded cross to Pao at the far post, who scored with a clean strike. After scoring, Sudeva Delhi looked to run down the clock but was stunned by an equaliser in injury time. Fasluhahman sent a cross into the box, which was beautifully collected by Abiola Dauda, who went on to send an acrobatic volley into the back of the net from close range.



FILM CONVINCED MY FATHER TO LET ME JOIN BOLLYWOOD

3 idiots worked like magic on my father: Kiara



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Kiara Advani has revealed that it was filmmaker Rajkumar Hirani's film '3 Idiots' that convinced her parents to let her join Hindi cinema. In the 'Govinda Naam Mera' special episode of 'The Kapil Sharma Show', which will be attended by Vicky Kaushal, Kiara Advani, Renuka Sahane, Viraj Ghelani and director Shashank Khaitan, Kiara will spill the beans on how she got into the business of showbiz.

She shares, "It is very natural for parents to worry about their children who want to try their luck in the film industry. Considering they are not from the industry, they were scared for me and were worried about my safety."

"They wanted me to try something other than this profession. But they always knew that acting is something I really wanted to do in my life. I remember I was in school when papa and I went to watch 3 Idiots and you know it is said that films are not just a medium of entertainment but the message they impart can touch the lives of people."

The actress added: "And 3 idiots worked like magic on my father and he agreed to support me in this journey. I would really like to thank Raju sir for making such an amazing film."

SREEJITA'S SHOCKING REVELATIONS ABOUT TINA DATTA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In the upcoming episode of 'Bigg Boss 16', Sreejita De will be seen making shocking revelations about her 'Uttaran' co-star Tina Datta. A new promo shared by the channel Colors on Instagram, Sreejita is seen talking to Soundarya Sharma about Tina. She even shared that Tina tried breaking people's house and hence she couldn't make a home for herself. Sreejita says: "Tina can never stay without getting attention, especially from the boys. She has tried to break many marriages and that's why she has not been able to settle down in her own life and make her own house. "She is one of those people who are so unhappy from inside that they pull down other people and get pleasure out of it." For the caption, it was written: Sreejita kar rahi hai Tina ke baare mein kuch baatein."

Tina and Sreejita have often been seen at loggerheads at the 'Bigg Boss 16' house. Their cold war stems from the days when they worked together in the show.



ANSHUMAN & RIDHI'S UPCOMING MOVIE IS A LOVE LETTER TO ANIMALS



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The animal lover vigilante film 'Lakadbagha', which was recently screened at the 28th edition of the Kolkata International Film Festival, has set its release date on January 13, 2023. The film stars Anshuman Jha, Ridhi Dogra and Milind Soman.

For Anshuman, the film is a love letter to dogs and animals at large.

The film, which is inspired by real events in Kolkata and presents the

story of the illegal animal trade, will be released worldwide in theatres. The makers also shared the main poster which maintains its teaser poster tagline: "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog" by Mark Twain.

Commenting on the occasion, actor Anshuman Jha said:

"Lakadbagha' is my love letter to dogs (and animals at large) and I can't wait for the world to meet Arjun's character on January 13. He is ordinary and that's his super power.

This is a universal film with an Indian soul set in Kolkata and the action is nothing like anything you have seen before.

Actress Ridhi Dogra added: "Lakadbagha' is truly a special film - it has action and thrill but also a soul. Akshara, my character is the grey between the worlds of the protagonist and the antagonist. It is obviously special for me as it's my big screen debut. And I can't wait for the world to watch it in January 2023."



FARHAN AKHTAR HAS PENNED A HEARTFELT NOTE FOR 'RONALDO'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Farhan Akhtar has penned a heartfelt note for star Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo on social media. The Bollywood actor-filmmaker said Ronaldo gave life to the game.

Taking to Instagram, he shared a long note appreciating Ronaldo and his work. He also shared a picture of the footballer alongside the note.

He wrote: "This is a Cristiano Ronaldo appreciation post. This guy has given his life to the game, set standards of skill, athleticism and fitness that most sportspeople can only fantasise about.

"It's so easy to tear someone down in a moment when they stop behaving like robots and display human emotion. It's so easy to forget how fortunate we've been to witness him take the beautiful game to a whole other level through sheer commitment, sacrifices, hard work and constant improvement through self analysis."

"It annoys the hell out of me to see commentators diss him and speak of him as a has-been. Not one of them could last a day in his shoes... I don't know the guy but I know that watching him play made me happy. Even when he played against teams I supported... I hope he knows what he means to the millions of people who feel the same way I do."

Ronaldo's game at the FIFA World Cup 2022 came to an end after Portugal lost in the quarter-finals.

Talking about Farhan, he is all set to make 'Jee Le Zara', which stars Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Alia Bhatt and Katrina Kaif.



BHUVAN BAM DIFFERENTIATES "YOUTUBE AND REEL VIDEOS"

Team Absolute | Mumbai

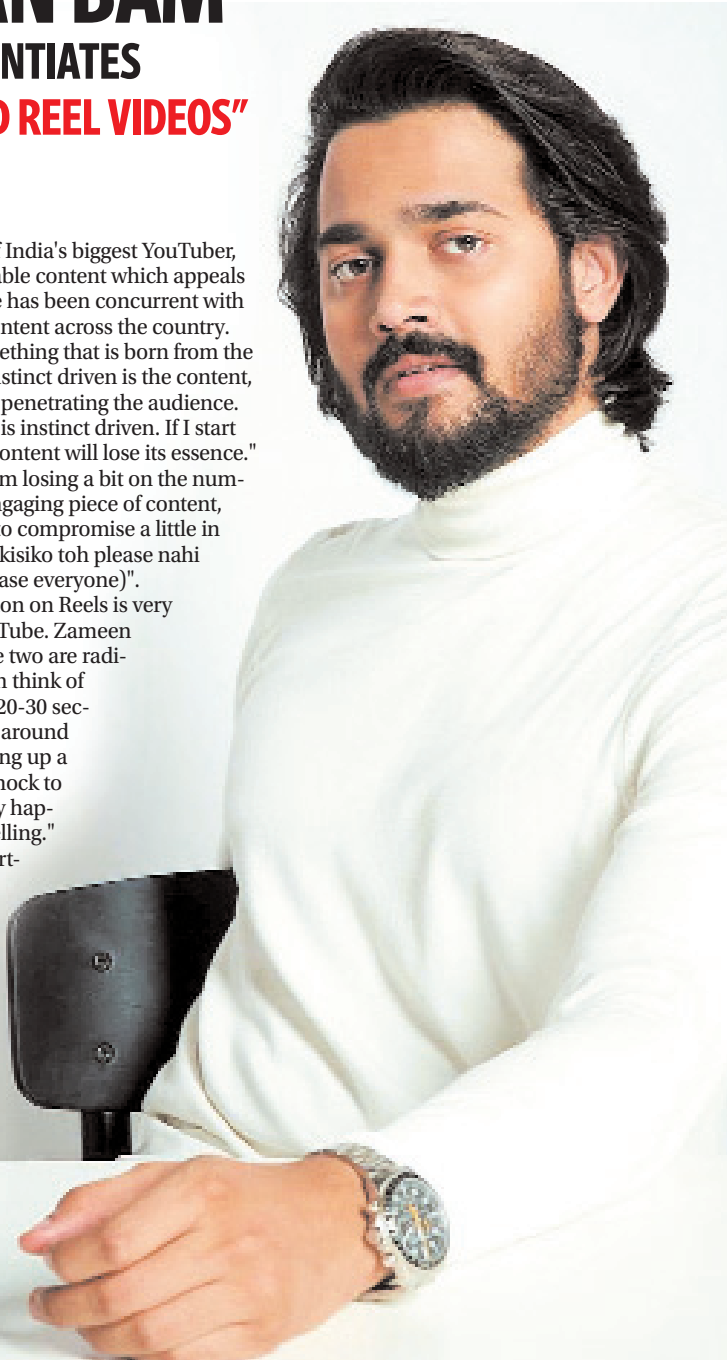
Bhuvan Bam is one of India's biggest YouTuber, courtesy of his relatable content which appeals to the youth. His rise has been concurrent with the expansion of digital content across the country.

For him, content is something that is born from the gut. The more rooted or instinct driven is the content, the greater possibility of it penetrating the audience. Bhuvan said: "My content is instinct driven. If I start catering to numbers, my content will lose its essence."

He doesn't shy away from losing a bit on the numbers front: "To make an engaging piece of content, sometimes it's important to compromise a little in terms of numbers. Ab har kisiko toh please nahi kar sakte na (you can't please everyone)".

He said: "Content creation on Reels is very different from that on YouTube. Zameen aasmaan ka antar hai (The two are radically different). I can't even think of engaging the audience in 20-30 seconds because I like toying around with the characters, building up a story and then serving a shock to the audience, this can only happen in long-format storytelling."

Lavishing praise on short-format creators, Bhuvan added: "I give it to short-format content creators because they're able to entertain the audience in such a short span of time. I never look down on creators on Reels or never look up to creators on YouTube, it's absolutely wrong, these two are very different forms of entertainment. Hence, can't be compared."



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Vaani Kapoor