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BHARAT BIOTECH'S INTRANASAL COVID VACCINE PRICED AT RS 800

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Vaccine maker Bharat Biotech's intranasal vaccine for Covid-19, the first in the world, is scheduled to be introduced in the country as a booster dose shortly.

The vaccine, iNCOVACC (BBV154), is now available on CoWin, and priced at Rs 800 for private markets and Rs 325 for supplies to the Centre and state governments, the Hyderabad-based company said.

Last month, Bharat Biotech received approval from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) for the use of heterologous booster doses of iNCOVACC.

It is a recombinant replication-deficient adenovirus vectored vaccine with a pre-fusion-stabilised SARS-CoV-2 spike protein.

This vaccine candidate was evaluated in phases I, II and III clinical trials with successful results, the company said.

iNCOVACC has been specifically formulated to allow intranasal delivery through nasal drops. The nasal delivery system has been designed and developed to be cost-effective in low- and middle-income countries, it added.

"We have achieved the goals

we set for ourselves during this pandemic. We have developed COVAXIN and iNCOVACC, two Covid vaccines from two different delivery platforms, with two different intranasal delivery platforms gives us the capability for rapid product development, scale-up, easy and painless immunization during public health emergencies and pandemics," said Bharat Biotech Executive Chairman Dr. Krishna Ella.

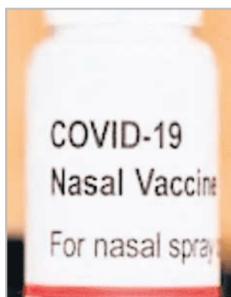
He thanked the Ministry of Health, CDSCO, Dept of Biotechnology, Govt of India, Technology Development Board, and Washington University, St Louis, for their support and guidance.

As a needle-less vaccination, Bharat Biotech's iNCOVACC will be India's first such booster dose.

India will now have more options when it comes to third doses or precautionary doses.

iNCOVACC's manufacturing platform has the double benefit of enabling faster development of variant-specific vaccines and easy nasal delivery that enables mass immunization to protect from emerging variants of concern, the vaccine maker said.

Clinical trials were conducted to evaluate iNCOVACC as a primary dose schedule, and as heterologous booster dose for sub-



jects who have previously received two doses of the two commonly administered COVID vaccines in India.

iNCOVACC was developed in partnership with Washington University, St. Louis, which had designed and developed the recombinant adenoviral vectored construct and evaluated in preclinical studies for efficacy.

Product development related to preclinical safety evaluation, large-scale manufacturing scale-up, formulation and delivery device development, including human clinical trials were conducted by Bharat Biotech.

Product development and clinical trials were funded in part by the Government of India, through the Department of Biotechnology's, Covid Suraksha Program.



CHINA GIVES UP REPORTING COVID FIGURES AS VIRUS RIPS THROUGH POPULATION

Beijing: China's National Health Commission has announced that it will no longer be publishing daily Covid-19 infection figures, as the virus rips through the population with the abandonment of rolling lockdowns, mass tracking of citizens and compulsory testing, according to a media report.

"As of today, we will no longer release daily statistics on the pandemic, with any data released by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention for the purposes of reference and research," the health ministry said in its official website, RFA reported. The announcement came as China

said on Monday that beginning January 8, it will put an end to a mandatory quarantine on arrival for overseas travelers that had been in place since March 2020. It also followed a leaked ministerial document dated December 20 -- which analysts said was likely the result of computer modeling in the absence of widespread testing -- said around 250 million people may now be affected with Covid-19 following the lifting of control measures, RFA reported. Officials had already warned that the development of the current outbreak had become "impossible to track" in the absence of mass testing.

Fresh cold wave conditions likely to continue in Jan: IMD



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The northern parts of the country will witness fresh cold wave conditions from December 31 onwards, said India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday.

R.K. Jenamani, senior scientist at the IMD, said cold days and severe cold days are mainly over south Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh. "The cold to severe cold wave is expected to continue over Punjab, Haryana, north Rajasthan and Delhi. Dense to very dense fog will continue to prevail in the belt. From December 28, there will be improvement due to western disturbance and on December 29, fresh snowfall is expected in Jammu & Kashmir, Leh and some parts of Himachal Pradesh," said Jenamani. Drizzle can be expected in parts of Punjab on December 29, said the IMD.

Delhiites woke up to a chilly morning on Tuesday and dense fog

lowered visibility in some areas of the city, affecting road and rail traffic. "A minimum temperature of 7 degree Celsius was recorded in Delhi," said the Meteorological (MeT) office.

The MeT office said that a layer of dense fog and moderate icy cold winds from the North were responsible for this steep fall in temperature. "Northwesterly dry and cold winds will continue over Northwest India. However, intensity of fog may decrease leading to marginal increase in day temperatures and abatement of cold wave from parts of West Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana. Minimum temperature may also increase marginally," said the MeT office.

"Light snowfall is going on over the upper reaches of Western Himalayas. Another Western disturbance is expected around December 30 and 31st. Moderate snowfall is possible during that time. Temperatures may dip once again on New Year eve," he said.

Tiger cub found dead in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve

Umaria (Madhya Pradesh) Agencies

A tiger cub was found dead in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district with forest officials suspecting another feline killed it during a fight. The reserve's patrolling team spotted the carcass in Khitoli range on Monday, BTR's field director Rajiv Mishra said in a statement.



After receiving the information, senior officials reached the spot and inspected the area, he said.

The cub was about 15 months old.

Prima facie, on the basis of an inspection of the area, it seems the cub was killed by another tiger in a fight, the official said.

"Some body parts of the cub were found to have been eaten," the statement said without elaborating.

After an autopsy, the carcass was disposed of as per the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines and its viscera was sent to a laboratory for an examination,

Mishra said.

According to the All India Tiger Estimation Report 2018, Madhya Pradesh was home to 526 tigers, the highest in any state of the country.

Madhya Pradesh has a number of tiger reserves, including Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura and Panna.

Telangana has highest MBBS seats to population ratio: Govt

Hyderabad: With 19 MBBS seats for one lakh population, Telangana now has the highest ratio of medical seats in the country, state Health Minister T. Harish Rao said on Tuesday.

The country's youngest state has a total of 6,690 seats with a population of 3.51 crore (as per 2011 census). Karnataka stands second with 17.91 seats for one lakh population while Tamil Nadu is at third position with 15.35 seats.

Telangana has second highest ratio of PG seats in the country. For every one lakh population, the state has 7.22 PG seats. Karnataka stands first with 9.06 seats for the same population.

The Health Minister said that under visionary leadership of Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao, Telangana is shining like a diamond in medical education, despite Central government's discrimination in allotting medical colleges. He stated that BJP-ruled states are not even in competition.

The minister said that the measures taken by the Chief Minister to make medical education accessible are yielding the results.

The state set a new record this year with a student who had secured 8,78,280th rank in NEET, got an MBBS seat under B category. With eight new medical colleges, the state now has added 1,150 MBBS seats.

Woman having 2 kids elopes with teenage girl to 'marry', FIR lodged

Team Absolute | Ranchi

In a bizarre incident, a divorced woman, having two kids, has allegedly run away with a teenage girl in Jharkhand's Dhanbad, with the latter's family alleging that the woman wants a same sex marriage and hence, she has "kidnapped" the girl.

The teenager's family has met senior police officials and have urged them to take strict action against the woman and rescue the girl.

According to the information, the woman and the teenage girl went missing on September 15. Now, the local police has lodged an FIR in this matter and a team has been set up to look into the matter.

A source said that the teenaged girl lived in Bhooli area of Dhanbad and was in a relationship with the older woman despite her family's strong disapproval. However, the woman and



the girl kept on meeting each other despite being warned. Both had said that they wanted to marry each other.

Both went missing on September 15. The family of the teenager launched a search but they failed to find her. Her cell phone was also found switched off.

On December 26, the teenager's mother met senior police officials and told them that her daughter and the woman had

once fled from the spot but they returned after that within a week.

DSP Amar Kumar Pandey told reporter that they have lodged a case after receiving a complaint in this respect.

Police said that they were conducting raids at all the possible hideouts of the woman.

"This could be a matter of human trafficking or same sex marriage. We are working on both the angles," police said.

MOVE FROM WOMEN EMPOWERMENT TO WOMEN-LED DEVELOPMENT: PRESIDENT

Hyderabad | Agencies

Stating that larger participation of women results in better overall development, President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday called for quickly moving ahead from the phase of empowering women to the stage of women-led development.



"We should quickly move ahead from the phase of empowering women to the stage of women-led development. It is already happening in many fields. It must happen in a much bigger way," she said in her address to the probationers of the 74th batch of the Indian Police Service at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy, Hyderabad.

The President asserted that in line with "our stated national priorities, Nari Shakti has to play a major role in achieving the targets we have set for ourselves during the 'Amrit Kaal'".

"A truly 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' pre-supposes 'Atmanirbhar Nari'. It is very rightly said that when you invest in a woman, the woman invests in everyone else. It is heartening to note that women are demonstrating greater participation in our democratic process," she said. Describing the rising share of women voters as one of the biggest achievements of Indian democracy in recent times, she noted that the leadership pipeline of women has to become larger and stronger in every walk of life. The President also emphasised that women in leadership positions, like woman police officers, should always help other women, especially the vulnerable.

Local manufacturing push to drive 60% Indian employers to hire new talent in Q1 2023

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government's reforms to boost local manufacturing have triggered the creation of new jobs in the sector, and 60 per cent of employers in the manufacturing segment aim to recruit and expand their resource pool in the first quarter of 2023, a report showed on Tuesday.

The positive hiring sentiment is attributed to large-scale enterprises (69 per cent), followed by medium (44 per cent) and small (39 per cent) businesses.

The overall intent to hire for both the manufacturing and services sectors combined grew from 65 per cent in Q3 to 68 per cent in Q4 of the ongoing financial year, according to the report published by employment services provider TeamLease.

"The global employment rate has increased considerably post the last Covid-19 wave and is poised to grow stronger in the coming quarters. With domestic demand increasing, despite stringent external conditions, the manufacturing industry is projected to witness all-encompassing growth," said Mahesh Bhatt, Chief Business Officer, TeamLease Services.

In the January-March 2023 period, employers in the manufacturing sector are most enthusiastic about recruiting at the junior level (60 per cent) and entry-level (55 per cent), followed by mid-level (27 per cent) and



senior level (24 per cent). The intent to hire is greater in Metro and Tier I cities (94 per cent) as compared to Tier II cities (73 per cent), Tier III (43 per cent), and the rural sector (23 per cent). The cities with the highest intent to hire are Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi and Pune. "Hiring intent for Q4 has increased by 3 per cent and will continue to surge in the coming quarters as well. Production-linked incentive schemes, along with financial impetus for the manufacturing segment that the

budget is likely to address, will promote employment optimism," said Balasubramanian, Vice President and Business Head - Consumer and Healthcare, TeamLease Services. Further, attrition appears to be more balanced in the sector. Apart from healthcare and pharmaceuticals that have shown a double-digit attrition rate during the July-September period this year, the manufacturing industry has single-digit attrition rates, said the report.

CONGRESS TO BEGIN BHARAT JODO YATRA IN BIHAR FROM JAN 5



Patna: The Congress will start Bharat Jodo Yatra from Bihar's Banka district in the new year, a party leader said on Tuesday.

Congress Legislature Party leader Ajit Sharma said that the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Bihar will start from January 5 and it will be headed by party President Mallikarjun Kharge.

"After the big success of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, our party has decided to do the same in Bihar too. Our national President Mallikarjun Kharge will lead the Yatra and it will help the Congress to gain political ground in Bihar," he said.

"The BJP is facing an uneasy situation due to the big success of Bharat Jodo Yatra of Rahul Gandhi. This is the reason why they are doing propaganda and wrongful statements to mislead the people. Laks of people are supporting Rahul Gandhi in Bihar Jodo Yatra."



RAILWAYS ANNOUNCES 'AMRIT BHARAT' SCHEME FOR STATION MODERNISATION



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Railways Ministry on Tuesday said it has formulated a new policy for modernisation of stations named "Amrit Bharat Station" scheme, envisaging their development on a continuous basis

with a long-term vision.

Based on long-term planning and implementation of the elements of the master plan as per the needs and patronage of the station, it aims at preparation of master plans of different stations and its implementation in phases to enhance facilities,

including and beyond the Minimum Essential Amenities (MEA). It also seeks creation of roof plazas and city centres at the station in long run.

The scheme shall aim to meet the needs of the stakeholders, the station usage studies as far as possible based on availability of funds and priority,

and cater for introduction of new amenities as well as upgradation and replacement of existing ones.

It will also cover the stations where detailed techno-economic feasibility studies have been conducted or are being conducted but the work for construction of roof plazas has not been taken up yet. This will ensure the master plan being suitably implemented and relocation of structures and utilities being given more emphasis in the phasing plans.

To meet the objectives, the master plans will have elementary details of the most appropriate location of the roof plazas to be created in future and cost-efficient improvement to facades, and provision of wide, well-lit and aesthetically pleasing entrance porches. At least one aesthetically designed hoarding (signage) on each side of the circulating area at a prominent location shall be erected for display of important information etc. The size of such hoarding shall not be less than 10m by 20m.

The station approaches would be improved to ensure smooth access by widening of roads, removal of unwanted structures, properly-designed signages, dedicated pedestrian pathways, well-planned parking areas, and improved lighting.

Mining inspector besieged, held hostage by sand mafia in Bihar's Bhagalpur

A GANG OF SAND MAFIA HELD A MINING INSPECTOR CAPTIVE AFTER THE LATTER SEIZED TWO TRACTORS LADEN WITH SAND IN BIHAR'S BHAGALPUR DISTRICT ON TUESDAY.



Patna | Agencies

Mining inspector Maharshi Muni learnt that mafias are transporting sand illegally in the Kajrauli area. Accordingly, he went there and found a large number of sand-loaded trucks and trac-

tors in a queue. He seized two of the tractors and took them to his office. Angry over the seizure, over a 100 men carrying batons and rods surrounded his office and held him captive. When the district police learnt about the incident, a team led by SHO of Madhusudanpur police

station reached there and managed to free him after a brief scuffle. The sand mafias forcibly took away the seized tractors and also dumped sand on the road.

The mining officer made a video of the incident and district police are trying to identify the accused.

Delhi govt allows post-mortems to be conducted even after sunset in hospitals

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a landmark decision, Delhi Government on Tuesday allowed the post-mortem of the dead body to be conducted even after the sunset in the hospital of the national capital.

In this regard, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday directed the officials of the Health Department to conduct the post-mortem even at night in hospitals with adequate facilities. He also asked the hospital in-charges to ensure all necessary infrastructure at the post-mortem house.

After the decision, the relatives of the deceased body will not have to wait

for long hours and encourage the organ donation and transplantation. The post-mortem cases related to organ donation will be done on a priority basis.

Sisodia said, "Due to the availability of post-mortem facilities at night, people in Delhi will not have to wait long for the post-mortem of the dead bodies. This will give a lot of relief to the relatives of the deceased. However, in the case of deaths where there is suspicion of murder, suicide, rape, or foul play, a provision has been made to examine the dead bodies only during the day."

He informed that the Delhi government had sent a proposal to the Government of India for

approval to conduct post-mortems in hospitals after sunset. Such post-mortems shall be carried out in hospitals that have adequate facilities to conduct them on a regular basis.

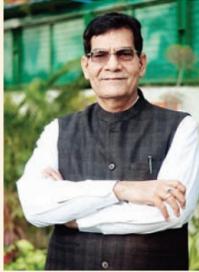
The Dy CM also said that to avoid any doubt or confusion, video recording of all the post-mortems will be done throughout the night and it will be preserved for future reference for legal purposes.

"Apart from friends and relatives of the deceased, this new process will also promote organ donation and transplantation, as organs can be retrieved within a stipulated time after the procedure," he said.

NO MUNICIPAL POLLS WITHOUT OBC RESERVATION: UP GOVERNMENT

Lucknow: Municipal polls in Uttar Pradesh would not be held without OBC reservation, state Urban Development Minister A.K. Sharma said on Tuesday.

Reacting to the Allahabad High Court verdict, he said that the government was mulling setting up a commission as per Supreme Court rules for OBC reservation. "We may also approach the apex court in this regard. The Law Department will study the verdict and then we will take action accordingly," he told reporters. Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav said that the UP government had deliberately delayed necessary action since it is "essentially anti-OBC". He said that if needed, the Samajwadi Party would go to the Supreme Court to ensure reservation for OBCs.



Outstanding loans to minority communities by state-owned banks up 118% since 2011: Finance Ministry

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The amount of outstanding bank loans to minority communities has increased from Rs 1,43,397 crore as on March 31, 2011 to Rs 3,12,566 crore as on March 31, 2022, registering a growth of 118 per cent during this period, according to Finance Ministry sources.

Enhanced priority sector lending to minority communities by public sector banks (PSBs) had been mandated by the government in 2007-08.

The government at that time had directed PSBs to step up their priority sector lending to minorities from 9 per cent to 15 per cent over a period of three years, sources said.

Since then, there has been sustained growth in lending to minority communities by PSBs.



They were advised to make continuous efforts to achieve the target from 2010-11 onwards. Outstanding loans to minority communities as on March 31, 2022 has also witnessed a year-on-year growth of 8.56 per cent over previous year, which stood at Rs 2,87,917 crore as on March 31, 2021. The overall achievement of PSBs under minority

community lending was around 13 per cent of their total lending to the priority sector as on March 31, 2022. Moreover, credit flow to a particular sector or industry including lending to the minority communities remains mostly demand driven, and is linked to the level of economic activity and other related factors, the sources added.

PM Modi's brother, family injured in road accident in K'taka

Mysuru, (Karnataka) | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brother Prahlad Damodar Das Modi and his family were injured after their car met with an accident near Kadakola village in Mysuru district of the state on Tuesday.

The incident took place when Damodar Das, along with his family, was travelling from Bengaluru towards Bandipur, a tourist spot, by car. The driver lost control over the wheels and hit a road divider, sources said.

Seventy-year-old Damodar Modi injured his chin in the incident. His son Mehul Prahlad Modi (40), daughter-in-law Jindal Modi and their six-year-old grandson Menat Mehul Modi also suffered injuries. The driver was also hurt.



Since the airbags opened up at the right time, the impact of the crash minimised and the occupants escaped with injuries. The front portion of the car has been damaged completely, the sources said.

Mysuru Police Superintendent Seema Latkar and others have rushed to the spot. A complaint

has been registered at Mysuru South police station.

All the injured have been admitted to the JSS Hospital. Dr Madhu, Superintendent of the hospital stated that all the injured are out of danger. The grandson of Prahlad Modi has suffered injuries on the left side of his head.

MISCREANTS HYPNOTIZE WOMAN IN PATNA, ROB JEWELLERY

Patna: Two unidentified men allegedly hypnotized a woman and made off with her jewellery in Kankarbagh locality of the district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place when Ranju Prasad -- wife of a retired botany professor in the College of Commerce, Patna -- was going to a doctor's clinic for a medical check-up. As she reached the Shivaji Park three-wheeler stand, a man approached and offered her a camphor, which appeared to be a part of prasad. When the woman refused to accept it, the man scared her by saying that the gold ring and chain she was wearing were jinxed and could prove fatal for her son. "He then put a few drops of water on Ranju's right palm and asked her to move her hand in clockwise motion over her head. As soon as she did it, she went into a trance-like state and started to follow his commands. By then, the miscreant was joined by his associate. Obeying their command, the victim handed over her gold ornaments to the duo who decamped with it," said an official of Kankar Bagh police station. "An investigation is underway," he added.



Tension along Assam-Mizoram border over tree-cutting

Guwahati | Agencies

Tension erupted along the Assam-Mizoram border in Assam's Hailakandi district regarding the cutting of trees on the state's soil allegedly by the residents of Mizoram, officials said on Tuesday.

The Divisional Forest Officer of Hailakandi district said that some Mizo people were cutting trees on land that falls within the boundary of Assam. The locals protested, and informed the police.

The incident took place at Ramnathpur village in the district on Monday evening.

"Hearing about the incident, local police, along with district administration and forest officials, went there and tried to make Mizo people



understand that the land falls within the territory of Assam. They agreed and left the place," the officer added.

Meanwhile, the administration has increased police vigilance in that village to avoid any untoward incidents. The 165-kilometer-long border between Assam and Mizoram has been a bone of contention for the two states

in many places. Six police personnel from Assam lost their lives in the last year in a clash between two states.

Following that, many rounds of talks happened between the two states to resolve the border issue. Chief Ministers of Assam and Mizoram held talks on resolving border dispute in New Delhi in September this year.

Congress appoints observers for 'Hath Se Hath Jodo Abhiyan'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday appointed observers for the successful planning and implementation of the 'Hath Se Hath Jodo Abhiyan', which will be a follow-up activity of the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

The 'Hath Se Hath Jodo Abhiyan' will commence on January 26 and continue for the next two months. The plenary session will be held in Raipur in February.

In total, 26 observers have been appointed who will look after one or more states. Milind Deora has been appointed for Gujarat, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu; Subhash Chopra will look after Haryana; Prithviraj Chavan has been appointed for Karnataka; Deepender Hooda for Uttar Pradesh; Ajay Kumar Lallu for Uttarakhand; while Ghulam Ahmad Mir has been appointed observer for West Bengal and Andaman & Nicobar, among others.

The event will be telecast live on giant screens at important places in every state.

As part of the programme, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will lead an all-women march in each state capital and read out a 'women's manifesto' as the Congress gears up to take the 'Hath Se Hath Jodo Abhiyan' to the booth level.

Apart from Priyanka's all-women march, Congress



workers will also distribute letters written by Rahul Gandhi and a charge-sheet against the BJP government to every person.

After the Yatra, a block level convention will be held in each district which will be attended by the state Congress president and senior leaders.

Distorting history is dangerous phenomenon: Stalin

Chennai | Agencies

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has said here that distorting history was dangerous, and added that 'people must not fall to some imaginary stories floated by some persons as history'.

The Chief Minister was speaking at the 81st annual session of the Indian History Congress here on Tuesday.

He said that some people were floating imaginary stories as history and that people should not get fooled by believing these stories.

Stalin said that one should study history to know self and added that only those who have studied the past can create history in the present and can predict the future.

The Chief Minister said that history should be supported by



scientific facts and added that the danger that has engulfed the country in the present day was "distortion of history". He also said that history should reflect the people from all walks of life and not only of

Kings and their valour and lifestyles.

Stalin said, "The dignity of the Constitution should be safeguarded in education, language, culture, authority, economy, and administration." He

said that the Indian landscape was totally secular once upon a time and that the differences were created by some persons at a later stage.

He also said that the people of Tamil Nadu were speaking proudly on the historical specifications based on scientific facts, and also pointed out the archeological excavations that are taking place in Keeladi and other places of the state.

Stalin also said that archeological excavations from Keeladi have shown that urbanisation and literacy prevailed in Tamil land as early as in 6th century BC.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister also said that archeological studies were being undertaken in seven locations across the state ever since the DMK government assumed office in 2021.



MAHA LEGISLATURE EXPRESSES SOLIDARITY WITH MARATHI-SPEAKING PEOPLE ON K'TAKA BORDER

Team Absolute | Nagpur

In a much-anticipated development, the Maharashtra Legislature here on Tuesday adopted a resolution unanimously expressing full solidarity with the Marathi-speaking people living on the Karnataka border villages.

The resolution said the government will pursue the ongoing legal battle before the Supreme Court to merge the 865 Marathi-speaking villages with Maharashtra in Belagavi (Belgaum), Karwar, Nippani, Bidar, Bhalki and other towns and commit to include "each and every inch" of the lands there.

The state government will also urge the Centre to implement the decisions made at the recent meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah with the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra Eknath Shinde and of Karnataka Basavaraj Bommai in New Delhi.

"The state government remains firmly and with full commitment with the Marathi-speaking people



from the 865 villages," said the two-page resolution, moved by Shinde and adopted by the entire house with a voice vote and thumping desks.

With Speaker Rahul Narwekar in the Chair in the Assembly, Shinde, Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar and other leaders reiterated their full commitment to stand by the six-decade old struggles

of the Marathi-speaking people in the borders.

"Maharashtra has already respected the will of the Marathi-speaking people from 865 villages for their inclusion in the state. The government has provided a slew of amenities and facilities for social, education and economic development," said the resolution.

It added that the govern-

ment has also provided other concessions like the benefits under the Chief Minister Relief Fund, special incentives for admissions to engineering and medical streams, pre-training for IAS, etc.

The Maha Vikas Aghadi allies like former Chief Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) President Uddhav Thackeray, Congress state President Nana Patole and leaders of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and other parties heartily welcomed the passing of the resolution.

However, Thackeray questioned whether the Maharashtra government's initiatives shall be applicable to the Marathi-speaking people in Karnataka given that state's aggressive stance on the issue.

"We shall welcome any such resolution that is in Maharashtra's interests. We still demand that given the current circumstances the disputed boundary areas must be declared as Union Territory to protect the local Marathi-speaking people," Thackeray demanded.

CM BASAVARAJ BOMMAI STRONG REMARKS ON BORDER ROW WITH MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra/ Bengaluru:

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has strongly condemned a resolution moved in the assembly of neighbouring Maharashtra, resolving to protect the state's interests amid a border row between the two states where the BJP is in power.



Karnataka, too, recently passed a resolution on the border row. Reacting to Maharashtra's latest move, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said there is no provision for the resolution they (Maharashtra leaders) have passed. "They are provoking and threatening to divide us. We condemn this. Many decades have passed since the State Reorganisation Act was passed (in 1956). People in both states live in harmony," Bommai said.

"Maharashtra is playing politics. And passing such a resolution is just a political gimmick. We stand by our decisions. Not a single inch of Karnataka will go to Maharashtra. We will continue to protect the interest of Kannada people, in Karnataka and Kannada-speaking community outside the border," Bommai said.

"When the case is pending in Supreme Court, why did they pass such a resolution? Our resolution is different from theirs. Our resolution says we will not let go of our Karnataka (land), while they say want to snatch it from us. When the case is pending in Supreme Court, there's no meaning to the resolution. We believe in the Supreme Court," the Karnataka Chief Minister said.

Former Minister Anil Deshmukh To Walk Out Of Jail Tomorrow

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh is likely to walk out of jail on Wednesday as the Bombay High Court on Tuesday refused to extend its stay on an order granting him bail in a corruption case registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).



"They are failing to make out any urgency in the Supreme Court, and coming here seeking stay. This cannot be permitted," Nikam argued.

Justice M S Karnik had granted bail to the 73-year-old Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader on December 12, but stayed the order for 10 days as the CBI sought time to challenge it in the Supreme Court. The probe agency moved the Supreme Court but the appeal would be heard only in January 2023 as the court is closed for vacation. Last week, the High Court had extended the stay till December 27 on the CBI's request. On Tuesday, the central agency sought another extension.

The former minister's lawyers Aniket Nikam and Indrapal Singh claimed that the CBI was trying to "overreach" the earlier order of the High Court which had stated that he under no circumstances another extension will be granted.

The vacation bench of the High Court, after hearing the arguments, said that "no further extension can be granted". With the court refusing to extend the stay, Anil Deshmukh could be released on bail on Wednesday, his lawyers said. The high court, while granting bail to the former minister, had noted that except for dismissed police officer Sachin Waze's statement, no testimony recorded by the CBI indicated that money was being extorted from bar owners in Mumbai at the behest of the NCP leader.

Deshmukh approached the high court after a special CBI court rejected his bail plea last month. He sought bail both on medical grounds and merits of the case.

Case filed over display board for flashing abusive message: Police

Team Absolute | Mumbai

An abusive message was displayed on a digital traffic advisory board in Dindoshi area of Mumbai after which a case was registered against unidentified hackers, a police official said. The city civic body had installed smart traffic polls near a mall in Goregaon (east) suburb. A contractor had placed two LED screen boards on one of the polls for displaying traffic-related advisories.

At 9.10 pm on Thursday, an abusive message was displayed on the LED screen, the official said on Monday. The message remained there for more than an hour before the power supply to the board was cut off, he said.

The contractor who had installed the boards told civic officials he was not aware of



the incident. He told the police that somebody might have hacked into the system and relayed the message. A case was registered against unidentified hackers under related sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act, the police official said.

Maharashtra Opposition's 'Unique' Protest

Team Absolute | Nagpur

The members of Maharashtra opposition today held a 'unique' protest against the policies of the Eknath Shinde-led government.

Several MLAs of Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), an alliance of Uddhav Thackeray-led faction of Shiv Sena, Nationalist Congress Party and the Congress, sang Marathi folk songs at the Vidhan Bhavan complex in Nagpur alleging corruption by the state ministers.

The videos show the legislators singing folk songs and playing a musical instrument called manjira or taal. They called out names of several state ministers accusing them of corruption.

According to the convention, Nagpur, the second capital of Maharashtra, hosts the winter session of the state legislature. This year's winter session is scheduled to end on December 30.

Earlier this month, opposition members staged a



protest against the state government in Mumbai over various issues, including Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute and Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari's controversial remarks on Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena, which was ousted from power earlier this year, has been attacking the state government, accusing it of not taking a stronger stand in the border conflict with Karnataka. According to the convention, Nagpur, the second capital of Maharashtra, hosts the winter session of the state legislature. This year's winter session is scheduled to end on December 30. Earlier this month, opposition members staged a protest against the state government in Mumbai over various issues, including Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute and Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari's controversial remarks on Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Chanda Kochhar, husband approach Bombay HC against their arrest

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former ICICI Bank CEO and MD Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar on Tuesday approached the Bombay High Court, calling their arrest by the Central Bureau of Investigation in a loan fraud case illegal. The court, however, refused to grant urgent hearing and directed the Kochhars to mention the matter before the regular bench once it resumes after vacation.

A lawyer representing the Kochhars said that no prior sanction, as required under the law, was obtained by the CBI before their arrest.

The probe agency arrested the Kochhars on Friday night after questioning them briefly. It alleged that they were evasive in their responses and did



not cooperate in the investigation. The CBI had named the Kochhars and Venugopal Dhoot, chairman of the Videocon Group, along with Nupower Renewables (NRL) managed by Deepak Kochhar, Supreme Energy

Private Ltd (SEPL), Videocon International Electronics Ltd. (VIEL) and Videocon Industries Limited, in its FIR registered in 2019 under IPC sections related to criminal conspiracy and the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The CBI has alleged that ICICI Bank had sanctioned credit of Rs 3,250 crore to the companies of the Videocon Group promoted by Dhoot in violation of the Banking Regulation Act, RBI guidelines, and credit policy of the bank.

The probe agency arrested Dhoot, 71, on Monday in connection with the case. The CBI has alleged that a sanctioning committee headed by Chanda Kochhar in 2009 approved a term loan of Rs 300 crore to VIEL in contravention of the rules and policies of the bank by abusing her official position as a public servant. The day after the loan was disbursed, Dhoot transferred Rs 64 crore to L from VIEL through SEPL, the CBI has alleged. The Kochhar couple and Dhoot have been remanded in CBI custody till December 28.

TWO RUSSIANS YOUTUBERS HELD FOR ENTERING 60-STOYRE TWIN COMPLEX TO SHOOT STUNT VIDEO

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two Russian YouTubers have been arrested for allegedly entering a 60-storey twin tower complex in Tardeo here to shoot a stunt video, police said on Tuesday. The duo was arrested late on Monday night and an offence registered under section 452 (house trespass) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code was registered against them, an official said.

The Russian embassy was informed about the incident after the first information report (FIR) was registered, he said.

The accused had allegedly sneaked into The Imperial, a plush twin tower complex, to shoot a stunt video and were



spotted in the CCTV cameras by the on-duty security guards, who immediately informed the police and cornered them, the official said.

During the probe, it was found that the duo had climbed up to the 58th floor of one of the towers using the staircase and had allegedly intended to ascend from the outside and record a video

while performing the stunt, he said.

After the guards spotted them, the accused came down to the 28th floor and then sneaked into a podium on the fifth floor, before jumping into the hillock, the official said. The accused sustained some hand and leg injuries, he said, adding that further probe is underway.

DEPUTY CM, BJP LEGISLATORS ATTEND SANGH PROGRAM IN NAGPUR

Mumbai: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Bharatiya Janata Party legislators on Tuesday attended the Sangh Parichay Varg (an introduction to the RSS) program in Maharashtra's Nagpur city, where the winter session of the state legislature is currently underway. Fadnavis told reporters that the legislators were also given the book 'Bhavishya Ka Bharat', which is a compilation of the lecture series of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat. "Since the last 25 years, BJP legislators have been visiting memorials and attending the Sangh Parichay Varg during the winter session in Nagpur as this is our place of inspiration. We get the energy of nationalism from here," Fadnavis said after attending the programme held at Dr Hedgewar Smruti Mandir in Reshimbagh here.



Hospitals conducted mock drill to check health infrastructure preparedness for Covid-19

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hospitals in Mumbai carried out mock drills on Tuesday to check the preparedness of health facilities to handle any spike in COVID-19 cases, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) officials said. In the wake of a spurt in COVID-19 cases in some countries like China, Japan, Brazil and South Korea, the Union government has issued guidelines, asking the hospitals to conduct mock exercises across the country.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday said all state health ministers will take part at their level in the mock drill to be conducted throughout the country at all COVID-19 hospitals as part of the precautionary measures.

In Mumbai, the medical facilities which will conduct the mock drill include the civic-run Seven Hills Hospital (having 1,700 beds) and Kasturba Hospital (35 beds), government-run Cama Hospital (100 beds), St George Hospital (70 beds), Tata Hospital (16 beds), and Jagjivan Ram Hospital (12 beds).

The state-run JJ Hospital also informed that it will conduct the mock drill. According to civic doctors, the exercise is designed to check



the readiness and response of hospitals in the wake of a rise in COVID-19 cases in some countries.

They have been asked to upload all reports collected during the drill on the Union government's dedicated portal for COVID-19.

As per the BMC's release issued about preparedness of the "health infrastructure" on Monday, it has identified 10 civic hospitals, three government hospitals and 21 private hospitals having 2,124 isolation beds, of which

1,523 are functional. The hospitals have 1,613 oxygen-supported beds and of those 1,021 are functional.

They have 579 ICU beds, of which 473 are functional and of the 1,079 ventilators, 954 are functional, the release said.

Out of the 3,245 doctors, 3,453 paramedics and 5,784 nurses, as many as 2,828 doctors, 3,246 paramedics and 4,029 nurses are trained in COVID-19 management, it said. To diagnose and track COVID-19 cases, the city has a daily testing capacity of 1,35,035 at 34 hospitals and 49 laboratories, according to the release. Also, the stock of medicines like Remdesivir, Tocilizumab, Methylprednisolone, Dexamethasone, Amphotericin B Deoxycholate and Posaconazole is available.

"The medicines will be procured and made available in future if cases increase," the release said, adding that PPE kits, N-95 masks, nebulizers and pulse oximeters are available in adequate quantity.

The city has 859 functional oxygen concentrators and 2,933 oxygen cylinders, apart from 79 Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) oxygen plants of 1,468 metric tons capacity and liquid medical oxygen of 268 metric tons capacity, it added.

Red sandalwood worth Rs 6 crore seized in Bhiwandi



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Waliv police have seized red sandalwood worth about Rs 6 crore. According to the police, after a tip off, on the check post of Bhiwandi Common Road in the wee hours of Monday they stopped a suspicious container. During the search they found high-quality red sandalwood hidden amid sacks of onions in it. Two people have been detained and the container seized. During interrogation, it is learnt that the wood had come from Hyderabad, and was to be taken to Dubai from Uran port. A total of 450 pieces of high-

quality red sandalwood, 25 Kg each (single piece) were wrapped properly in sacks kept under the bags of onions.

The accused said the smell of the sandalwood was greatly reduced by the odour of the onions which is why it was hidden among the sacks. "The seized material is high-quality red sandalwood which is worth more than Rs 6 crore. With the help of a forest officer, we have conducted the Panchnama. The process of registering the FIR is underway," said Deputy Commissioner of Police Suhas Bavchre. Red sandalwood or red sanders is endemic to India and is endangered.



EDITOR'S SPECS

India's digital ad spend to \$21 bn by 2028

With the significant surge in the use of smartphones and Internet, digital ad spending in India is likely to reach \$21 billion by 2028, a report showed on Tuesday. Notably, growth in user-generated content (UGC) will empower individual creators and influencers to build their digital identity, which brands can leverage for digital ads. This strong ecosystem of 2.5 to 3 million creators is expected to drive marketing spending of \$2.8 billion- \$3.5 billion by 2028, according to the report by Redseer Strategy Consultants. The digital ad spend in the country is set to observe a muted growth in FY23 due to macro factors, post which it would account for 65-70 per cent of overall ad spend in India growing at a CAGR of 19-21 per cent. "Upon mapping market sizing across media agencies, we observe a significant under-reporting of digital ad spend in India. However, our projection has considered enterprise spends, SMB spends, influencer marketing, affiliate marketing and gaming," said Mukesh Kumar, engagement manager, Redseer. With users spending around seven hours daily on their smartphones, digital platforms have a good engagement rate. Some of the most popular performances driving digital advertising platforms include e-commerce, short videos, OTT, social media, long-form videos, and news outlets. According to the report, global slowdown due to increasing interest rates, energy crisis etc., has led to new-age companies focusing on profitability and controlling their spending on ad and hence slower growth is expected in FY23. Under the current economic headwinds, the ad market is estimated to grow by 6-8 per cent in FY23, said the report. As the creator economy grows, it is essential to bridge the gap between brands and influencers through a centralised platform such as the creator marketplace, the report mentioned.

Pilot, Raje keep suspense quotient up in Rajasthan's political soap

Archana Sharma

The great political story of Rajasthan has become quite interesting with continued suspense and speculations rife over the next role of former deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot and former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje. Will they be back or not? This has been a million dollar question over the last many months as political whispers remain abuzz on the next role of these leaders who are simply holding the MLA posts currently. While Pilot was made the deputy Chief Minister in 2018 following the Assembly polls, his portfolios were snatched after he and 18 other MLAs staged a rebellion against Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. He was however, brought back to the party's fold later with a promise to be given a decent portfolio. Since then, the Congress as an organisation has been giving subsequent dates, but nothing has been materialised. Pilot's next portfolio has been delayed in the wake of the

Covid pandemic, Assembly polls in other states, budget in the state and so on. In fact, when the Congress high command had called a meeting at CMR and invited all CLP members on September 25 to discuss this matter, Gehlot camp leaders called a parallel meeting at another venue where around 91 MLAs threatened the party with their resignations which were submitted to Assembly Speaker C.P. Joshi. Amid all this drama, the question yet remains if Pilot will be given a chance to lead the state and this speculation will stay on in the coming months too as the Pilot camp has been bringing their demand to the fore time and again. This is just not the case with Congress as the opposition BJP is also facing a similar challenge with Raje being sidelined. Raje's supporters have also been pitching her as the next Chief Minister while the party high command has refused to announce any chief ministerial face for the 2023 Assembly polls. Earlier, her posters were also removed from the party

office as well as during the bypolls. Party officials however, said that Central leadership had directed that only pictures of state president, national president and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be accommodated on posters. Raje was also seen missing from campaigning for the bypolls and many meetings. The BJP's Janakrosh Yatra became a platform for the comeback of Raje's pictures in posters. Again, there are discussions if she will be back or if she will be kept isolated as she was in Gujarat polls. Raje was no where in the list of star campaigners in Gujarat which once again became an issue of discussion. So it won't be wrong to say Raje and Pilot were the discussing points in the year which passed off peacefully but for the state's political sphere. There was a lot of drama, action, surprise, suspense, attack and counterattacks. Meanwhile, there were other discussion points as well. The slang words like 'Gaddar', 'Nikkama', 'Nakara' used by Gehlot

against Pilot and Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat became political jargons in Rajasthan as pundits were seen trying to decode their meanings. These words were initially used by Gehlot against Pilot during the political rebellion in 2020. In fact even recently, Gehlot openly targeted Pilot terming him as 'Gaddar' before the start of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra. Whenever the Chief Minister used these words against Pilot, the political pundits had to scratch their heads to find the meaning and intension of Gehlot as such attacks with these words always gave a meaning. Recently, when Gehlot used the 'gaddar' word before Bharat Jodo Yatra saying -- "A 'gaddar' cannot be the Chief Minister" -- political experts said that this was the direct message to high command that he will never want Pilot to take the top role. In fact questions are being raised as to why the 'Gandhian' Chief Minister known for his suave language ever used these harsh words against his deputy. "Usage of these

words are like political jargons. The Chief Minister has used the Nikkama for Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat too in ERCP matter and that matter has now become a national issue in forthcoming polls," said senior Congress leader. "So, when such words are used, take them as jargons and try to find its meaning. They have a long shelf life and deep meaning," he added. Meanwhile, it won't be wrong to say that Rajasthan's politics since last many months has been in for discussion and the millions dollar question being raised across political circles is who will lead from the front, will Gehlot continue as Chief Minister or will former deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot get the chance to lead the state. Will there be more words like 'gaddar', 'nikkama' and 'nakara' rocking the state or will it pass peacefully to enter the 2023 assembly polls -- these are a few questions which are presently being discussed in political circles with major question been 'Kaun Banega Mukhya Mantri'?

2023 POLLS TO SET TONE FOR 2024, BUT WILL BJP GET CLOSER TO 'CONG-MUKT BHARAT'?

Santosh Kumar Pathak

Year 2022 was a milestone for the BJP in terms of electoral success as it secured a record breaking win in its strongest bastion, Gujarat. The party also created a record by retaining power in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur. It, however, failed to form government in Himachal Pradesh. The party that raised the slogan of 'Congress-mukt bharat', was defeated by the Congress in the hill state. Given this, now 2023 will be crucial for the saffron party as the elections to be held in the year would decide the course of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The coming year would tell whether Congress has regained its strength or BJP's slogan of Congress-free India is headed towards success. Out of 10 states and Union Territories- Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram and J&K, where Assembly elections are to be held in 2023, the BJP will be engaging in direct contest with the Congress in all the states except Telangana and J&K. The saffron party is expected to hold its national executive meeting in

mid-January, 2023 to chalk out a strategy for the upcoming Assembly polls. In Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, which are currently under the Congress rule, the BJP is attempting to oust it from power. The BJP wants to give a jolt to both the Gandhi family and the Congress by defeating Ashok Gehlot in Rajasthan and Bhupesh Baghel in Chhattisgarh, as both these leaders are considered very close to the Gandhi family. The saffron party faced defeat in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh in the 2018 Assembly elections, and gained power much later due to major defection by Jyotiraditya Scindia among others in MP, and the success of Operation Lotus in Karnataka. In order to defeat the Gehlot government in Rajasthan, the BJP has been taking out a Jan Akrosh Yatra in all the 200 assembly seats of the state and is also preparing for a big campaign by bringing all the factions together. The BJP is trying to unite the party divided into factions in Chhattisgarh, and taking the help of organisations affiliated to the RSS to strengthen its base in the state. The Shivraj government and the BJP high command have been gearing up to win the elections in Madhya Pradesh. To change the political atmosphere in

Karnataka in its favour, the BJP high command removed the then Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa and made Basavaraj Bommai the Chief Minister in 2021. Yediyurappa was then made a member of BJP Parliamentary Board Committee, party's highest and most powerful body, in a bid to appease all factions and caste equations, and to send a political message to the people of the state. Assembly elections are also due in Telangana where the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (formerly known as Telangana Rashtra Samithi) is in power and K. Chandrasekhar Rao is the Chief Minister. Rao is engaged in a campaign to unite all opposition parties against the BJP across the country, while the latter is working on a strategy to defeat Rao in his home state. In view of Assembly elections to be held in 2023 in J&K, the BJP which has a stronghold in Jammu, has been trying hard to strengthen its base in Kashmir. In all these states, the BJP is expected to take the advantage of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity, which is why Modi will be seen engaged in more programmes and rallies in these states under the strategy for 2023. Along with

free ration being provided to more than 80 crore people, attempts will be made to spread information of the Centre's other achievements among the people. The party is also eyeing the Muslim votes and has been laying emphasis on preparations to seek the support of the Muslim community, especially the backward Muslims, in these elections. The BJP high command will review its strategy by visiting Delhi and the capitals of the states where the elections will be held in 2023, several times in the new year. These meetings will be held under the command of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP President J.P. Nadda and General Secretary B.L. Santosh. Legislative Assembly elections are also to be held in Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram in 2023. Tripura is currently ruled by the BJP and as part of its election strategy, the party has changed the Chief Minister in the state. In Meghalaya and Nagaland, the BJP-backed government is in power, while in Mizoram, the Mizo National Front (MNF) is in power.

international

NY Governor requests for emergency declaration over 'historic' winter storm

New York | Agencies

As a result of the "historic" winter storm that has battered the US and parts of Canada since December 22, New York Governor Kathy Hochul has submitted a request to President Joe Biden for a federal emergency declaration. The Governor's request on Monday comes as the Arctic storm continues to impact Western New York and the North Country regions, with blizzard-like conditions, sustained wind gusts of more than 60 miles per hour, and well below freezing temperatures, says a statement from Hochul's office. New York City has so far recorded 28 weather-related deaths, while the region around Buffalo has been worst affected. Governor Hochul, a native of Buffalo, said: "It is (like) going to a war zone, and the vehicles along the sides of the roads are shocking." She said residents were facing a "life-threatening situation", as many emergency vehicles were unable to reach worst-hit areas or got stuck in snow themselves. In response, the Governor has also deployed an additional 220 National Guard soldiers to the Western New York region, bringing the total of deployments to approximately 430. "I want to thank everyone at the state and local public safety agencies who stepped up and worked throughout the holi-



day weekend," Governor Hochul was quoted as saying in the statement. "I have spoken to President Biden who has agreed to swiftly approve our federal emergency declaration, which will be crucial to assist our recovery efforts from this historic storm... "While we continue to do everything we can to help Western New York recover and await federal assistance, I want everyone in impacted areas to continue to stay off the roads and check in on loved ones and neighbours," she added. Numerous State highways in the Western New York region remain closed to all traffic, as of Monday afternoon. The New York State Thruway (I-90) remains closed to all traffic between exit 46 in Rochester to the Pennsylvania line.

SIX KILLED IN ROAD ACCIDENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Johannesburg | Agencies

Six people were killed in a head-on collision involving two trucks in South Africa's northern province of Limpopo, the local authority said. The incident took place along the N1.29 North in Vhembe District on Monday morning, and the six who died on the spot included an infant, a 35-year-old driver, and four passengers aged between eight and 15, said Florence Radzilani, a member of the Executive Council for Transport and Community Safety, Xinhua news agency reported. Law enforcement officers at the scene cited speeding as a possible cause of the crash, according to Radzilani. "We continue to plead with all motorists to obey the rules of the road," she said.

100 mn people displaced globally in 2022: United Nations

United Nations | Agencies

A hundred million people across the world were forced to leave their homes in 2022 and the UN is continuing to help those in need in a myriad of ways, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said. Filippo Grandi, head of the agency, described the figure as "a record that should never have been set", Xinhua news agency reported, citing UN News. The figure is up from some 90 million in 2021. Outbreaks of violence, or protracted conflicts, were key migration factors in many parts of the world, including Ukraine, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Syria and Myanmar. Thousands of desperate migrants looked to Europe as a preferred destination, putting their lives in the hands of human traffickers, and setting off on perilous journeys across the Mediterranean,



UN News warned. It has now been more than seven years since the protracted conflict began in Yemen, which precipitated a humanitarian catastrophe and has forced more than 4.3 million people to leave their homes. In May, the UN migration agency IOM and the European Union's humanitarian aid wing, ECHO, announced that they were scaling up efforts to respond to the needs of more than 325,000 displaced by the conflict, including migrants and the communities that host them. In Syria, war has now been upending lives for 11 years: nearly 5 million children born in Syria have never known the country at peace, UN News added. More than 80,000 Syrians call the huge Za'atari camp in Jordan "home", and many of them may have to remain

outside of their country for the foreseeable future. Overall, Jordan hosts around 675,000 registered refugees from Syria, and most of them live in its towns and villages among local communities, with only 17 per cent living in the two main refugee camps, Za'atari and Azraq. More than five years ago, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fled their homes in Myanmar. Almost a million live in the vast Cox's Bazar camp across the border in neighboring Bangladesh. In March, the UN launched its latest response plan, calling for more than \$881 million for the refugees, and neighboring communities (more than half a million Bangladeshis), who are also highly reliant on aid. UN refugee agency figures show that by December, more than 7.8 million Ukrainian refugees had been recorded across Europe.

Another scandal-hit Japanese Minister resigns

Tokyo | Agencies

Japan's reconstruction minister Kenya Akiba resigned on Tuesday following allegations of his involvement in political funding and other scandals. Akiba, who was effectively sacked by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, is the fourth minister to resign over similar funding and other scandals since October, as the approval rating for the cabinet approaches the critical 30 per cent level, reports Xinhua news agency. Kishida has decided to appoint former reconstruction minister Hiromichi Watanabe to take over Akiba's portfolio. Watanabe held the position between 2018 and 2019. Akiba's dismal came amid mounting calls from the opposition bloc for him to step down following revelations he reportedly paid his state-paid secretaries for helping with his re-



election campaign in the October 2021 lower house election, which would be in violation of Japan's election law. Akiba also admitted that two politi-

cal groups connected to him were paid 14 million yen (\$105,000) in "rent payments" to his wife and mother, who own his office in his constituency in Sendai City, between 2011 and 2020. The scandal-hit minister also flipped over his connection to a controversial religious group, having first denied any links. Opposition party members were gearing up to continue to grill Akiba over the scandals during the ordinary Diet session set to begin next month. But his sacking, political observers here said, was motivated in part by the government and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party wanting to avoid delays on the passage of key bills being passed during the session by the opposition camp taking further aim at Akiba. Adding to Kishida's woes ahead of local elections in April, meanwhile, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications Mio Sugita also resigned on Tuesday after being heavily criticized for making discriminatory remarks against minority groups.

Ukraine aims to hold peace summit this winter: FM

Kiev | Agencies

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said that Kiev is counting on holding a summit to discuss the peace plan for Ukraine by the end of February. "The UN could be the best platform for holding this summit," Kuleba was quoted by the Interfax-Ukraine news agency as saying, Xinhua news agency reported. Kuleba said that he believes that Russia is not ready for peace talks, though the minister pointed out that "every war ends as a result of the actions taken on the battlefield and at the negotiating table".



While commenting on the recent visit of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to the United States, Kuleba said he was "absolutely satisfied" with its results. Zelensky put forward a peace plan for ending the Russia-Ukraine conflict at the G20 summit in Indonesia last month.



Mock drills held to check COVID-19 preparations

VISHVAS SARANG SAYS STATE READY TO HANDLE ANY SITUATION

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Mock drills were conducted at various hospitals in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday to check the preparedness of health facilities to handle any surge in COVID-19 cases and state Medical Education Minister Vishvas Sarang said they are ready to deal with any situation.

Amid a spike in COVID-19 cases in some countries, the Centre has asked states and Union Territories to conduct mock drills at all COVID-19 hospitals as part of precautionary measures. Madhya Pradesh minister Sarang was present during the exercise conducted in the government-run Hamidia Hospital in state capital Bhopal.

After inspecting the health facilities in the hospital, Sarang said such drills were conducted in all government medical institutions in the state. "We are ready to deal with any situation. The drill was conducted to check the preparedness of oxygen generation, Intensive Care Unit, Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, oxygen supported beds, medicines," Sarang said while appealing all to follow COVID-19 appropriate behaviour. The minister



said he will not celebrate his birthday on December 29 to avoid a gathering of people. He said the COVID-19 situation in Madhya Pradesh was under control and not a single positive case was reported from the state in the recent past. "We are following

all directives of the Centre. The state hospitals have 43,000 beds," he said. The oxygen plant at the Hamidia Hospital was being monitored round-the clock through GPS, Sarang said. As on Monday evening, active COVID-19 cases in Madhya Pradesh

stood at four and there was no report of any new positive case from the state, officials said. Madhya Pradesh has so far reported 10,54,918 COVID-19 cases including 10,776 deaths due to the viral infection, they said.

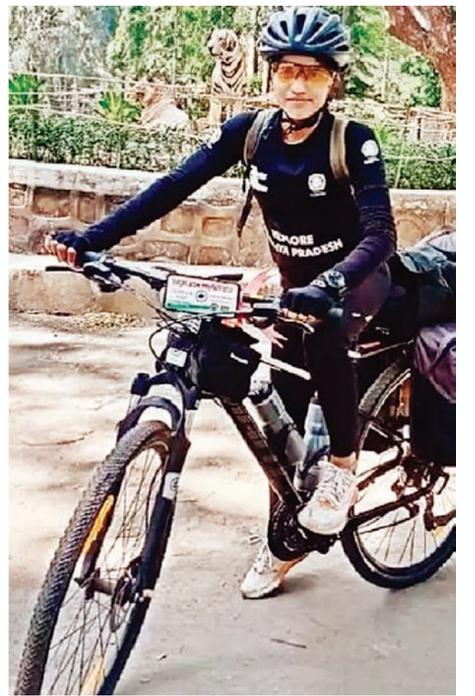
Woman pedals across nation to spread message of women's empowerment

Team Absolute | Bhopal/Kerala

In view of rising crimes against women, a 24-year-old cyclist has been pedalling across the nation to give away the message of empowerment and ensuring the safety of women. Aasha Malviya from Nataram village in Raigarh district of Madhya Pradesh has travelled through five states covering 6000 kms as part of her 'Sampoorn Bharat Yatra'. She has reached Kerala of late.

Aasha met Chief Minister of Kerala Pinarayi Vijayan, Governor Arif Khan and transport minister Antony Raju. Speaking about her experience Aasha said, "Through my Yatra, I wanted to send a message to the world that India is safe for women to travel and through my expedition, I wanted to convey the message to the public." Aasha has faced some troubles during her course of the journey.

"In Kerala, I had a good experience, except in Kochi where the district collector



and the officials did not cooperate with me. However, I managed to

reach Alapuzha where I met the Collector," Aasha said.

Various types of art and culture are hidden in tribes of our state: Governor

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that Madhya Pradesh holds a special identity in the field of arts, handicrafts and handlooms in the whole world. There are more than 45 tribes in Madhya Pradesh, in which lay various types of hidden art and culture. Governor Patel was addressing the Converge 2022 festival organised by National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) at Tatya Tope Nagar.

Governor Patel expected the teachers and students of NIFT to take advantage of this diversity and incorporate it in their designs and products. This will not only encourage the culture of India, but also provide cultural and economic security to these tribes on the land full of historical art and natural beauty of Bhopal. Governor Patel said that NIFT is counted among the top fashion education institutes in the world. Due to the growing need in this field, NIFT Bhopal is one of the 18 campuses located in different states and



union territories of the country. He said that along with fashion education, NIFT is also promoting sports, culture and literature through this festival. Patel inaugurated the programme by releasing pigeons and balloons. He unveiled the special cover of the Postal Department. Director, NIFT Bhopal, Lt. Col. Ashish Agarwal gave the welcome address and Joint Director Akhil Sahai proposed the vote of thanks.

WE HAVE EXPLOITED NATURE, WE MUST UTILIZE IT WISELY: CM CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Indian culture is an integralist. When many civilizations were disappearing in the world, the hymns of the Vedas were being composed in our country. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam stems from our soil only. With the formula of Sarve Bhavantu Sukhin: Sarve Santu Niramaya, our sages apprised how to live happily and peacefully in the world. He said that we have disturbed the natural balance by exploiting nature. Utilising resources wisely will only protect this creation. He said that the state government will work on the idea and action plan prepared regarding water element in the Sujalam conference today.

Jan Abhiyan Parishad of the state has made attempts to revive 313 rivers. The Chief Minister called for balanced use of water, water conser-



vation, organic farming and protection of environment. He said that the earth has to be saved, only then our existence will be saved. If the balance of the five elements is not maintained, then the balance of the earth will get disturbed. Chief Minister Chouhan was addressing the three-day Sujalam conference dedicated to the Panch Mahabhutas (sky, water, air, fire, earth) organised by the Madhya Pradesh Jan Abhiyan Parishad in Ujjain today to prepare Indian and

indigenous discussion on the purity of water and to put its scientific aspects on the world stage. The water collected from 313 rivers was offered to the mango tree in the programme. Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said that saints in our country have given their entire lives to save this civilization. He said that we are fortunate that the concept of Panchbhutas has developed in our country. He said that with the Namami Gange campaign, the water

of the entire Ganga river has been made purified for bathing in just five years. Uninterrupted availability of water for all is our biggest challenge in the times to come. The guests also released the book 'Sumangali'. The book has been edited by the Vice Chancellor of Maharishi Panini University, Dr. Vijay Kumar J and Anandil Joshi. A documentary based on water produced by Deendayal Research Institute was also screened.

Congress files complaint against minister over land "gift"

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The opposition Congress in Madhya Pradesh has filed a complaint against Revenue Minister Govind Singh Rajput over allegedly taking a "gift" of 50-acre land in Sagar district from his brother-in-laws earlier this year. The Singh brothers purchased the land in September 2021, just months before it was "gifted" to the minister.



The Congress has filed the complaint with the 'benami properties prohibition wing' of the income tax department. The alleged irregularities in the transaction have robbed the state of several crores, the Congress said, alleging it was just a process to help the minister launder black money.

A news channel found that the land, when purchased by the Singh brothers, was described in documents as a

non-irrigable wasteland. But after the minister got it, it was classified as irrigable farmland. The Congress alleged the process was meant to evade stamp duty. With the land named irrigable farmland, the minister and his family received benefits under the state's 1959 law on land revenue. Under Section 58(3) of the Land Revenue Act, the minister did not have to pay further revenue.

Congress media cell chief KK Mishra filed the complaint against the minister. The Congress complaint alleged Rajput "amassed massive amounts of wealth illegally from 2020-2022", with which he has purchased immovable properties in the name of several 'benami' people in different parts of the state. An investigation of stamp duty evasion should also be conducted against him, Mishra

said. "The nature of the land also changed at least twice within a year. Anyone can smell major fraud...The Chief Minister needs to get the matter investigated at highest level and the concerned minister should resign," said former law minister and Congress MLA PC Sharma. Not just the Congress, former BJP leader Rajkumar Dhanaura said the minister's brother-in-laws are not financially strong enough to buy such a vast tract of land. "It is the minister's black money which has been invested to buy the land -- first in the name of his brother-in-law. A year later, the land was transferred to the minister and his relatives through donation," said the leader, who was expelled by the BJP a couple of months ago for opening a front against Rajput.

FIVE ILLEGAL STRUCTURES OF DRUG PEDDLERS RAZED

Indore: Five illegally constructed structures of drug peddlers and those involved in criminal activities, were demolished by a joint team of Indore Municipal Corporation, district administration and police. As part of the government's anti-gang drive, removal gang of IMC accompanied by police reached Naya Basera at Chhoti Khajrani and demolished illegally structures. The removal gang demolished Girdhari Sanwale's residential building constructed on 6000 sq ft plot at Naya Basera in Ward No 44. Besides, the removal gang also demolished illegally constructed structures of Javed, Salman, Javed Nizam and Najvi Javed at Naya Basera. Deputy commissioner Lata Aggrawal said that some of the razed structures were pucca and others were kutcha houses.

Complaint filed against BJP's Pragya Thakur over 'derogatory' speech against minorities

Team Absolute | Bhopal/Bengaluru

A police complaint has been lodged against BJP MP Saadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur in connection with an alleged "blasphemous" and "derogatory" speech against the minority community during her recent Karnataka visit, police said on Tuesday. The complaint has been lodged by Tehseen Ponawalla, a venture capitalist and political analyst, through social media with Shivamogga SP G.K. Mithun Kumar. A copy of the complaint has also been marked to Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai. Pragya Thakur, an MP from Madhya Pradesh, had participated in the Hindu Jagarana Vedike's South Annual Convention organised in Shivamogga city on Sunday. She had also visited the residence of Bajrang Dal activist Harsha who was hacked to death for spear-heading the campaign against hijab.

The complainant accused Pragya Thakur of making a highly "blasphemous" and "derogatory" speech against the minority community while speaking at the function. She had asked people to give a befitting answer to love jihad in the same fashion. She further asked Hindus to take care of their girl children and keep weapons at home. If there is no weapon at least sharpen the knife used for cutting vegeta-



bles. "They had killed our Harsha with a knife. They have used knives to kill Hindu activists, we have to keep our knives sharpened to face any eventualities. If our knife cuts vegetables well, it can be effective on our enemies as well." The complainant stated that Pragya Singh's speech is an open call for use of arms against the minority community. "It is further submitted that the said speech has the potential effect of intolerance, hatred, violence inter alia against a particular community which is an offence. He has urged the police to register case against the Saadhvi under IPC Sections 153-a for promoting enmity between religions, 153-b for assertions prejudicial to national integration, 268 for public nuisance, 295-a for deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings, 504 for intentional breach of peace and 505 for statement conducing to public mischief.

RANGOLIS, BALLOONS TO WELCOME NRIS AT 51 SQUARES IN CITY

Indore: With public participation, Indore Municipal Corporation has planned to turn inaugural day of three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention into a festival. It has planned to make rangolis at 51 squares and release balloons from the same places when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate PBD on January 9. "Rangolis will be made to welcome the Prime Minister and NRIs at 51 select squares in a traditional way. Mayor-in-Council members and corporators, and public clad in traditional attire will also be present to greet the guests," said Mayor Pushmitra Bhargava. Besides, balloons will also be released from these select squares when PBD convention will be inaugurated. A meeting with various originations for these arrangements will be held shortly.

COLD GRIP OVER CHAMBAL REGION LIKELY TO REMAIN TILL TODAY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A cold wave is sweeping through the Gwalior-Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh as temperatures dipped below 4 degrees Celsius, the regional weather office said. The first cold wave of the region started Monday and was expected to continue till Wednesday, the MeT office said. According to the Meteorological Department, the weather conditions in the region will remain the same for the next two days till Wednesday. Gwalior Meteorological Centre in-charge Hukam Singh on Monday said, "Due to the onset of northern winds, a cold wave is being felt from today onwards in the region." "The hills are receiving



snowfalls, which have contributed to the chilled northern winds," he added. "In the coming days, the mercury may dip further. The maximum temperature may also hover around 17 degrees Celsius," Singh

said. "Cold waves and fog conditions are forecast for the coming days. Due to a Western Disturbance, there is snowfall in the hilly areas, so the cold wave will continue in the entire region," he explained. The day and night

temperature difference was around 15 degrees. "The cold wave will continue for the next two days in the entire Division," Singh said. People in the region said the extreme cold was felt from Sunday evening around 5 pm. They have been lighting bonfires and covering themselves in woollens. Children were being kept indoors and various precautionary arrangements were being made for stray animals to protect them from the severe cold.

The minimum temperature in Gwalior remained at 3.6 degrees Celsius. It was the second coldest city in the state after Bhind which recorded 3.4 degrees Celsius. The temperature in Bhopal was 12 degree Celsius.

Vikramotsav-2023 will start from February 18

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that preparations started for Vikramotsav 2023 in Ujjain should be completed on time. After the dedication of Shri Mahakal Lok, the number of national and international tourists and devotees coming to Ujjain has increased. Therefore, the activities to be carried out in Vikramotsav should be made the centre of public attraction. Chief Minister Chouhan was addressing the meeting of Vikramotsav at CM's residence Samatva Bhavan today. It is notable that Vikramotsav is to be held in Ujjain from 18 February to 22 March 2023.



Chief Minister Chouhan said that lakhs of earthen lamps were offered on Shiv Deepawali in Ujjain in the year 2022, the participation of the citizens of Ujjain was commendable. He said that the programme of offering earthen lamps on the first day of Vikramotsav of the year 2023 should be grand and dignified. Efforts should be made so that the programme is recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records.



Filming sex scenes with Jennifer Aniston 'was torture': Jake Gyllenhaal

Los Angeles | Agencies

Filming intimate scenes is anything but a cakewalk and Hollywood star Jake Gyllenhaal's experience is a testimony to it. The actor has revealed he felt "awkward" while filming sex scenes with Jennifer Aniston, describing the whole experience as "torture".

The actors starred alongside one another in the 2002 comedy 'The Good Girl', which follows two lovers who are bored in their dead-end jobs and end up embarking on an affair. Forty-two-year-old Jake admitted that he had a huge crush on Jennifer, 53, which made it difficult to film sex scenes with her.

"It was torture, yes it was, but it was also not torture. I mean, come on. It was like a mix of both," Jake joked during an appearance on 'The Howard Stern Show'.

Explaining his embarrassment, Jake said: "Weirdly, love scenes are awkward because there are maybe 30, 50 people watching. That doesn't turn me on."

He added: "Most of the time, it's oddly mechanical, right? And also it's a dance, like, you choreograph it for a camera. It's one of those like a fight scene, you gotta choreograph those things and I always have tried."

Jake then told presenter Howard that Jennifer had suggested they use a pillow to help them feel more comfortable during the bedroom scenes.

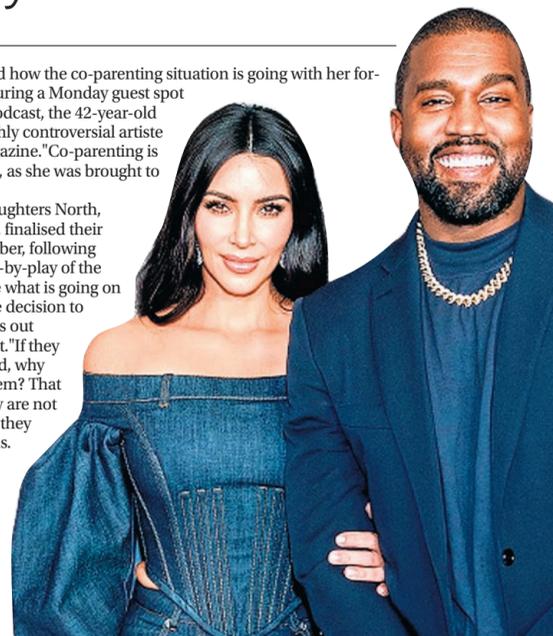
Kim Kardashian is having 'really hard' time co-parenting with Kanye

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kim Kardashian recently shared how the co-parenting situation is going with her former husband, Kanye West. During a Monday guest spot on the 'Angie Martinez IRL' podcast, the 42-year-old 'Kardashians' star discussed the highly controversial artist and their four children, reports magazine. "Co-parenting is really f***ing hard," Kardashian said, as she was brought to tears.

The former couple, who share daughters North, Chicago, and sons Saint, and Psalm, finalised their highly-publicised divorce in November, following West's on-and-off social media play-by-play of the situation. As per a magazine, despite what is going on with West, Kardashian stands by the decision to shield their children from what plays out online and says she is doing her best. "If they don't know things that are being said, why would I ever bring that energy to them? That is real, heavy, grownup s--- that they are not ready to deal with," she said. "When they are, we will have those conversations. One day, my kids will thank me for not sitting here and bashing their dad. I could," she added.

"I definitely protected him," she said in the interview, "and I still will in the eyes of my kids. For my kids. So, in my home, my kids don't know anything that goes on (in) the outside world."



Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu had a blast acting in 'Emily in Paris'

Los Angeles | Agencies

French actress Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu plays chic French boss Sylvie Grateau, the nemesis of Emily Cooper (Lily Collins), in Netflix's 'Emily in Paris'.

With sophisticated outfits and a Machiavellian management style, she nearly steals the show.

While 'Emily in Paris' had propelled her to global fame, Leroy-Beaulieu is a veteran of French films and TV, having worked with renowned filmmakers such as Roger Vadim, Coline Serreau and Philippe Le Guay as well as Andrzej Wajda, James Ivory and Robert Altman. The actress revealed that she had a blast playing her character's dark sides. Philippine said that her character is more vulnerable than she is mean.

"It's like Darren (Star, show creator). When you meet him for the first time, he's very cold, but in fact he's like many people who are highly sensitive: He protects himself. In a way, Darren and Sylvie have a lot in common. She's not a saint either -- she has dark sides and I have a blast playing them all the way."

She further mentioned, "As soon as I started reading this part I got a sense that she was very rigid and repressed in the way she behaved and moved, as if she was hiding something. And that's what we find out in Season 2: She came to Paris from the beach town of Saint-Tropez to get a career and had to toughen up to face the Parisian scene. By the start of Season 3, she's understood that she can work with Emily and has freed herself from her American bosses. I didn't expect my character to evolve so much and I'm very pleasantly surprised."



Gigi Hadid doesn't have energy to run after Leonardo

Los Angeles | Agencies

Things don't look good for fans of Gigi Hadid's rumoured romance with Leonardo DiCaprio, as the model reportedly 'doesn't have the energy' for his hectic routine.

In recent months, the pair have been spotted at a number of events together, but neither star has spoken out about the dating speculation.

After Leo, 48, was spotted with 23-year-old Victoria Lamas on a cosy outing, an insider claimed things have simmered down between the actor and 27-year-old Gigi.

While the pair are said to "like each other very much," neither one is looking for anything serious and Gigi's priority is her daughter Khai Hadid Malik, who she shares with One Direction star Zayn Malik.

"Gigi doesn't have the energy to run after DiCaprio. His routine is too much for her," the source said. Leonardo had dated Camila Morrone, 25, for four years - during which time the pair were seen publicly on numerous occasions.

As per a daily newspaper, the relationship sadly didn't last and ended 'amicably' in summer this year.

Gigi has been single since she split from Zayn. It seems as though model Victoria isn't the reason for Gigi and Leo's fizzled out 'romance', with a source close to the 'Catch Me If You Can' actor claiming that he and Victoria "are not dating". The insider said they were part of a bigger group when they were spotted on an outing in Hollywood.

Sophie Kasaei puts on a cosy display with boyfriend Jordan wishing christmas

Los Angeles | Agencies

Sophie Kasaei and her new boyfriend Jordan Brook put on a super loved-up display this week as they spent Christmas and Boxing Day together, just days after confirming their romance on social media.

The Geordie Shore star, shared a slew of smitten snaps with her TOWIE beau, jumping into his arms for one as she wished her 2M followers a Merry Christmas 'from my family to yours'.

Spending their first Christmas together, the new couple were joined by Sophie's pal Marnie Simpson and her fiancé Casey Johnson as they enjoyed a boozy night together.

Sophie looked sensational in a bright green, shimmering two piece - consisting of trousers and a matching crop top with a one-shoulder design. The TV star had her brunette locks left down in a slight wave, wrapping her legs around Jordan as he held her in his arms. 'Merry Christmas from my family to yours,' wrote Sophie while sharing the picture.

Pals Marnie and Casey joined the couple for the special day, as the group enjoyed a boozy day full of drinks, fun and karaoke. Spending the whole festive period together, Jordan shared a picture of the pair on Boxing Day as they enjoyed some cocktails.

The barber kept his look simple in a black T-shirt while his girlfriend looked stylish in a black baker boy hat and white ensemble. Sipping on Espresso Martinis, the pair smiled to the camera as he simply captioned: 'Special ??'



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Nina Dobrev

'Roblox seems a dangerous place for kids': Claire Sweeney

Los Angeles | Agencies



Claire Sweeney has warned parents of the dangers of online gaming site Roblox after her son Jaxon was targeted by online thieves. The actress, took to Twitter on Monday to issue a stark warning about the risks of letting children play on the site.

Claire revealed her son Jaxon, was playing the game when she saw he had been sent a message instructing him to tell them her credit card numbers. She tweeted: 'Parents out there, anyone's kids play Roblox? Yesterday my son was playing, and I saw on the chat in the corner, someone was asking him to go to my purse, take out my credit card and read the numbers!! 'Roblox seems a dangerous place for kids. Thankfully he told me!'

Roblox is a gaming site where more than half American players are under the age of 16. The website allows users to create blocky Lego-esque avatars and program their own games or play games created by other users.

However, there are concerns that children may be unsafe playing the popular game and could be prey for online predators. She was flooded with messages from other parents sharing their concerns, including Jeremy Vine. He wrote: 'Did a piece on this @BBCRadio2! Horrible stories. 'One 13yr-old encouraged to run away from home to meet 'a teenage girl' who turned out to be a large man in the Czech Republic'. Claire replied: 'Your show was brilliant, @HayleyHassall read article. Chatted to my son about Roblox. Then this happened yesterday. They said they knew everything about him, his age, name. Then asked him to go to my purse, get my credit card and send the numbers. User name was 'Unfortunate'.'

Claire's warning comes after earlier this year, Kim Kardashian threatened to sue Roblox after her son Saint, saw an ad for her 'unreleased' sex tape. Kim was left shocked as she saw Saint laughing at his iPad while play



MUMBAI INDIANS: INDIA'S MOST VALUABLE SPORTS FRANCHISE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Five-time Indian Premier League (IPL) winner Mumbai Indians have yet again re-iterated their global stature as the most valuable sports franchise in India, according to a survey by a global brand valuation company. As per a recent report by global brand valuation agency Brand Finance, Mumbai Indians is valued at USD 83 million, registering a 4% spike as compared to 2021. Mumbai Indians' Brand Strength Index (BSI) also stands at a strong 70.5 out of 100 with an AA+ brand strength rating. Year-on-year, Mumbai Indians have continued to increasingly command its appeal amongst Indian and global brands alike. The five-time IPL Champion has always had a strong mix of marquee and global brands on board, including DHL, TeamViewer, and Cadbury Dairy Milk along with young brands like Slice, which is a testament to its Mumbai Indians' strong reach and customer affinity, the IPL franchise informed in a release on Tuesday.



According to Brand Finance, Mumbai Indians have nearly doubled their brand value over the years with a 99% growth since 2009. This reflects the trust and strong brand partner portfolio of the franchise with brands having a high pedigree, which is not restricted to geographies. Its associations have also evolved with like-minded partners with whom Mumbai Indians have stitched long-term partnerships, unlocking maximum value for both brands.

Mumbai Indians have progressively adapted to the evolution in trends on and off the pitch and with digital engagement on the rise over the past two years, the franchise has ensured that it builds stronger fan engagements and activations, which can be co-leveraged by brand partners. Currently, Mumbai Indians have over 32 million fans across its social media platforms, the release claimed.

Notably, Mumbai Indians also emerged as the only brand to have registered growth in 2020, unfazed by market slow-down and apprehensions amongst sponsors globally regarding investment in sports due to the pandemic.

MAHIP ADHIKARI'S HAT-TRICK GIVES DELHI VICTORY IN SANTOSH TROPHY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With the help of Mahip Adhikari's brilliant hat-trick, Delhi defeated Gujarat 4-0 to register their second consecutive win in Group-1 of the 76th National Senior Men's Football Championship being played for the Hero Santosh Trophy.

In the match played at the Ambedkar Stadium, Mahip completed the hat-trick by scoring goals in the 59th, 81st and 84th minutes. Meanwhile, in other matches of the day played at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Karnataka beat new comers Ladakh 3-2, while Uttarakhand defeated Tripura 1-0.

Delhi's performance continued to improved match-by-match, which played at Ambedkar Stadium. On Tuesday, Substitute attacking midfielder Mahip Adhikari, who was benched for two consecutive matches, scored a brilliant hat-trick, when he got his chance. In the 30th minute, Ajay Singh Rawat opened Delhi's account by scoring from Jaideep's pass. Delhi was leading 1-0 till half time.

Mahip entering the field as a substitute just after the interval proved to be a boon



for the hosts. Mahip scored all his three goals on the passes of Jaideep, Raghav Chadha and Ajay Singh Rawat respectively. The hosts dominated for most of the time. Captain Neeraj Bhandari, Karandeep, Gaurav Rawat and Sahil, the players of Delhi's defence, did not give any chance to Gujarat's forwards by defending strongly. With this victory, Delhi remained in second place in Group-1 with seven points of two wins and one draw from three matches. On the other hand, Karnataka registered their third consecutive win today and remain at the top with nine points from three wins in three matches. After tasting the victory today, Uttarakhand has moved to the third position in the table.

Uttarakhand have four points from three matches with one win, one draw and one loss. At the same time, Gujarat is in fourth place with three points from one win and two defeats in three matches. Tripura and Ladakh are placed fifth and sixth respectively with one point each from three matches.

In the first match of the day played at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Karnataka had to struggle a bit to win over Ladakh. Karnataka beat Ladakh 3-2. Abhishek Shankar Powar (27th), Jacob John Kattukaren (54th), Robin Yadav (80th minute) scored in Karnataka's victory.

Ladakh played the better side in the first half and defied expectations to take an early lead through Mohammad Ilyas' goal in the ninth minute. So, he kept Karnataka at 1-1 till the interval. But in the second half, Karnataka launched a flurry of attacks and were leading 3-1 at one stage. Stanzin Gillik of Ladakh made the difference 3-2 before the referee's whistle.

In the third match of the day, Uttarakhand beat Tripura 1-0. This is the first victory of Uttarakhand. Substitute Sarthak Singh scored the only goal of the match in the 56th minute.

ESPORTS OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED AS PART OF 'MULTI-SPORT' EVENT BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

New Delhi: In a big move, the Government of India has officially recognised 'E-Sports' (Electronic Sports) as a part of Multi-sports events.

Esports will be taken care of by the Department of Sports under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. The Indian Esports Industry has been fighting for Esports not to be clubbed under the umbrella term "Gaming".

The industry has maintained that Esports (Electronic sports) is a competitive sport where esports athletes use their physical and mental abilities to compete in certain genres of video games in a virtual, electronic environment.

The decision is going to have far reaching effects on India's Esports sector and boost the growth of the country's Esports industry which is currently home to over 430 million mobile gamers and the number is estimated to grow to 650 million by 2025, according to the latest data provided by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI).

India bags gold to end Asia Cup stage 3 with 10 medals



Dubai | Agencies

In the individual event, Akash Malik went down fighting in the quarterfinals. Talking about his performance in Dubai, Akash said, "I am very happy that we won gold at the team event. Parth, Mrinal, and I performed really well. We played together as a team and to our strengths which is the reason, we won gold. This win will surely motivate us and help us reach newer heights and make India proud."

India dominated the competition, held between December 20-25, and ended the Asia Cup Archery Stage 3 with 10 medals -- five gold, three silver and two bronze.

Ace Indian archer Akash Malik, who won a silver medal in the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, has made the country proud yet again by winning the Men's Recurve Team gold at the Asia Cup Archery Stage 3 in Dubai.

Parth Salunke and Mrinal Chauhan are the other members of the team which took down South Korea in the final. The final was a close affair with India and Korea staying tied at 4 points each in the regular game, forcing the match into a shoot-off.

In the shoot-off round, the Indian archers piped Korea by 1 point to win the gold medal. The final score read Korea 26 and India 27 in the shoot-off.

India had a podium sweep in the women's individual compound event as Pragati won gold, Aditi Gopichand Swami took silver and Parneet Kaur bagged bronze.

In the Women's Team Compound, the Indian combination of Pragati, Aditi Gopichand Swami, and Aishwarya Sharma won the gold medal.

The other Indian winners were: Men's team compound: Priyansh, Ojas Pravin Deotale, Manav Ganeshrao Jadhao - gold; Men's individual compound: Priyansh - gold; Ojas Pravin Deotale - silver; Mixed team recurve: Parth Sushant Salunke, Tisha Punia - silver; Men's individual recurve: Parth Sushant Salunke - bronze

WOMEN'S T20I PLAYER RANKINGS

Australia's Ashleigh Gardner becomes No. 1 ranked all-rounder

Dubai | Agencies

After her match-winning performance in the final T20I of the five-match series against India, Australia's Ashleigh Gardner became the No. 1 ranked all-rounder in the latest ICC Women's T20I Player Rankings, released on Tuesday.

Gardner, who was named Player of the Match after her effort of 66 not out off 32 balls and a haul of two for 20, has 417 points and topped the all-rounders' list for the first time after moving up three spots. She has overtaken West Indies captain Hayley Matthews (381), India's Deepti Sharma (387) and New Zealand captain Sophie Devine (389), who was at the top through the past year. On the other hand, Tahlia McGrath, up two spots to 10th (248), climbed past Stafanie Taylor



(235) and compatriot Ellyse Perry (231).

Making runs in the recent T20I series against India, Gardner also jumped two spots to seventh in the batting rankings (649), over Suzie Bates (641) and Alyssa Healy (631). Australians hold the top two spots through the work of McGrath (814) and Beth Mooney (760), with India's Smriti Mandhana in third (727). Chamari Athapaththu (612) re-enters the top ten, with Jemimah Rodrigues slipping two places (607). Deepti Sharma's 34-ball 53 against Australia sees her move up three places to 29th in the batting rankings while England's Nat Sciver and India's Richa Ghosh moved up one place each to occupy 15th and 39th positions, respectively.

2nd Test: Warner's double century in 100th Test puts Australia on top against South Africa

Melbourne | Agencies

Starved off a century for nearly three years, underfire Australian opener David Warner responded with a brilliant double century in his milestone 100th Test, becoming only the second batsman after England's Joe Root to do so, on the second day of the second Test against South Africa at the Melbourne Cricket Ground here on Tuesday.

Warner joined a special club in the afternoon session, becoming the 10th batsman to score a century in his 100th Test in the Boxing Day Test, becoming the second Aussie batter in this elite list. He went on to set an even better record, racing to his double century as Australia took the driver's seat in the second test, scoring 386/3 off 91 overs in the second Test against South Africa.

Having shot off South Africa for 189 in their first innings, Australia now lead the visitors by 197 runs with seven wickets in their kitty and three days to go in the match.

The credit for putting Australia in this situ-



ation goes to Warner, who scored 200 off 254 deliveries, hitting 16 boundaries and two

sixes before retiring hurt, exhausted by the sweltering conditions at the MCG.

Warner resurrected the Australian innings from 75/2 as he raised a double-century partnership with Steve Smith, who scored a fine 85 off 161 deliveries, hitting nine fours and one six. At stumps on the second day, Travis Head was batting on even-ball 48 with Alex Carey keeping him company with nine runs. The seasoned opener passed the 8000 Test-run mark early on day two, doing so at an average of over 46, passing Mark Waugh as Australia's 7th-most prolific run-scorer in the format. Just seven batters boast more than the 25 Test centuries for Australia than the 36-year-old left-hander, who joins Pakistan great Inzamam-ul-Haq on the mark.

Brief scores

South Africa 189 trail Australia 386/3 in 92 overs (David Warner 200 rt hurt, Steve Smith 85, Travis Head 48 not out; Anrich Nortje 1-50) by 197 runs.

BRIJESH DAMANI WINS HIS MAIDEN NATIONAL BILLIARDS TITLE

Indore: Seasoned cueist Brijesh Damani representing Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) scripted history by winning his maiden national title of the much at the Senior National Billiards Championship 2022-23 held here.

In the final played on Monday evening, Damani played the final against his fellow PSPB player Dhruv Sitwala, who is currently Asia No. 2, registering a 5-3 victory to claim the coveted national title in the last billiards event of the year. The match was level till four games (2-2) when Damani, who is employed with IndianOil, accelerated and won the next two frames to lead 4-2. Although Sitwala took the next game, Damani played all across the table to dominate in the 8th game and won the title 5-3, according to information reaching here on Tuesday.

To reach the final, Damani defeated the 2019 National Billiards champion S. Shrikrishna, who is the reigning World 6Red Champion too, in the semifinal. He had reached the last-four stage by beating B. Bhaskar of Karnataka 4-1.

Damani's long list of achievements has six international medals, which include silver for India in the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games and silver in the recently held SAARC Snooker Championships 2022 at Dhaka.

FIH WORLD CUP 2023:

Indian men's hockey team reaches Odisha for World Cup

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Ahead of the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023, the Indian men's hockey team arrived here at the Biju Patnaik International Airport on Tuesday morning.

The team was accorded a rousing welcome to the team led by captain Harmanpreet Singh here. The team will leave for Rourkela, where it will practice for the World Cup, which will be held in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela from January 13 to 29 next.

The Indian team will open its campaign on January 13 with a match against Spain at the Bira Munda International Hockey Stadium in Rourkela.

Speaking to media persons on their arrival here, skipper Harmanpreet said, "We have decided to continue with our strategy to maintain the scoreboard at the start of a match. We do not know when the World Cup will be



again organised in India, so it is our target to give our best in this World Cup."

The Indian hockey team vice-captain Amit Rohidas said he is very happy as Odisha, his home state is hosting the Hockey World Cup for the second time in a row.

He said the team was practising for the World Cup in Bengaluru and will now train on the new turf

at Bira Munda stadium in Rourkela.

After taking on Spain in the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 Bhubaneswar-Rourkela, the Indian men's hockey team will meet England on January 15 in Rourkela, before moving to Bhubaneswar for their final Group D game against Wales on January 19.

BWF RANKINGS

HS PRANNOY RECLAIMS CAREER-BEST EIGHTH SPOT AFTER FOUR YEARS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ace Indian shuttler HS Prannoy moved one spot up to reclaim a career-best eighth position in the latest men's singles BWF World Rankings released on Tuesday, after almost four years.

Prannoy had briefly been world No. 8 in the rankings released on January 15, 2018. He recently entered the top 10 after attaining ninth position in last week's rankings.

The 30-year-old has been in good form in 2022. He played a stellar role in India's maiden Thomas Cup win earlier this year, registering crucial victories in the deciding ties against Malaysia in the quarter-final and Denmark in the semis.

Apart from being a part of the Indian badminton contingent which clinched the Commonwealth Games 2022 mixed team gold medal at Birmingham, Prannoy has also been in fine form in individual events.

The Indian made seven quarter-finals, two semi-finals and the Swiss Open final in 2022. Prannoy's run included some big upset wins, including two against reigning Olympic champion and world No. 1 Viktor Axelsen.

However, he remained the second-best-ranked Indian men's player in the singles

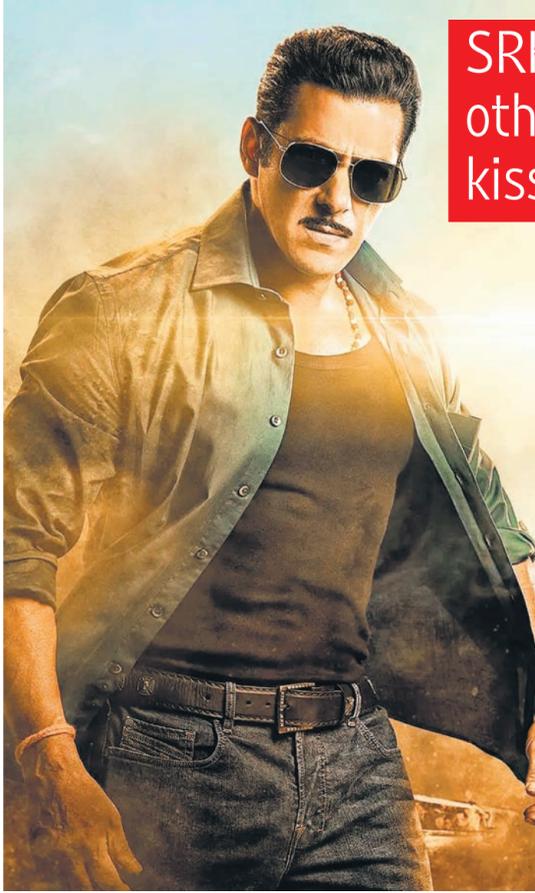


rankings as Lakshya Sen held on to his world No. 7 spot. Kidambi Srikanth, a former world No. 1, is 12th in the latest rankings.

In women's singles, two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu, who has been sidelined with an injury since winning the CWG gold medal at Birmingham, lost a place to drop down to world No. 7. On the other hand, the out-of-form Saina Nehwal rose two places to the 31st spot and is currently sandwiched between junior compatriots Malvika Bansod (world No. 30) and Aakarshi Kashyap (world No. 32).



Salman Khan Birthday bash



SRK and Salman hug each other, the actor hugs and kisses ex-girlfriend

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood's Bhajjaan Salman Khan turned a year older today. The actor celebrated the 57th bash in a grand way with celebrities like Sangeeta Bijlani, Iulia Vantur, Tabu and Sonakshi Sinha to Kartik Aaryan, Pooja Hegde and Shah Rukh Khan in attendance.

Salman was also seen making a grand entry at the party, which was reportedly held at his sister Arpita Khan's Mumbai home. The actor celebrated his birthday along with his niece Ayat Sharma.

However, one celeb who stole everyone's thunder at the bash was none other than Shah Rukh Khan. Photos and videos of the actors hugging at the party are trending big time and have been curated by several fan pages dedicated to both the actors on social media. Meanwhile, the birthday boy also cut the cake with the paparazzi stationed outside the venue. While most celebs arrived at the party in black outfits, Sangeeta Bijlani made a statement in a sparkly blue dress. She was also seen with Salman outside the party venue, where he gave her a hug and kissed her forehead.

Katrina Kaif, who earlier dated Salman, also took to the story section of her Instagram to send birthday wishes to Salman with whom she will share the screen in their upcoming spy-action movie "Tiger 3". Calling Salman an "OG (original gangster)", she shared a monochromatic picture of him seated on a bike. Salman appears to be staring into the camera lens as he sports a light stubble in the picture. Katrina wrote on the picture, "Tiger Tiger Tiger ka happy birthday @beingsalmankhan #OG."

Salman Khan had recently finished the filming of Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan, which is directed by Farhad Samji. The movie is slated to be released in theatres in April next year. Salman Khan will also be seen in the highly-awaited film Tiger 3, which will reunite Salman with Katrina Kaif.

VICKY, KATRINA TO RING NEW YEAR IN RAJASTHAN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As the year 2022 draws to a close, many Bollywood stars are leaving the galaxy cluster at India's entertainment capital, Mumbai, and are heading to their much needed holiday break.

While some step outside the country, Bollywood couple Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif have chosen a rather different place for their year-end vacation.

The two headed to Jawai Leopard Safari in Bali district of Rajasthan. After celebrating Christmas with their families, KatVic first took a flight to Jodhpur from Mumbai. Katrina was in so much haste that she stepped inside the Mumbai airport. She realised after an officer told her about the security check after which she went back for the procedure.

Once the couple landed in Jodhpur, they travelled to their destination through the road. Jawai area has more than 40 families of leopards and is famous for the big cat sightings. It is surrounded by the Aravali range of mountains. The place is famous among the elite section of society.

Earlier, former cricketer Sachin Tendulkar too celebrated his birthday in Jawai area. Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt, who got married this year, too had their vacation last year at the same destination.

Talking about Vicky and Katrina, the two got married last year in December in Sawai Madhopur district of Rajasthan in an intimate ceremony which saw only a select few guests in attendance.

The couple will ring in the New Year at Jawai and will return to Mumbai to fulfil their work commitments



I love Honey Singh's vibe: Saurabh Prajapati

Mumbai: Saurabh Prajapati, one of India's newest choreographers, recently finished a fantastic piece of work alongside Yo Yo Honey Singh and stunning Iulia Vantur. The group earned a lot of positive attention for its rendition of the Ramgopal Verma song Yai Re from Rangeela.

Speaking more about it Saurabh says, "I am happy that Yai Re is trending worldwide. This song will always be a special song to me for two main reasons: It's my first song with my favourite Yo Yo Honey Singh. It was just so much fun working with him. I love his vibes and his music. There is something magical about him and his infectious energy. From our very first meeting we got connected. Working with Iulia Vantur was another wonderful experience. She is so hard working and I must mention here she pulled off the entire choreography in one day. She is very passionate and focused when it comes to work. The original was brilliantly choreographed by Ahmed Khan and I am glad that I have got the opportunity now."

Saurabh also adds, "I want to thank Director Mihir Gulati for having faith in me - the entire team is amazing. It's a team work for everyone - right from to DOP Manish Shunty to all the assistant directors and Aadesh Gola production team. At the end when I saw the final outcome I was overwhelmed with the result. As a choreographer I am blessed to be part of this cult song. What Urmila Matondkar has done is unbelievable. I wanted to make this a party anthem of 2023 and give it a different concept. In future, I wish to choreograph and direct more songs and try to create my own niche in the music videos."

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shriya Pilgaonkar, who is awaiting the release of her streaming show "Taaza Khabar", is gushing about her co-actor, YouTuber Bhuvan Bam's rise as a digital superstar. Bhuvan, who swayed the nation with his relatable videos on YouTube will be seen essaying the role of a sanitation worker in "Taaza Khabar". Commenting on Bhuvan's journey, the actress said, "It's incredible to see Bhuvan's journey and evolution. He really is such a wonderful person and it has been an absolute pleasure to work with him. I could see the hard work and passion with which he has approached this character." She further mentioned, "He has done an outstanding job as Vasya and the Madhu-Vasya chemistry has turned out to be really special. We got to know each properly through the process of the shoot and we're good friends now. I think people are going to enjoy our on-screen chemistry. This cast and crew in general has been fun to work with." She went on to state how the show's story skillfully weaves two ends of parent-child love and love between romantic partners, "The story beautifully explores the relationship between a parent and their child as well as between 2 lovers. And of course, I love the music of our show. It's a great vibe. I'm sure the viewers are going to have as much fun watching as we've had making the show." Produced by Rohit Raj and Bhuvan Bam under BB Ki Vines productions, and directed by Himank Gaur, the series will release on Disney+ Hotstar on January 6, 2023.

"It's incredible to see Bhuvan's journey and evolution: Shriya Pilgaonkar"



Farah Khan gives reality show contestant an Om Kapoor makeover

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmaker Farah Khan gave a makeover to the 'Indian Idol 13' contestant Shivam Singh and made him look like Om Kapoor, the role played by superstar Shah Rukh in her film 'Om Shanti Om'.

Furthermore, after the makeover, Shivam entered the show in a six-pack with foreign performers and danced to the track 'Dard Ae Disco'.

Farah said: "You made it feel like the

original song," to which judge Vishal Dadlani also added: "All the credit goes to Farah." Shivam also sang the song 'Jag Suna Suna Laage' from the film. The top 10 contestants included Rishi Singh from Ayodhya, Bidipta Chakraborty, Debosmita Roy, Senjuti Das, Sonakshi Kar from Kolkata, Chirag Kotwal from Jammu, Vineet Singh from Lucknow, Navdeep Wadali from Amritsar, Shivam Singh and Kavya Limaye from Gujarat.

'Indian Idol 13' airs on Sony Entertainment Television.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Popular TV actor Amar Upadhyay has started out as a producer with his show 'Kyunkii Tum Hi Ho'. The actor gets candid about his production debut and the kind of response it is getting from the audience. Upadhyay says: "Till date, people gave me so much love as an actor. It is because of their love I am what I am today. And I am truly grateful that my fans have supported me and loved my show 'Kyunkii Tum Hi Ho'."

Amar made his stint as Mihir Virani in the show 'Kyunkii Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi' and was also seen as Virendra Pratap Singh in 'Molki'. Currently, he is working as producer and actor for the show.

In conclusion, he notes: "As soon as I got to know, I immediately called up our writers to give even better content given that now they have very high expectations which has now put me under a great pressure as a producer and as an actor to do even better."

Upadhyay signs off by saying: "So yes, it does put us producers and actors under a lot of pressure."

Amar Upadhyay debuts as producer



Kriti Sanon