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BODIES PILE ON TOP OF EACH OTHER IN HOSPITAL MORGUES AS COVID SWEEPS THROUGH BEIJING

COVID-19 RETURNS

Sanjeev Sharma | New Delhi

Beijing is currently facing an extraordinary wave of deaths as Covid-19 rips through the population, amid a widespread lack of data as mass, compulsory testing is abruptly halted across the country, RFA reported.

As China moves away from the gruelling lockdowns, mass tracking of citizens and daily testing that characterised Communist Party leader Xi Jinping's zero-Covid policy, a high-ranking official in the party's law enforcement arm said that a family member of his had died recently, and the family had had to wait five days before they could find a cremation slot.

The person, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals, said he had only been able to get a cremation that fast due to his rank and connections within the Chinese political system, RFA reported. According to the person, who works in the Communist Party's political and legal affairs system, which directs and governs law enforcement across the country, the current



wave of Covid-19 infections in Beijing was driven by transmissions in hospitals, known as nosocomial infections.

He described "appalling" scenes inside a number of Beijing hospitals, as the city's healthcare system groaned under the weight of the outbreak, with most of the victims elderly people, RFA reported. "What we saw was really appalling," he said. "All of the hospital morgues were full, and they were stacking dead bodies on the ground, on top of each other." "If you call any funeral home in Beijing right now ... they will tell

you that they have nowhere to store any more bodies and that you'll have to wait a week or longer (for a cremation)," he said, RFA reported. An employee who answered the phone at the Mentougou Funeral Home in a northwestern suburb of Beijing said, "There is no space here ... our cold storage is full and there is nowhere to put (any more bodies). We only have three or four furnaces and we're cremating 180 people a day." They said they are now taking bookings for cremations from December 31 at the earliest.

GEAR UP GENOME SEQUENCING OF POSITIVE CASES: CENTRE TO STATES

New Delhi: After the China has reported surge in the Covid-19 cases, the Centre on Tuesday asked all states to gear up the whole genome sequencing of positive cases to track the new variant. In a letter to all states and UTs, the Health Ministry has said, "In view of the sudden spurt of cases being witnessed in Japan, United States of America, Republic of Korea, Brazil and China, it is essential to gear up the whole genome sequencing of positive case samples to track the variants through Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) network."

Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, in the letter, has said that such an exercise will enable timely detection of newer variants, if any, circulating in the country and will facilitate undertaking of requisite public health measures for the same.

"In this context, all states are requested to ensure that as far as possible samples of all positive cases, on a daily basis, are sent to the designated INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs) that are mapped to the states and UTs," the Health Ministry has told states.

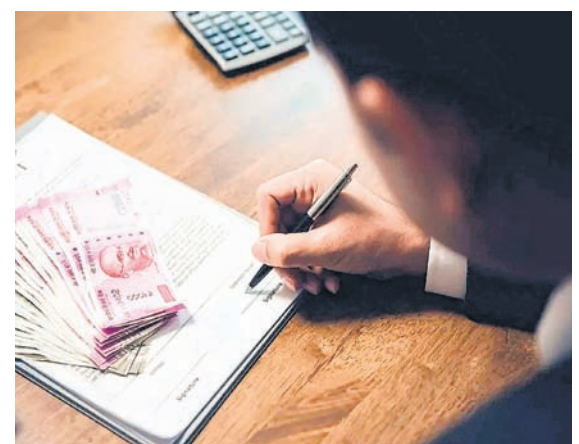
BANKS WRITE OFF LOANS WORTH RS 11.17 LAKH CRORES IN PAST 6 YEARS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Banks have written off Rs 11.17 lakh crore bad loans from their books in the last six years till financial year 2021-22, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

The non-performing assets (NPAs), including those in respect of which full provisioning has been made on completion of four years, are removed from the balance sheet of the bank concerned by way of write-off, Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said in a written reply. Banks write off NPAs as part of their regular exercise to clean up their balance sheet, avail tax benefit and optimise capital, he said, adding, the write-off is carried out by the banks in accordance with RBI guidelines and policy approved by their boards.

"As per RBI data, public sector banks (PSBs) and scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) wrote off an aggregate amount of Rs 8,16,421 crore and Rs 11,17,883 crore respectively



during the last six financial years," he said.

With regard to the list, including names of write-offs/defaulters who have defaulted more than Rs 1 crore to the public sector banks, RBI has informed that borrower-wise information on written off loan accounts is not maintained by it, he said.

In reply to another question, Karad said, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has informed that the total number of wilful defaulters each having outstanding loan of

Rs 25 lakh and above in public sector banks was 8,045 as on June 30, 2017 and 12,439 as on June 30, 2022; whereas in private sector bank, it was 1,616 as on June 30, 2017 and 2,447 as on June 30, 2022.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has informed that 515 fraud cases, including cases related to wilful defaulters, have been recorded since May 1, 2017 under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

MP MINISTER REFUSES TO CALL INDIRA, RAJIV'S ASSASSINATIONS 'SACRIFICES' FOR NATION



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's 'dog' remark has made senior BJP leader and Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra furious and he raised a question on calling the assassina-

tions of former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi as sacrifices 'made for the nation.' Responding to Kharge's remark, the minister said on Tuesday said if he (Kharge) considers the assassinations of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi as a sacrifice for the

nation then he should have a look at West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura where hundreds of BJP and RSS workers have sacrificed their lives for the unity of the nation.

The BJP leader condemned Kharge's remark and said he would refuse to call the assassinations of the two former PM's sacrifices. Indira Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984 at her Safdarjung Road residence in New Delhi. She was killed by her bodyguards Satwant Singh and Beant Singh following Operation Bluestar, a military action she ordered to remove Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his followers from the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab.

Rajiv Gandhi was the second prime minister to be assassinated after his mother Indira Gandhi. He was killed by the LTTE on May 21, 1991 in Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu.

CAG flags 24 cases of irregularities involving Rs 348.57 cr in some Ministries, Departments

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A CAG report has flagged 24 cases of irregularities involving Rs 348.57 crore related to four Ministries and Departments and four Central Public Sector Enterprises.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India's Report No. 24 of 2022 - Union Government (Civil), table in Parliament on Tuesday, contains 24 illustrative cases of irregularities involving Rs 348.57 crore pertaining to four Ministries/Departments, four Central Public Sector Enterprises under their administrative control, and two Union Territories without Legislatures.

The report said that though the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had revised the rates for issue of fresh Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards, 17 Missions/Posts in the Eurozone countries did not revise the same while three Missions/Posts in the UK adopted a lower rate of exchange for charging the OCI fees leading to loss of Rs 58.23 crore.

The report also said that MEA had purchased two properties for setting up Indian Cultural Centres (ICC) at Paris (2011) and Washington (2013) but could not get them renovated in time for use as such. Due to inherent deficiencies, such as significant structural concerns and issues of encroachment at ICC Washington, the expenditure incurred on purchase of property along with its renovation or refurbishment aggregating Rs 41.93 crore remained



infructuous.

Mentioning another instance, the CAG report said that Embassy of India, Beijing hired a firm for construction of Indian Embassy complex there. The audit observed that EoI, Beijing made avoidable payment of Rs 8.53 crore on account of escalation, even though the clause regarding escalation was not applicable as per the terms and conditions of the contract. The CAG report further said that the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances hired office space from State Trading Corporation of India Ltd, which required extensive renovation works to make it fit to occupy.

BJP TO INSTALL SAVARKAR'S PORTRAITS IN K'TAKA SCHOOLS

Belagavi (Karnataka): After successfully unveiling the portrait of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar at Belagavi Suvarna Vidhana Soudha, the ruling BJP is now making preparations to install the freedom fighter's photos in all schools of the state.

Minister for Kannada and Culture, Power V. Sunil Kumar on Tuesday stated that the ruling BJP is contemplating installing Savarkar's photo in schools of the state.

Minister Kumar defended the move to put up a photo of Savarkar in the Assembly hall of Suvarna Soudha, stating he welcomed the opposition Congress party's decision not to oppose it.

The Karnataka government had unveiled Savarkar's photograph amid opposition by the Congress in the Assembly hall of the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha on Monday.

Savarkar's photo was one among the seven photos of the great personalities of the country that were installed in the Assembly hall. The ceremony was carried out in the absence of the Congress leaders and legislators.

MAHA TO STUDY 'LOVE-JIHAD' LAWS BEFORE TAKING FINAL CALL: GOVT

Mumbai: Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said that Maharashtra government will take a final call on the issue of 'love-jihad' after a detailed study of the Bills and Acts in other states, and emphasised that it is not opposed to inter-religious marriages. "We shall study (the bills/laws) in other states and then take an appropriate decision in the matter," Fadnis told the state legislature. "Only after a thorough study, the government would decide on either a new act or amendments to existing laws, and the government will consider whatever is good, assured Fadnis. Later, talking to the media, he said that the government is not against 'inter-faith marriages' as apprehended in some quarters, while replying to queries on the possibility of a 'love-jihad' law in the wake of the Shradha Walker case, days after her family had met him and demanded justice. Last week, the state government had set up a panel to go into 'inter-faith' marriages and find out instances where the woman is estranged from her family and provide assistance in such cases.

Health treatment for all citizens irrespective of their state: Delhi HC



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed the Lok Nayak Hospital to conduct, on December 26, the MRI test on a Bihar resident, who requires immediate surgery, as this had been scheduled for July 2024, since he is not a Delhi resident.

Appearing for Gulam Mahabub, advocate Ashok Agarwal contended before the court that the petitioner is a resident of Bihar and the discrimination on basis of a Delhi voter ID card is being practiced regularly. He had sought that the hospital clarify its policy.

Counsel for the hospital, however, stated that they are

not following any such policy.

The court further stated that where a patient's health treatment is concerned, treatment has to be provided to all citizens, irrespective of which state they belong to while directing that the petitioner's MRI be conducted in December. Agarwal had said that the hospital had initially advised Mahabub to get the MRI from a private lab, but due to financial problems, he cannot afford this.

While the hospital did not comment on the issue, its senior doctors, however, said that two to three years is the "normal" waiting time in the hospital due to the heavy rush.

Fifth Scorpene class submarine 'Vagir' delivered to Indian Navy

THE SCORPENE SUBMARINES ENCOMPASS SUPERIOR STEALTH FEATURES LIKE ADVANCED ACOUSTIC ABSORPTION TECHNIQUES, LOW RADIATED NOISE LEVELS, HYDRO-DYNAMICALLY OPTIMISED SHAPE, ETC, AND THE ABILITY TO LAUNCH A CRIPPLING ATTACK ON THE ENEMY USING PRECISION GUIDED WEAPONS.

THE ATTACKS CAN BE LAUNCHED WITH BOTH TORPEDOES AND TUBE-LAUNCHED ANTI-SHIP MISSILES, WHILE UNDERWATER OR ON SURFACE.

THE STEALTH OF THE POTENT PLATFORM IS ENHANCED BY THE SPECIAL ATTENTION GIVEN TO HER CHARACTERISTIC UNDERWATER SIGNATURE WHICH GIVE IT AN INVULNERABILITY UNRIVALLED BY MOST SUBMARINES.

'VAGIR' IS BUILT TO UNDERTAKE MULTIFARIOUS MISSIONS LIKE ANTI-SURFACE, ANTI-SUBMARINE, INTELLIGENCE GATHERING, MINE-LAYING, AREA SURVEILLANCE, OPERATE IN MULTIPLE THEATRES OF OPERATION, SHOWCASING INTEROPERABILITY WITH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE NAVAL TASK FORCE.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Vagir, the fifth state-of-the-art, indigenously-built 'Vagir' submarine of Project-75 Kalvari class submarines was delivered to the Indian Navy here on Tuesday, officials said. The Project-75 includes six submarines of the Scorpene design being built at the Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) in collaboration with Naval Group, France. This is the third submarine to be delivered in 24 months. Launched in November 2020, the 'Vagir'

commenced her sea trials from February 2022 and completed all the tests including the weapons and sensor trials in the shortest possible period compared with the earlier submarines. The new vessel will be commissioned soon into the Indian Navy as 'INS Vagir' a fully combat-worthy submarine, capable of operation in all modes and regimes of deployment, to enhance the sea-force's defence capabilities.

Earlier, the MDL had delivered the submarines 'Kalvari', 'Khanderi', 'Karanj', 'Vela' and on Tuesday, 'Vagir'.

INS Arnala, Navy's first anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft, launched

Kolkata: INS Arnala, Indian Navy's first anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft (ASWSWC), being built by the Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd, was launched at the Larsen & Toubro shipyard in Kattipallu, Tamil Nadu, on Tuesday. This is the first of eight such ships being built by GRSE for the Navy. Eight more ASWSWC are being built by Cochin Shipyard Ltd. The first ship will be completed and delivered well within schedule. These ships will be capable of full-scale sub-surface surveillance of coastal waters as well as search and attack operations. They will also be capable of carrying out coordinated anti-submarine operations with aircraft. These ships will have combat management systems on board and will be armed with lightweight torpedoes as well as anti-submarine warfare rockets. These ships will have a complement of 57 personnel, including seven officers. Their three water jets (fitted to marine diesel engines) will provide greater maneuverability and a maximum speed of 25 knots. The greatest advantage is that these vessels will require a draft of only 2.7 metres, allowing them to access the coasts easily in search of sub-surface threats.



AIIMS DECLARES IT PREMISES DRUGS-FREE ZONE; STRICT PUNISHMENT FOR OFFENDERS

Team Absolute | New Delhi
The All India Institute of Medical Sciences here on Tuesday declared its premises a drugs-free zone, recommending action against staff, students and patients/attendants violating the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (1985) on its campus.

"The entire world is facing the menace of drug addiction, including many educational institutions, which has a devastating impact on the addicts, their families and a large section of the society. Our main objective is to reach out to the masses and spread awareness about substance abuse," AIIMS said in an official notification.

"Anyone who contravenes the NDPS Act will face punishment based on the quantity of the banned substance," it added.

"Where the contravention involves quantity lesser than commercial quantity but greater than small quantity, the offender will face rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years and with fine which may extend to Rs 1 lakh; where the contravention involves commercial quantity, the offender will face rigorous imprisonment for a



term which shall not be less than 10 years but which may extend to 20 years and shall also be liable to fine which shall not be less than Rs 1 lakh but which may extend to Rs 2 lakh," the hospital said.
The notification said that the list under the NDPS Act mentions the names of all substances banned or

controlled in India. The list uses the International Non-proprietary Name (INN) of the drugs, but in some cases mentions drugs by their chemical name.

Widely-known drugs such as ganja, cocaine, heroin etc. are mentioned by those names. Cultivation, production, manufacture, posses-

sion, sale, purchase, transport, storage, consumption or distribution of any of the banned substances and as per the rules or orders and conditions of licences that may be issued, is illegal.

The hospital also requested all HoDs to bring this to the knowledge of the staff and students working under them. The security personnel have also been instructed to not to allow the patients, attendants, visitors and staff members to use drugs, in any form, within the premises of AIIMS Delhi.

"If outside personnel or any drug peddler are found selling drugs, the security personnel are instructed to take video/photograph of the culprit and he/she should be handed over to the police immediately and be completely banned from entering the AIIMS premises in near future," the notification read.

It added that employees, doctors or students wanting to seek help for substance use problems can do so in the psychiatry OPD, adding that they will be provided treatment while maintaining confidentiality. Treatment will not be linked to administrative action or punitive measures, the notification added.

Liquor policy caused Rs 2,873 cr loss to Delhi govt, Rs 295 cr profit to accused: ED

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), in its charge sheet filed in connection with the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, claimed that due to it, the government suffered a loss of Rs 2,873 crore whereas the accused had a profit of Rs 295 crore.

As per the charge sheet, a copy of which is with the ED, government officials and politicians were given Rs 100 crore by the accused involved in the matter.

It said that the investigation conducted in the present case by the ED so far has revealed that Sameer Mahandru was one of the kingpins and major beneficiary of the above criminal conspiracy and he was actively involved not only in payment of the kickbacks, but also in formation of the cartelisation of the liquor policy.

The ED has mentioned that during the course of investigation, it has learnt that kickbacks of around Rs 100 crores were paid to the



politicians and public servants of the ruling party and government.

Some of these kickbacks are found to have been paid back or re-cooped to the 'South liquor lobby' out of profit margins of wholesalers through different modes, including bank transfers and credit notes.

It has further been alleged specifically that Mahandru is the beneficial owner or controller of the four companies which has also been made an accused.

Indo Spirits was able to secure a wholesale liquor license (L-1) of Pernod Ricard India Pvt Ltd and

another company being beneficially owned or controlled by Mahandru's Khao Gali Restaurants Pvt Ltd, was able to secure two retail zone licenses (L-7Z), despite the fact that Mahandru was also related to liquor manufacturing business.

The ED has alleged that as a result of the cartelisation and monopoly achieved in furtherance of the above criminal conspiracy, a total loss of Rs 2,873 crore has been caused to the Delhi exchequer while accused Mahandru and his firms generated proceeds of crime amounting to around Rs 295.45 crore.

Delhi court posts Jacqueline's plea seeking to go abroad for Dec 22

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Tuesday posted, for Thursday, the plea of Bollywood actor Jacqueline Fernandez, an accused in a Rs 200 crore extortion case involving 'comman' Suresh Chandrashekar, seeking permission to travel abroad.

Special Judge Shailendra Malik issued notice to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and sought its reply to Fernandez's application seeking permission to travel to Bahrain from December 23.

Fernandez also appeared before the court during the brief hearing. On December 12, the court had adjourned her hearing in connec-

tion with the money extortion case for Tuesday.

On the same day, the Delhi High Court had also issued a notice to the police on a bail plea filed by Leena Maria Paulose, wife of Chandrashekar, in connection with the case. A single-judge bench of Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma asked the police to file a response within six weeks' time while listing the matter for the next hearing on February 2, 2023. On November 30, the Delhi Police arrested Mumbai-based Chandrashekar's aide Pinky Irani, who introduced him to Fernandez. The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) had registered an FIR against Chandrashekar last year.

MAN HELD WITH 73K SAUDI RIYALS AT IGI AIRPORT

New Delhi: A man carrying 73,000 Saudi riyals valued at Rs 16 lakh inside the false bottom of his bag was nabbed at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport here, an official said on Tuesday.

The CISF staff posted at Terminal-3 of IGI airport noticed suspicious activities of the accused, who has been identified as Sheikh Pappu Khan, in the check-in area. Khan was supposed to travel from Delhi to Dubai by a Spicejet flight. On suspicion, he was diverted to the random checking point for thorough checking of his luggage. On checking his bag through X-BIS machine, doubtful image of 'false bottom' was noticed. Thereafter, Khan was allowed to complete the check-in formalities and was kept under close watch through physical and electronic surveillance. "After clearing the check-in process and immigration formalities, Khan was intercepted by CISF staff and was brought to the Customs office. On thorough checking of his bag, in the presence of Customs officials, 73,000 Saudi riyals valued at Rs 16 lakh were found concealed inside the false bottom of his bag," a CISF official said.

Two Andhra women self-isolate for 2 years due to Covid fear

Two women in Andhra Pradesh's Kakinada district confined themselves to their house for two years due to fear of getting infected by Covid-19.

Amaravati | Agencies

The shocking incident came to light at Kuyyeru village in Kakinada on Tuesday.

The authorities shifted the woman and her daughter to government hospital in Kakinada after the family head informed them about their deteriorating

condition. The healthcare workers faced resistance as the women refused to open door of their room. The women healthcare workers finally persuaded them to open the door and forcibly shifted them to hospital.

Local officials said both the women are suspected to be mentally unsound. Mani and her daughter Durga Bhavani had confined themselves to four walls of their house in 2020 after the outbreak of Covid. Though the pandemic later came under control, the women continued to remain in isolation.

Mani's husband had been providing them food and water but for last one week, they were not allowing him into

their room. He, then, approached the local authorities.

This is the second such incident to come to light in the state. In July last year, a similar incident was reported from East Godavari district.

Three women had confined themselves inside their house for almost 15 months due to the fear of getting infected by Covid. A couple and their two children had isolated themselves after one of their neighbours died due to Covid.

The matter came to light when a village volunteer went to get their thumb impression for allowing a housing plot for them under a government scheme. After being alerted by the volunteer, the authorities shifted them to a hospital.

Prime accused in Odisha teacher's murder case commits suicide in jail

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Gobinda Sahu, the prime accused in the sensational murder of female school teacher Mamita Meher in 2021, allegedly committed suicide in the Kantabanji sub-jail in Balangir district on Tuesday, a police officer said.

"I received a call from the jailer that Gobinda Sahu made an attempt to end his life. When they took Sahu to the hospital, the doctor declared him brought dead," said DIG (Prisons), Subhakanta Mishra.

The DIG of Sambalpur has been asked to conduct an inquiry and submit a report within 24 hours, Mishra said.

"The prime accused in the Mamita Meher murder case was supposed to appear in court on Tuesday. When the escort team was going to the sub-jail, we got the information that Sahu had committed suicide," Deepak Kumar, DIG, Sambalpur, told mediapersons.

A thorough investigation will be



conducted into the matter as per the guidelines issued by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Supreme Court, Kumar added. Meanwhile, Odisha DGP Sunil Bansal has ordered a Crime

Branch probe into the death of Sahu. Kumar said videography of the post-mortem of Sahu will be conducted and the NHRC will be intimated about the suicide within 24 hours.

Congress, a party of terrorists: K'taka BJP President

Uttara Kannada | Agencies

Karnataka BJP President Nalin Kumar Kateel on Tuesday alleged that by continuously supporting the terrorists, the Congress has turned into a party of "terrorists".

He was addressing the BJP leaders after inaugurating meeting of state office-bearers Murudeshwara town of Uttara Kannada district, he stated that the Congress is defending terrorists for vote bank politics.

The Congress government led by Siddaramaiah supported terrorism, drug and sand mafia. The drug mafia was contained by the BJP government headed by Yediyurappa and Bommali, he said. "Karnataka Congress President D.K. Shivakumar thinks lightly about the Mangaluru cooker blast. The Congress State President supports divisive forces, anti-nationals and



corrupt. Now, it can be called as a party of terrorists," Kateel stated.

He further stated that before independence and after independence, Savarkar is the only leader to be imprisoned. It's not only Savarkar, the Congress has also insulted Dr B.R. Ambedkar as well. Though the Congress

came to power in the name of Ambedkar, the party had never given a chance to Ambedkar to contest elections. Even after his demise, the party did not conduct proper final rites for him, Kateel stated.

The Congress is not the same it once used to be before independence. It has changed, he said.

2 die after vehicle carrying children to school collides with bus in MP's Rewa

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Two children died and over a dozen others were injured after a vehicle taking nearly 40 children to school collided with a bus in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa on Tuesday, officials said.

As per the administration, the incident occurred due to negligence of drivers and dense fog in the early morning. The two deceased children have been identified as Sanskriti Singh, 6, and Navya Singh, 11. While Sanskriti died on spot, while Navya died on the way to hospital.

Police said around 15 children were injured, out of which five were in serious condition and have been referred to the Sanjay Gandhi Medical College and Hospital, Rewa, which is around 40 km from the accident spot. The other injured children were given medical treatment at primary health care centre

located nearby area, and a few of them were discharged too.

"Five children, who have received serious injuries, are being treated at Sanjay Gandhi Hospital. The Commissioner has been directed that such vehicles, involved in transporting children to schools illegally, should be checked and action should be taken as soon as possible across district," said Rewa Collector Manoj Kumar Pusp.

He also directed departments concerned of the district administration to ensure that CCTV cameras are installed outside all the schools as well. "Safe movement of children should be ensured. During the regular inspection of the schools, the officials of the Education Department were instructed to take detailed information regarding the work being done by the school management for safe transportation of the children," he added.

TWIST IN TALE: TELANGANA GIRL MARRIES 'KIDNAPPER'

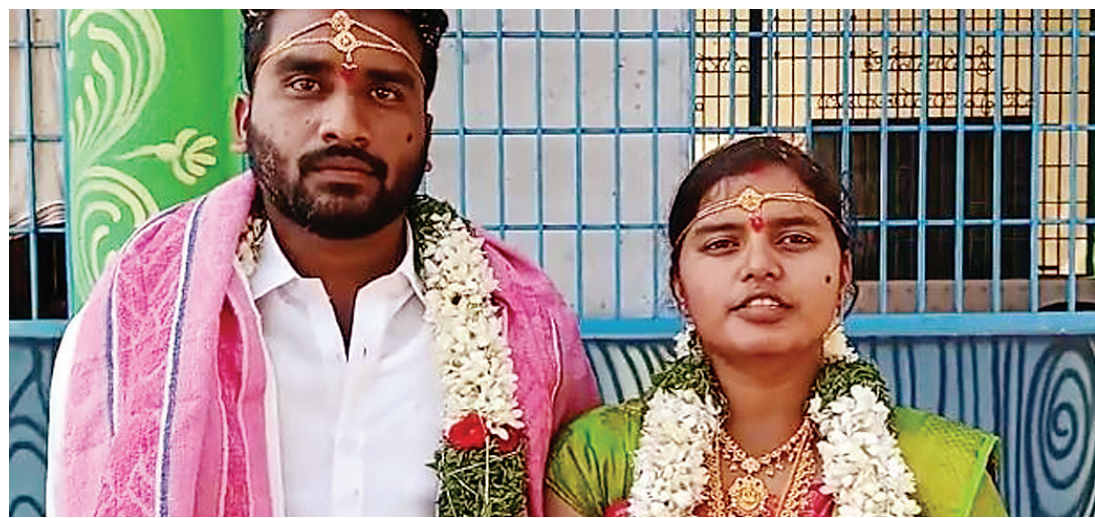
Hyderabad | Agencies

The kidnapping of a 18-year-old girl from Telangana's Rajanna Sircilla district took a twist with the girl now releasing a video of her marriage with the boyfriend who "kidnapped" her.

Shamili stated that she was not kidnapped but at her request, her boyfriend Ganeswar took her from home as her parents were trying to marry her off to some other man.

The video was released hours after the "kidnapping" in Moodepalle village of Chandurthi mandal. The video clip of the incident had gone viral on social media and sent the police in a tizzy.

The couple released a video and photographs of their marriage, performed at a temple. In the selfie video, Shamili said that they were in love for four years but her family did not approve of their relationship since he is Dalit. She also revealed that they were married last year but since she was minor then, the wedding was not legal and her parents



had filed a police case against Ganeswar. He was sent to jail in the case. Referring to the CCTV footage of the "kidnapping" that went viral on social media in the morning, Shamili said she could not recognise him as he was wearing a mask. After realizing that he is Ganeswar, she willing-

ly married him. Stating that they face threat to their lives from her parents, she demanded police protection.

Earlier, the video of the kidnapping in a filmi style had created a flutter. One of the "kidnappers" is seen dragging the girl towards the car and pushing her into the rear seat of the

vehicle. The girl's father who came to her rescue was pushed aside by the men, who then sped away with the victim. A few seconds later, the girl's father is seen leaving on his motorbike to chase the car. His efforts, however, proved futile. He later lodged a complaint with the police.

WINTER SESSION LIKELY TO CONCLUDE ON DEC 23

New Delhi: The Winter session of Parliament is likely to conclude on December 23, six days before its scheduled culmination, sources privy to developments said.

They added that the decision has been taken keeping in mind the forthcoming Christmas week.

Leaders of all parties are said to have arrived at a consensus to end the session on December 23.

The Winter session was supposed to end on December 29, 2022. It had begun on December 7.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla had received representations from several opposition leaders to end the session early, keeping in mind the festival and year-end season ahead.

NO PROPOSAL FOR IMPLEMENTING OLD PENSION SCHEME: JAGDISH DEVDA

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government on Tuesday told the Legislative Assembly that there is no proposal under consideration to implement the Old Pension System (OPS) for its employees.

The government's reply came to questions asked by Congress MLAs Ravindra Singh Tomar and Suresh Raje. Responding to MLAs questions on this matter, state's finance minister Jagdish Devda said, "There is no proposal for implementing OPS."

The minister further told the House that the state government employees appointed on or after January 1, 2005, are covered under the New Pension Scheme (NPS). The reply said 4,83,332



employees and officials of the state are registered under the NPS. Notably, earlier last week, Madhya Pradesh Congress president Kamal Nath had announced to bring back the OPS if voted to power in the Assembly polls slated for November 2023.

"The pension of government employees, which was stopped by the Shivraj (Singh Chouhan) government, will be restored as soon as the Congress government is formed in Madhya Pradesh," Nath had said last week.

The winter session of Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly, which began on December 19, is scheduled to conclude on December 23.

YOUTH KILLED, COUSIN INJURED IN ATTACK

Indore: A youth was killed and his cousin injured when they were attacked by an unidentified group of youths in Rangwasa area under Betma police station, following an altercation over making some objectionable comments. According to Betma police, the incident took place near Rangwasa Himmatgarh Hanuman temple. Police said that Suresh Panwar and his cousin Gajraj were pushing their bike that had conked out. Seeing this, some youths taunted them and Suresh replied back. A fierce argument ensued between them and the accused attacked Suresh and Gajraj with knives, injuring them. Both were brought to Indore in critical condition, and while Suresh died Gajraj was undergoing treatment in a private hospital.

According to Suresh's family, his wife is pregnant, and he was married only a year back. The police have taken Gajraj's statement. He has given the names of the attackers. According to police officials, the accused will be arrested soon.

MP HC nullify cancellation of BJP MLA Jajpal Singh's election in 2018

Team Absolute | Bhopal

BJP MLA from Ashok Nagar constituency, Jajpal Singh 'Jajji', who is facing alleged charges of producing a fake caste certificate to contest the Assembly elections in 2018, received a major relief as the Madhya Pradesh High Court (HC) has set aside its previous order to nullify his membership from the state Assembly.

The development came four days after a single bench of the HC had directed the Assembly Speaker to declare the election of Jajji as 'null'.

The MLA has challenged the single bench's order before the joint bench of the High Court in Gwalior, and hearing the matter on Monday, the bench set aside its previous order (December 14) on this matter.

Now, the MLA, who was denied entry in the state Assembly, will be



allowed to attend the ongoing Winter session from Tuesday onwards. However, the case of producing fake caste certificate will still remain as before. "Allegation is totally false and politically motivated. I would like those who stood in my support and made me stronger to fight against baseless charges. Today's stay order came as a big relief, which at least gave me time to prove my innocence before the court," Jajji said on Monday. Hearing the plea of former

BJP MLA Ladduram Kori, who was the candidate from Ashok Nagar constituency in 2018 Assembly elections, the court had earlier termed Jajji's Scheduled Caste (SC) certificate as 'fake' and along with nullifying the legislature, directed the police to register a criminal case against him for contesting from a seat reserved for SCs on the basis of a fake caste certificate.

Jajji, who is considered a staunch supporter of the Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, was among those 20 Congress MLAs, who had joined the BJP in March 2020. Later, he contested the elections on a BJP ticket and won.

Ladduram Kori had in his plea accused Jajji of contesting elections from the reserve seat for SCs despite not being eligible. He has alleged that the BJP MLA has produced fake Scheduled Caste certificate.

Tendu leaf collectors will again get the basic amenities: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that several decisions have been taken to provide maximum benefits to the forest dwellers of the state. In this episode, Van Mela is also a major means of increasing the income of forest produce producers. The state is making a special identity in the field of wildlife conservation. Decisions have also been taken with the aim of providing economic prosperity to the forest dwellers.

CM Chouhan was addressing the inauguration program of the seven-day International Forest Fair at Lal Parade Ground in Bhopal today. Representatives and scientists from 12 countries have also come to the fair. This year the theme of the International Forest Fair is "Self-reliance from Minor Forest Produce".

CM Chouhan said that concrete arrangements have been made in Madhya Pradesh to provide benefits to the local forest dwellers from the forest produce. Tendu leaf collectors



are not harmed by the declaration of minimum support price. In the PESA Act, rights have been given to the panchayats of the forest dwellers. Tendupatta collection will be done

through panchayats in PESA development blocks. The state government will again provide amenities to 40 lakh tendu leaf collectors from this year. The interest of tribal brothers

and other forest dwellers will be ensured. The support price of Chironji will also be fixed so that forest dwellers can get full benefit.

Some DAVV courses may be out of CUET purview



Team Absolute | Indore

Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya (DAVV), which has decided to opt for the common university entrance test (CUET), is likely to bring some of its courses out from the purview of CUET.

Though it did not specify which courses will be taken out from the purview of CUET, the axe is likely to fall on courses that were part of CUET-2022 but still have vacant seats.

The university is likely to add one or two courses to CUET-2023 which were not

part of CUET-2022.

A member in the DAVV admission cell said that a committee will be constituted which will decide on merit which course should be part of CUET-2023 and which should not be.

DAVV was the lone state-government-run university from Madhya Pradesh which had participated in CUET-2022 for admission in both its professional undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. As the session of DAVV started late in November due to the delayed CUET process, many thought that the DAVV would not opt for CUET again. But the university stated that it would be part of CUET-2023.

CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN PLANTED SAPLINGS



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Ashoka, Harsingar and Kachnar in the Smart City Garden.

Along with CM Chouhan, journalist Jitendra Sharma planted an Ashoka sapling on his birthday. Atul Sharma, Shailendra Bhadauria and Vasudev Choure were with him.

'There should be no human trafficking or misconduct with children in madrasas': Usha Thakur

Team Absolute | Gwalior

Madhya Pradesh Culture and Tourism Minister Usha Thakur has reiterated to Congress MLA Arif Masood for his Saraswati Shishu Mandir remark during her Gwalior visit. Late Monday, Thakur said, "There is no objection, get the Shishu Mandir checked. Shishu Mandir gives an intense initiation to patriotism and Sanatan culture".

It was hours after, Arif Masood told reporters that the government should clarify "which literature had been found wrong and where" following order of scrutiny of madrasas.

"Earlier also they targeted madrasa and got it investigated. Do they find anything in it? Get it done again but also investigate the Saraswati Shishu Mandir," Masood had said. He was reacting to state Home Minister Narottam Mishra's



Sunday remark that the study material of madrasas would be scrutinised.

Thakur lashed out saying: "A few Madrasas were found where anti-national activities were conducted. Some madrasas were not even recognized by the Madrasa Board. They were not even recognized by the education department."

"Around 40 to 50 small children were kept in small rooms. There is a concern that there should be no



very bad experience with hatred."

Explaining Rahul Gandhi's close shaves with hatred among leaders of his own party, Mishra said: "When he (Rahul) visited Madhya Pradesh, he saw hatred between Digvijaya Singh and Kamal Nath. Upon reaching Rajasthan, he saw hatred between CM Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot."

"Gehlot, Nath and Singh are very experienced leaders, the shop is far away, they will not even let you (Rahul Gandhi) get Gumasta (a licence to open the shop)," the minister said.

TWO STUDENTS KILLED, 20 HURTS AS THEIR VEHICLE COLLIDES WITH BUS ON WAY TO SCHOOL



Bhopal: Two students of a school were killed, and 20 others injured, four of them critically, on Tuesday when their pick-up vehicle collided with a bus in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa district, police said. The incident occurred near Paliyari village on the Jawa-Dabhora road, about 70 km away from the Rewa district headquarters, under the limits of Panwar police station, said Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Venkateshwar Rao.

"Two girls aged six and eleven who were students of class 1 and 5 respectively, were killed. 20 other students, aged 8 to 10 years, were injured. Four of them are critical.

They are undergoing treatment at the Rewa Medical College," he told reporters. The pick-up vehicle was going to drop students at a private school located at Jawa.

Toll Company Sprinkles Gangajal on Highway to Prevent Accidents

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After all measures taken to prevent road accidents failed, a toll company in Madhya Pradesh took to the shelter of God. They sprinkled Gangajal on a 250 kilometre long highway and performed "Hawan" for the victims of the accident. Close to 7 thousand vehicles ply daily on the 300 kilometre four-lane highway between Lebad and Nayagaon village of Neemuch district.

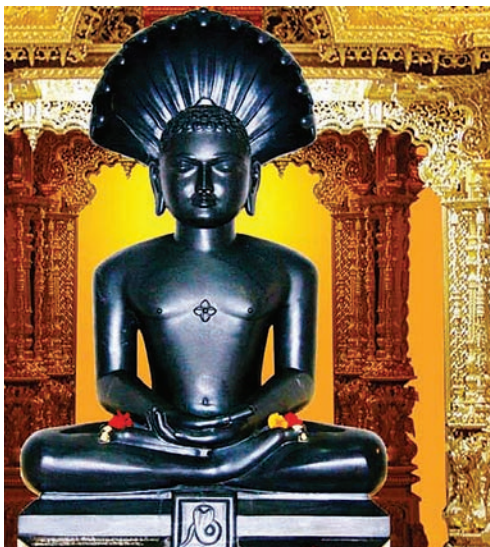
Accidents are very common on the 125 kilometre stretch of this highway. In the last one year, there have been more than 300 accidents in which dozens of people have lost their lives, reported ABP News. In order to prevent accidents on the highway, black spots were located along with constructing speed breakers and dividers and, installing indicator boards where required. However, accidents continued to happen after which Gangajal was

sprinkled on both sides of the road stretching from Lebad to Java with the help of water tankers, reported ABP News. Sunderkand and Havan were also performed at Borali toll tax located near Badnavar.

According to Rajesh Ramde of the toll company, Gangajal was sprinkled on the road with religious chants for the departed souls.

He also said that a campaign around the toll gates has been started by the company to create awareness among people about traffic rules and driving carefully on the highway. Ratlam Collector Narendra Kumar Suryavanshi and SP Abhishek Tiwari had recently got encroachments removed from the highway in order to curb accidents and ensure smooth traffic movement. The police has also ensured that speeding vehicles are challaned so that it acts as a deterrent for drivers.

Rath Yatra to celebrate birth anniversary of Lord Parshavnath held



Team Absolute | BIndore

Birth anniversary of 23rd Tirthankar, Lord Parshavnath, was celebrated enthusiastically by the Jain community of the city on Monday. A Rath Yatra started from Mahaveer Bhawan at Rajwada under the auspices of the Navratna Family. Women of the society participated wearing red and saffron saree.

This Rath Yatra went till Mahaveer Bhawan of Aerodrome Road. During the Rath Yatra the participants raised slogans against the Jharkhand government's decision to declare Sammed Shikharji as a tourism destination. The Jain community wants the government to take back this decision.

CONGRESS TO LAUNCH DOOR-TO-DOOR CAMPAIGN IN SEHORE



Team Absolute | Sehore

The Congress plans to launch a door-to-door campaign through Haath-se-Haath Jodo Yatra from January 26, party sources said. The party workers of the district have begun to prepare for it. Political observers said that the party was trying to connect the Haath-se-Jodo campaign with the Bharat Jodo Yatra. As part of the campaign, the party workers will take out marches from block to block and from Panchayat to Panchayat.

The assembly elections in the state will be held next year. As far as the party's performance in the last Vidhan

Sabha elections goes, it lost all the four seats to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the district.

The Congress workers will also hoist the national flags and convey the main issues of the Bharat Jodo Yatra to the people as part of the campaign, sources further said. The party workers have also been asked to organize fairs during the campaign. The members of the Youth Congress and those of the National Students Union of India (NSUI) have been told to take out bike rallies. The Congress workers and leaders will highlight the shortcomings of the BJP during the campaign.



EDITOR'S SPECS

CALENDARS: IRRELEVANT IN THE AGE OF MOBILE PHONES

After wall clocks, it is now the calendars that are vanishing from the walls. December used to be a month known for distributing and buying calendars. The business slumped during the pandemic when people avoided getting calendars printed and distributed but this year, people seem to have given up on calendars. "First the mobile phones took away wall clocks and watches and now it is the calendars. The pandemic slump has weaned people off calendars," says Surendra Kumar, who owns a card and calendar shop in Aminabad. He explains, "The pandemic has changed the habits of people. People prefer to watch the date and time on their phone and are not inclined to look at wall clocks or calendars. Even this wedding season has been very dull for us because people are not getting invites printed -- they are getting them designed and sent on WhatsApp which saves the money and effort." According to wholesalers, the main reason for this is that business establishments, banks, etc., no longer get tax concessions for calendars and diaries and hence have almost stopped the practice of gifting these to customers. Ashraf Ali, another wholesaler in the card and calendar market, says that if the trend continues, he and others may have to look for other business options. "We have been selling cards and calendars for almost five decades but the slump that began with the pandemic is continuing and we cannot remain in the business for long," he says. Most of the bookshops have stopped stocking calendars this year. "Good calendars are expensive and customers do not want to buy them," says a leading bookshop owner.

JAPAN ANNOUNCES BIG MILITARY PUSH

Asad Mirza

After Germany, Japan becomes the second country to overhaul its military in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war and increasing Chinese belligerence.

It seems as if the war indirectly and the Chinese belligerence in the region directly has forced another country to give up its long-standing stand of being a non-military nation.

Pacifist Japan has said it would soon start a once-unthinkable \$320 billion military build-up that would arm it with missiles capable of striking China and ready it for a sustained conflict as regional tensions and Russia's Ukraine invasion stoke war fears, globally.

Last week, Japan approved a new national security strategy, one of the country's largest defence shake-ups since World War II. This is a marked shift from the country's pacifist approach, which has dominated its political discourse for decades.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government worries that Russia has set a precedent that will encourage China to attack Taiwan, threatening nearby Japanese islands, disrupting supplies of advanced semi-conductors, and putting a potential stranglehold on sea lanes that supply Middle East oil.

The newly released National Security Paper spells out that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a serious violation of laws that forbid the use of force and has shaken the foundations of the international order, and the strategic challenge posed by China is the biggest Japan has ever faced.

In its sweeping five-year plan and revamped national security strategy, the Japanese government said on 16th December, that it would also stockpile spare parts and other munitions, reinforce logistics, develop cyber-warfare capabilities, and cooperate more closely with the United States and other like-minded nations to deter threats to the established international order.

Neighbours' Reaction

Neighbouring South Korea issued a strong protest against Japan's territorial claim over disputed islands made in a national security paper, while cautiously responding to Tokyo's plans for an unprecedented military build-up.

South Korea's foreign ministry has demanded an immediate removal of the territorial claims from Japan's national strategy documents, saying in a statement that the move did nothing to help "building a future-



oriented relationship" between the two countries, and it hoped the implementation of Japan's new security policy will be transparent and contribute to regional peace and stability while continuing to uphold the spirit of its pacifist constitution.

On his part, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol who took office in May has tried to improve ties with Tokyo, which have been marred by the territorial row over the islands and historic disputes stemming from Japan's 1910-1945 occupation of Korea.

However, President Yoon, had said in an interview in November that it was understandable for Japan to boost its defence spending given the growing threat from North Korea's ballistic missile programme.

Meanwhile, China has said that hyping up the threat posed by Beijing to back its military build-up "is doomed to fail." Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin has said that Japan's new defence policy ignores facts, deviates from its commitment to China-Japan relations and the common understandings between the two countries, and groundlessly discredits China's defence building and normal military activities. China resolutely opposes this and has made serious demarches to the Japanese side through diplomatic channels.

American Praise

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan has praised Japan's new national security and defence strategies, saying they will also support the US-Japan alliance.

Sullivan also praised the Japanese Prime Minister commitment to international peace, nuclear non-proliferation, and his leadership, including support for Ukraine.

The reason for US to welcome the Japanese decision stems from the prism, which it uses to view China. US sees China as "the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective".

Washington has positioned the next decade -- the same period covered by Japan's three new security documents -- as a critical period.

Japan becomes 3rd-biggest military spender

Unthinkable under past administrations, the rapid arming of Japan, which already hosts US forces, including a carrier strike group and a Marine expeditionary force, has the backing of most voters, according to opinion polls. Some surveys put support as high as 70 per cent of voters.

Kishida's plan will double defence outlays to about 2 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) over the next five years, and increase the defence ministry's share to about one-tenth of all public spending.

It will also make Japan the world's third-biggest military spender after the US and China, based on current bud-

gets. The five-year spending roadmap did not come with a detailed plan for how Kishida's administration would pay for it, as ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers continue to discuss whether to raise taxes or borrow money.

Having seen Russia's and Ukraine's enormous expenditure of munitions and material, the Japanese government is focused on buying munitions, spare parts, and other equipment that the Japanese forces will need if a conflict breaks out in the next few years. In addition, Japan will acquire new capabilities, such as long-range missiles that can strike enemy missiles on the launchpad, and it will invest in future high-tech capabilities in realms such as cyber and space. In toto, Japan's armed forces will fast become much more formidable in the near future.

In fact, Japan becomes the second country after Germany to give up its post-WW II stance on being a military power, in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war. But the notable point is that in both cases the US has welcomed the decision of both the governments, as it will translate in big business for its armaments industry.

In reality the Japanese decision may lead to an end to the ear of non-alignment and efforts to establish world peace sans armaments.

international

VEHICLES STRANDED, TRAINS SUSPENDED AS RECORD SNOWFALL HITS JAPAN

Tokyo | Agencies

Record levels of snow hitting Japan's Niigata, Tohoku and other areas north of Tokyo have left vehicles stranded on highways, caused power outages and disrupted transportation, the weather agency and local media said on Tuesday.

Weather officials said vehicles became stranded in heavy snow on roads in Niigata prefecture, with local media reporting that the Self-Defense Forces were enlisted to help with the situation, reports Xinhua news agency. The Japan Meteorological Agency reported that as of 11 a.m., the amount of snowfall had reached three times the seasonal average in some areas, with 2.24 metres recorded in one village in Yamagata prefecture and 1.87 meters in Niigata. Local authorities said traffic jams on major



affected highways in these regions are set to continue.

In the early hours of Tuesday, around 800 vehicles were stranded on highways in Niigata's Kashiwazaki, with the heavy snow also causing power

outages and bringing a halt to some train services.

East Japan Railway Co. said it halted a number of local services starting from the first planned departures early Tuesday morning. The weather agency said

that icy conditions are expected to hit again from Thursday and alerts for strong winds, blizzards and heavy snowfall may be issued, owing to a winter pressure system mixing with an influx of cold air.

12 KILLED, 13 INJURED IN PAK GAS CYLINDER BLAST

Islamabad: At least 12 people were killed and 13 others injured due to a massive gas cylinder blast at a market in Pakistan's Balochistan province, a local official said on Tuesday.

Deputy Commissioner of Lasbela Murad Khan Kasi told the media that the incident took place at a shop during its gas refilling process, causing a huge explosion and spreading fire to the adjacent shops in the Bela area of Lasbela, reports Xinhua news agency. The official said 25 people received burn injuries who were shifted to the Civil Hospital in Karachi, adding that 12 of the wounded succumbed to their injuries during their treatment overnight.

The official feared that the death toll might increase because most of the injured were in critical condition.

The explosion-triggered fire also engulfed other cylinders stored in the shop, leading to more blasts that have destroyed four neighbouring shops and around 12 vehicles parked nearby.



Musk's Starlink internet service hits 1 mn paid subscribers

San Francisco | Agencies

Elon Musk-run affordable satellite internet service Starlink has reached 1 million active paid subscribers, which now includes private jets, cruises, boats and more.

In October, SpaceX had announced that its satellite internet service would soon be available on select airplanes with the official launch of Starlink Aviation next year.

"Starlink now has more than 1,000,000 active subscribers -- thank you to all customers and members of the Starlink team who contributed to this milestone," tweeted the company.

Earlier this month, Starlink took off on the first JSX jet, a private airline company. Starlink is providing high-speed, low-latency internet to passengers during flights on the jet, with more JSX jets to join the service soon.

Musk has announced that Starlink will soon be available for recreational vehicles (RVs) in December.

SpaceX will also have a new government-focused satellite internet service called Starshield with a focus on "national security".

Of more than 3,131 working satel-



lites in orbit, approximately 2,700 are at their operational altitudes and capable of serving customers on the Earth.

Another 390 satellites are in the process of climbing to their operational orbits. Once they're done, SpaceX's first Starlink constellation will be more than two-thirds complete.

The constellation is made up of five orbital 'shells' -- distinct groups of satellites that share a similar orbital inclination (the angle between the satellite's orbit and Earth's equator) and altitude.

Two of those shells, known as Group 1 and Group 4, contain 3,168 satellites or more than two-thirds of the constellation.

They are nearly identical and focus on Earth's mid-latitudes, where almost every person (and customer) on Earth resides.

400 US troops sent to border as SC halts lifting asylum-limiting policy

Washington | Agencies

Texas authorities have deployed more than 400 US National Guard troops and other personnel to El Paso, a city bordering Mexico, after the Supreme Court temporarily halted the termination of an asylum-limiting policy during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The deployment aims "to safeguard the border and repel and turn back illegal immigrants", the Texas Military Office said in a statement late Monday.

Long lines of migrants were seen to have crossed border into El Paso from Mexico every day recently as the border policy, known as Title 42 which allows the US government



to swiftly expel asylum-seekers at the border during the pandemic, was set to end on Wednesday.

Following the Supreme Court decision earlier on Monday, El Paso Mayor Oscar Leeser said the city is going forward as if Title 42 were no longer in place.

"We are seeing breaking news that Title 42 may not be lifted. One of the things we are going to do is we are going to proceed as if it is going to be lifted. We are going to make sure we are prepared," Leeser said

at a press conference. Since the city announced an emergency declaration over the migrants surge on December 17, the federal government has released \$6 million for El Paso, Leeser added.

The city said in its emergency declaration that it lacks resources to ensure new migrants have shelter from the cold and food, fearing lower temperatures expected this week could be deadly for migrants who have had to sleep on the streets.

Earlier on Monday, 19 Republican state attorneys general asked the high court to let Title 42 stand as states are grappling with an influx of migrants at the southern U.S. border.

8 IRAQI CIVILIANS KILLED IN IS ATTACKS

Baghdad: A total of eight Iraqi civilians were killed and seven others injured in attacks by the Islamic State (IS) terror group in the eastern Diyala province, an official said.

On Monday evening, IS terrorists attacked a civilian car outside a village near the town of Khalis, some 70 km northeast of the capital Baghdad, the official told Xinhua news agency.

Later, the militants opened fire on villagers who gathered near the car, he added.

Iraqi security forces rushed to the scene and carried out a search for the attackers, a provincial security source told Xinhua. Prime minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani, also the commander-in-chief of the Iraqi forces, sent a high-ranking delegation from the Diyala Operations Command to investigate the attacks. Over the past months, Iraqi security forces have conducted operations against extremist militants to crack down on their intensified activities.

Kathmandu | Agencies

Nepal's Department of Drug Administration has published a list of 16 Indian pharmaceutical companies, including Divya Pharmacy that manufactures Yoga guru Ramdev's Patanjali products, that failed to comply with the World Health Organization's (WHO) good manufacturing practices.

Publication of the list by the department, the national regulatory body of the drugs markets, both allopathic and ayurveda, means that medicines manufactured by those companies cannot be imported to Nepal, according to the Kathmandu Post daily.

"After inspection of the manufacturing facilities of the pharmaceutical companies, which had applied to export their products to our country, we have published the list of the companies that do not comply with the WHO's good manufacturing practices," said Santosh KC, a



Department spokesperson.

Good manufacturing practice is a system of ensuring that products are constantly produced and controlled according to the set quality standards, said the news report, it is designed to minimise the risks involved in any pharmaceutical production that cannot be eliminated through testing the final product.

In April and July, the Department had sent a team of drug inspectors to India to probe the manufacturing facilities of pharmaceutical companies that had

applied to supply their products to Nepal.

Besides Divya Pharmacy, the list also names Radiant Parenterals Ltd., Mercury Laboratories Ltd., Alliance Biotech, Captab Biotech, Aglowmed Limited, Zee Laboratories Ltd, Daffodils Pharmaceuticals Ltd, GLS pharma Limited, Unijules Life Science Ltd, Concept Pharmaceuticals Pvt, Shree Anand Life Sciences Ltd, IPCA laboratories Ltd, Cadila Healthcare Ltd, Dial Pharmaceuticals, Aglowmed Limited and Mackur laboratories Ltd.

The Department said that, among the Indian companies it has prohibited, some are already registered and some are new. Products of some companies do not comply with the regulatory requirements and some companies do not comply with good manufacturing practices. Among them, some companies' products are used in critical care, dental cartridges and also vaccines.



OPPOSITION DEMANDS CHIEF MINISTER'S RESIGNATION FOR 'LAND-SCAM TAIN'

Team Absolute | Nagpur

The Maharashtra Legislature witnessed noisy scenes on Tuesday as the opposition...

Top leaders like Shiv Sena-UBT President Uddhav Thackeray, Congress President Nana Patole, Nationalist Congress Party state President Jayant Patole, Leaders of Opposition Ajit Pawar (Assembly) and Ambadas Danve (Council) and others joined the chorus asking Shinde to step down.

They pointed out that when Shinde was the Urban Development Minister, he had handed over a prime plot of land in Nagpur, worth around Rs 100 crore, meant for housing poor and slum-dwellers, to some builders at a throwaway rate of barely Rs 2 crore.

The matter assumed sudden significance after the Bombay High Court ordered a status quo on the project, the MVA said, as various leaders and legislators demonstrated on the steps of the legislature and raised slogans.



The CM has no right to continue for even a minute and must quit immediately. How can he stay in office when there is such a huge land-scam? During the MVA government, the then ministers like Anil Deshmukh and Sanjay Rathore had quit as soon as the allegations were levelled, said Patole.

In a big setback, the HC questioned Shinde's order (when he was the minister concerned in the erstwhile MVA regime), directing the

After woman MLA attends session with infant, Maha Legislature gets 'Hirkani Room'

Team Absolute | MNagpur

A day after a woman MLA attended the Maharashtra Assembly session with her 10-week-old infant son, the state Legislature here got a small baby-care centre, here on Tuesday.

The centre is named 'Hirkani Room' symbolising the legendary courage of a milkmaid who was stranded in the Raigad Fort during the reign of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, but showing courage, she climbed down the steep hilllock at the dead of the night to be reunited with her little child awaiting her in a village below the mountain.

The Hirkani Room was inaugurated by Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLA from Deolali (Nashik) Saroj Ahire Wagh - who shot to fame when she carried her two-and-half-months old son, Prashansak to the legislature on Monday. In the presence of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Ahire Wagh inaugurated the room - Hirkani means 'diamond dust' - with a cradle with a folding mosquito net, a small medical facility manned by a lady doctor and two nurses plus other requirements for child-care.

Present were Ahire Wagh's family members, Ministers Tanaji Sawant, Deepak Kesarkar and other dignitaries at the small ceremony in the Room No. 106 of the legislature extension building.



Scores of excited legislators cutting across party lines met Ahire Wagh, played, blessed and clicked photos with the 'youngest' entrant to the state legislature since Monday.

On hearing of the development, Shinde had felicitated the MLA Saroj, her husband, Pravin Wagh and other relatives on Monday evening in his office. On Tuesday, NCP's Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar and other leaders also met the lady MLA and her child and lauded her efforts to combine her duties towards her constituents and responsibilities to her baby boy. The Hirkani Room will enable young mothers to bring their minor kids to the legislature, feed them and take care as required while they can also fulfil their legislative duties as elected representatives, said an official.

On Monday, Wagh Ahire had also expressed a desire to have such a day-care facility or a creche to enable women legislators to bring their children during the sessions.

CGST Superintendent in Navi Mumbai arrested for taking bribe

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday said that it has arrested a CGST Superintendent of CGST, Anti-Evasion Unit, at Vashi (Navi Mumbai) in connection with a bribery case.

A case was registered against accused B Someshwar for allegedly demanding a bribe of Rs 20 lakh from a businessman for closing the investigation

against his firm and for not arresting him. The bribe amount was negotiated and the accused agreed to take Rs 10 lakh. Searches were conducted at the premises of the accused which had led to the recovery of incriminating documents and details of various movable and immovable assets.

The arrested official was produced before the Special CBI Court, Thane which has sent him to CBI's custody till Tuesday.

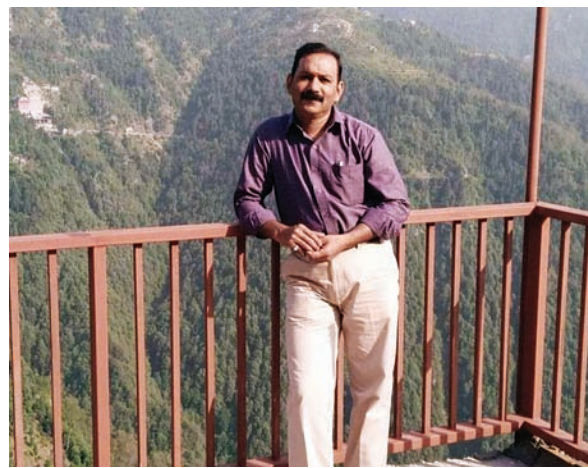
TABLIGHI JAMAAT MEMBER'S CONNECTION EMERGES IN UMESH KOLHE MURDER CASE

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai:

The role of a member of Tablighi Jamaat has been mentioned in the charge sheet of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) filed against 11 accused in connection with the barbaric killing of Umesh Prahladrao Kolhe (54), a chemist shop owner in Maharashtra's Amravati district who had supported Nupur Sharma.

The NIA filed the charge sheet on December 16. The accused were identified as Mudassar Ahmed, Shahrukh Khan, Abdul Taufeeque Shaikh, Mohammad Shueb, Atib Rashid, Yusuf Khan, Irfan Khan, Abdul Arbaz, Mushfiq Ahmad, Shaikh Shakil and Shahim Ahemad. All have been charge-sheeted under sections, 120B, 341, 302, 153-A, 201, 118, 505, 506, 34A of the IPC and section 16, 17, 18, 19 & 20 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The charge sheet mentions Mudassar Ahmed, son of Sheikh



Ibrahim, as a Tablighi Jamaat member.

Investigations revealed that a criminal conspiracy was hatched by the accused persons by constituting a terrorist gang to murder Umesh Kolhe, who had uploaded his WhatsApp post in support of allegedly controversial remarks made by ex-BJP leader Nupur Sharma. The accused working with common intentions, brutally killed Kolhe on June 21, 2022 at Ghantaghar in Amravati in a public area, with an aim to strike terror among the people," the NIA has said.

Sanket Kohle, his son had got an FIR registered in this respect with the City Kotwali Police Station. Later on the probe of the matter was taken over by the NIA.

"Kolhe posted a message on a WhatsApp group where Muslims were also his customers. They didn't like his support to Nupur and killed him," the NIA has said.

Kolhe was returning by bike and his wife and son were following him on a scooter when he was attacked and killed.

BOY FALLS TO DEATH FROM 5TH FLOOR DURING FOOTBALL PARTY

A football World Cup final party turned into unspeakable tragedy for a Mumbai family as a three-year-old boy fell from the fifth floor and died at a club on Sunday night.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Little Hridyansh Rathod had gone with his family to the Garware Club in Churchgate for an Argentina-France final watch party. His father, Avansh Rathod, is a member of the club.

The family was on the sixth-floor terrace, where the match was playing on a big screen, when the little boy went to use the toilet on the fifth floor.

He reportedly went with an 11-year-old cousin, Vivan, around 10.40 pm.

When they were returning to the sixth-floor terrace, the older boy, who had walked ahead, heard a noise. He realized that Hridyansh had fallen from the stairs.

The child reportedly fell through a gap in the safety glass covering the railings.



Vivan ran upstairs and told everyone that Hridyansh had slipped and fallen. His family and relatives ran to the spot and looked for him but couldn't find him anywhere. They realized, to their horror, that he was lying on the ground floor, with multiple injuries and blood pooling around him. They rushed him to the hospital, where he died around 2 am.

Hridyansh's parents are in shock, the police said. The family has reportedly blamed the club for negligence in not replacing a missing glass panel, which left a dangerous gap, just broad enough for the child to slip through.

The police are scanning security footage to establish what happened. They have filed a case of "sudden death" after speaking to Avansh Rathod and are questioning the guards and other staff.

Man killed, 2 sons injured in fight between groups

A 49-year-old man died and his two sons were injured in a fight that took place between two groups over harassment of a woman in the eastern suburb of Trombay here, police said on Tuesday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Offences have been registered against 24 people involved in the fight that took place in Cheetah Camp locality on December 14, an official said.

The police have arrested four accused in the case, he said.

According to the police, the prime accused had allegedly harassed the victim's 22-year-old daughter in public and made lewd remarks.

The woman called up her father and other family members.

The accused also brought others to the scene and a fight ensued between the two groups, including women, the official said.

The victim and his sons were attacked with iron rods and sharp weapons and were recuperating at a hospital, where he died on Monday night, he said.

The police have arrested four out of 15 accused involved in attacking the deceased and his sons, while a case of attempt to murder has been registered against nine persons, including two pregnant women, who attacked the other group, the official said.

CHINA TO ESTABLISH SCHOOL IN MEMORY OF DR KOTNIS IN SOLAPUR



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Consul General of China in Mumbai has announced establishment of a school in the memory of Dr Dwarkanath Shantaram Kotnis in his home district Solapur in Maharashtra as a tribute to the legendary Indian physician who went to China in 1938 and provided medical aid in the battle zone during the second Sino-Japanese war. The announcement was made by Chinese Consul General in Mumbai Kong Xianhua, who also said good ties between New Delhi and Beijing are promoted by people.

Mumbai. Dr Kotnis' behaviour makes us aware a good China-India relationship is promoted by the people and should benefit the people in the end, he said.

In 1938, Dr Kotnis went to China as part of a five-member team of Indian doctors to provide medical assistance during the second Sino-Japanese war. The physician worked at frontier and saved around 800 injured soldiers.

He later married a Chinese nurse and they had a son in 1942.

However, adverse weather affected Dr Kotnis and he died at the age of 32 in 1942.

On August 30 this year, an eulogy written by Communist leader Mao Zedong decades ago for the Indian doctor for his services rendered to Chinese people was installed in the form of a plaque at Dr Kotnis Memorial Hall in Solapur.

The life of the physician, regarded as a shining example for Sino-Indian friendship, was the subject of a Hindi film titled 'Dr Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani'.

Mumbai gynaec 'delivers' engineer from likely death, 32K-feet mid-air

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

Avverting a major scare, a leading Mumbai gynaecologist helped save the life of a Kolhapur engineer who suffered a medical emergency aboard a Delhi-Mumbai flight.

It was around 9.30 p.m. on December 17, when the passengers on Vistara flight No. UK957 were just settling in for a warm dinner when the aircraft PA system crackled to life.

"Is there any doctor on the flight? We have a medical emergency on board," an airhostess repeated thrice, and the sole medic, Niranjan Chavan got up, leaving his meal mid-way.

He rushed towards the back of the aircraft and was shocked to see a young co-passenger, struggling to breathe, eyes rolled up, and motionless, slumped on his seat, body cold, creating concerns in the flight.

He was later identified as Sushant Shelke, 31, an engineer from Kolhapur, along with an assistant, returning after completing a professional assignment in New Delhi.

"I checked his pulse, but couldn't feel any. Then I tried to confirm it on my smartwatch when I got a feeble reading of around 96. His blood pressure had plummeted alarmingly. He had hypotension with cold clammy hands. All not very good signs given the circumstances mid-air," Chavan told correspondent.



Immediately, he asked the airline cabin crew, comprising Kavita, Shipra and Hamarzyde, to start oxygen, got some sugar powder and kept it on Shelke's tongue and then fruit juice to sip on Shelke, who had become a proud new father just a week earlier.

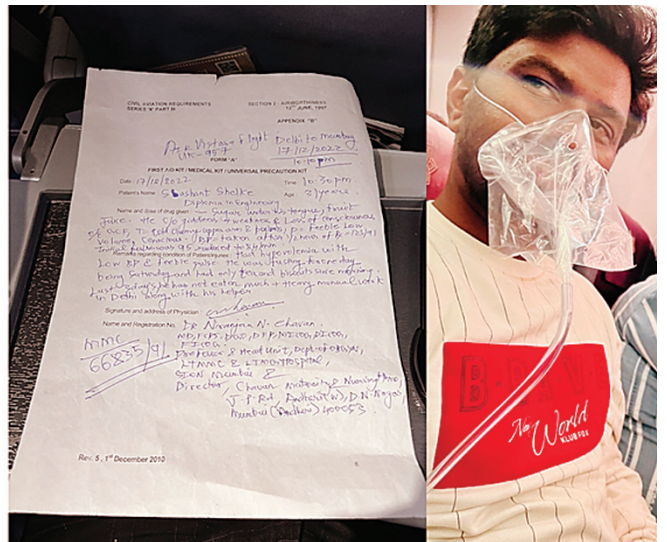
Chavan massaged his hands and arms to increase the blood flow and increase the body temperature, even as many curious passengers tried to crowd around and crane their necks to view the treatment, but were shooed off by the crew.

"He seemed to improve after sometime. Slowly, he told me that he

was on a religious fast that day (December 17), but had lived only on tea-biscuits for three days in New Delhi as he sorely missed his home-cooked traditional Kolhapuri cuisine. After some 45 minutes, Shelke's blood pressure climbed up to near-normal, the colour seemed to return on his face and he was apparently feeling stronger and cheerful, said Chavan. The medico, who is the President of prestigious Mumbai Obstetrics & Gynaecological Society (MOGS, founded in 1934), sat beside the recovering co-passenger and completed the various airline and medical formalities before disembarking.

Later, around midnight, Shelke was handed over to the medical team waiting at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport who took his further charge, and whisked him away for 'observation' though he was raring to return home to his family in Kolhapur.

"It was a nerve-wracking incident, my first in over three decades of flying all over, but it was a big learning experience for me treating a critical passenger mid-air like this," admitted Chavan, who also heaped praises on the Vistara pilots and crew for their promptness without panicking.

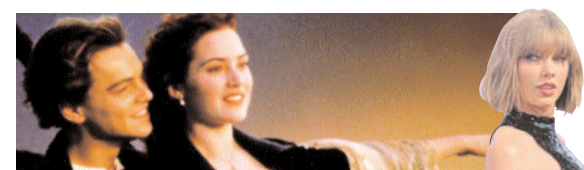


HUGE DISSATISFACTION AMONG PEOPLE AGAINST GOVERNOR: UDDHAV THACKERAY

Nagpur: Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday claimed there was "huge dissatisfaction" among the people of Maharashtra against Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari over his controversial comments on revered icons and wondered why he was still holding on to the top constitutional post.

Addressing a press conference in Nagpur, where the winter session of the state legislature is currently on, the former chief minister also spoke about the Maharashtra-Karnataka border row and alleged Marathi-speaking people were facing "injustice" in the adjoining state. Criticizing the Governor over his "insensitive" statements on icons of Maharashtra, Thackeray said, "Koshyari ji, for the last 15 days, is sending letters and asking what he should do. Any person having self-respect, after seeing huge dissatisfaction among the people of Maharashtra, would have resigned by now."

Earlier this month, Koshyari wrote a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah stating he would never imagine even in his dream to insult icons like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.



CATHERINE ZETA-JONES: 'I LOVE LIONEL MESSI'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Catherine Zeta-Jones has said that she loves Lionel Messi, and her husband Michael Douglas is "fine" with it.

The 53-year-old actress added her husband Douglas, 78, is "fine" with her admiration for the Paris Saint-Germain player, 35, who led Argentina side to World Cup victory on Sunday, scoring twice to help his side beat France 4-2 on penalties at the Lusail Stadium in Qatar, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Zeta-Jones, who cheered on Argentina from her US home, said on Instagram: "The best match I have ever seen, ever!!! Look, I support Paris Saint Germain, why, one wonders, I love the French, speak it too, my heart goes out to you."

"But you have to understand, I Love MESSI and the best bit?...my husband is just fine with it. no need to....so Don't cry for me or anybody else, Argentina!!!! OLE!!! What a guy! Doesn't care about my Messi posters all over the house, like....super cool."

Zeta-Jones, who has two children with her husband of 22 years Douglas, also posted a video of her TV as Argentina's players wept tears of joy after their victory, while she could be heard singing: "Ole, Ole, Ole!"

Messi said after the win, which is being hailed as the greatest World Cup final in the history of the tournament: "It took so long, but here it is. We suffered a lot, but we managed to do it."

"Can't wait to be in Argentina to witness the insanity of this."

DiCaprio's former co-star calls him 'very stupid' for dating only younger women



Los Angeles | Agencies

British-Australian actress Miriam Margolyes wants to "have a word" with Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio about his penchant for younger women.

The 81-year-old actress labels her "Romeo + Juliet" co-star, who she claims is "quite smelly", "very stupid" for notoriously never dating anyone over the age of 25 and specu-



lated the 48-year-old star avoids older females because he doesn't want to be a father.

"I'll have to have a word with him about that," she said. "That's very stupid. But maybe it's something else besides age. Maybe at that age they want to start having children." Meanwhile, Miriam blasted her former Cambridge University classmate John Cleese, branding him a "bad man" and insisting she won't ever appear on his forthcoming GB News show. She said, "There are two people I'd never appear with, one is John Cleese and the other is Piers Morgan."

Claiming she turned down a "large sum" to appear on one of Piers' shows, she added, "I think he's a bad man and I think John's a bad man." But one person the "Harry Potter" actress is a fan of is King Charles. She said, "I think he's a very considerable person, much more than it seems most people do. And I honour him and I love him." However, Miriam doesn't think she is "good enough" to receive a dame hood. She said, "I'm nice enough to be a dame, but I'm not good enough. I haven't done enough serious theatre work."



James Gunn shoots down claim that Gal Gadot was 'booted' from DC Universe

Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker James Gunn and producer Peter Safran scrapped several ideas from the past regime like Henry Cavill's return as Superman and Patty Jenkins' take on 'Wonder Woman 3'.

Many fans have speculated that with the axing of the third installment of the 'Wonder Woman' film, Gal Gadot had been "booted" from DC.

However, Gunn provided some clarity about Gadot and where she currently stands. "I'm not sure where you're getting that we 'booted' Gal," Gunn replied.

Gunn's response could be interpreted in two ways: Gadot is still working with DC for a future Wonder Woman appearance or Gadot left DC on her own accord amid the shakeup.

Jenkins's treatment for 'Wonder Woman 3' was rejected by the new regime at DC as it did not fit the plans Gunn and Safran have for the DC Universe.

"I never walked away. I was open to considering anything asked of me. It was my understanding there was nothing I could do to move anything for-

ward at this time. DC is obviously buried in changes they are having to make, so I understand these decisions are difficult right now," Jenkins said in a statement.

Prior to news that 'Wonder Woman 3' was not happening under Jenkins's direction, Gadot shared a hopeful message about sharing with fans the "next chapter" of the superhero.

"A few years ago it was announced that I was going to play Wonder Woman. I've been so grateful for the opportunity to play such an incredible, iconic character and more than anything I'm grateful for YOU. The fans. Can't wait to share her next chapter with you," Gadot shared on social media.

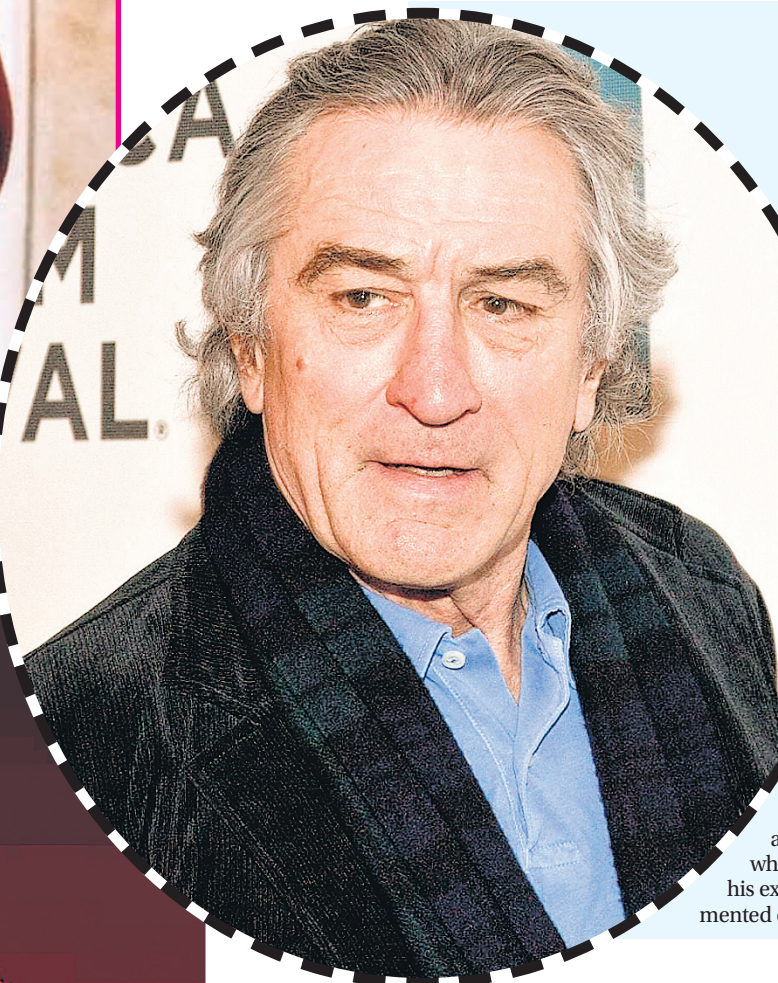
Gunn has been getting a lot of backlash over his decisions as the DC Universe goes into a new direction. "The Suicide Squad" director addressed fans in a series of tweets calling out the "disrespectful outcry."

"Our choices for the DCU are based upon what we believe are best for the



story & best for the DC characters that have been around for nearly 85 years. Perhaps these choices are great, perhaps not, but they are made with sincere hearts & integrity & always with the story in mind," he tweeted.

Gunn continued, "We were aware there would be a period of turbulence when we took this gig, & we knew we would sometimes have to make difficult & not-so-obvious choices, especially in the wake of the fractious nature of what came before us."



WOMAN ARRESTED FOR TRYING TO STEAL CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FROM ROBERT DE NIRO'S HOUSE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Robert De Niro's house was reportedly broken into by a serial female burglar reportedly trying to snatch presents from under his Christmas tree.

On Monday, law enforcement sources said a "known" robber they named as Shanice Aviles also played with his iPad while inside his townhouse. After police reportedly saw her break into the actor's New York City home, the 31-year-old is now under arrest pending charges. She has allegedly been collared after officers from the NYPD's 19th Precinct public safety team started following her at around 2.30 A.M. on Monday, and allegedly saw her bust into De Niro's seven-bedroom home on East 65th Street after she allegedly checked whether the doors of other buildings on the same road were unlocked.

She was reportedly already wanted for a string of other burglaries while she was being trailed, and is said to have previously been arrested 26 times. The 79-year-old 'Heat' actor is said to have awoken to the commotion and came downstairs, but a police official told the Post there was "no interaction" between De Niro and Aviles, and added, "She was stealing Christmas presents."

It's understood officers had no idea it was his home until that point, and it is unclear if Aviles knew she was targeting the star's house. De Niro, who was at home at the time with the 11-year-old daughter he shares with his ex-wife Grace Hightower, 67, from whom he split last year, has not yet commented on the incident.

JAMES CAMERON: 'I EAT PRESSURE FOR BREAKFAST'

New Delhi | Agencies

As the second instalment of epic science fiction film 'Avatar: The Way of Water' is creating a tizzy at the box-office, award-winning director James Cameron has spoken about the pressures a filmmaker has to go through on making a movie at such a grand scale.

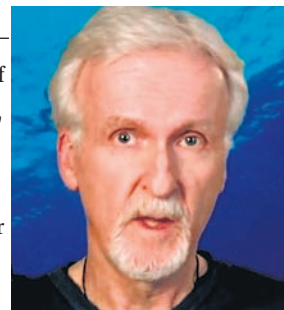
Cameron shared that one of the pressures on many filmmakers is how to stay objective about your own film. "I think there are a lot of pressures on many filmmakers... one of the biggest ones that people rarely talk about is how to stay objective about your own film. If you work on a film for five years at the end of that period can you still look at the movie and see it with fresh eyes," he said.

"I think this is one of the hardest skills that as director one has to develop, right..." The 68-year-old Academy Award-winner agreed that there are pressures.

"There is also the pressure of getting the film done as quickly as possible and this is not a quick film to make clearly. We have had over 3000 vfx shots in this movie and too just to put that on perspective on 'Terminator 2', I had 42 vfx shots. So, that's an enormous pressure."

He shared his mantra of maintaining his calm. "There is budgetary pressure, there is deadline pressure all that things and I joke around that 'I eat pressure for breakfast bring it on'. And you have to fortify yourself with that kind of mantra... But really the truth of it is that if it wasn't joyful and if it didn't feed an artiste creatively every single day, it wouldn't be tolerable and I wouldn't have done it (made it) again," said Cameron, who became the first person to do a solo descent to the bottom of the Mariana Trench, the deepest part of the Earth's ocean, in the Deepsea Challenger submersible.

"So, if it works out and we prevail in its altered market place that we are in right now we get to make them all... giant saga. So, its exciting and something I have done before on that scale... You know that challenges. Part of me is the fun of challenges and part of it with these amazing artiste... And I am talking about the design, computer artiste and incredible cast. I feed on the energy and the creativity of the cast," said the filmmaker, who in 2010 was named as one of the 100 most influential people in the world by Time Magazine.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Laura Haddock



THREE FRANCE PLAYERS RECEIVE VILE RACIST ABUSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA AFTER WORLD CUP DEFEAT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

France players -- Kingsley Coman, Aurelien Tchouameni and Randal Kolo Muani -- have been subjected to appalling racist abuse following their World Cup final defeat against Argentina in Doha.

Les Bleus lost a nail-biting final to Argentina on penalty kicks following a 3-3 draw after extra time.

During the thrilling clash, Kolo Muani missed a chance to win the game in extra time for France, while Tchouameni and Coman both missed penalties in the shootout.

The trio received numerous racist messages on social media after that. Meta, which owns Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, later removed all such comments.

As per reports, Real Madrid's Tchouameni has limited comments on his Instagram posts. Kolo Muani of Eintracht Frankfurt turned them off.

"We don't want racist abuse on Instagram, and we've removed the disgusting comments for breaking our rules. We also want to help protect people from having to see this abuse in the first place, which is why we've developed Hidden Words, a feature

that filters offensive comments and DMs, and Limits, which hides comments and DMs from people who don't follow you, or only followed you recently," Meta said in a statement.

"We're in touch with players and their teams directly, including since yesterday's final, to offer them support and help them turn on these tools."

Bayern Munich has also issued a statement of support for Coman, condemning the racist remarks made about him. "The FC Bayern family is behind you, King. Racism has no place in sport or our society," they said on Twitter.

Argentina fans throw all economic worries to wind after WC win

Armstrong Vaz | Doha

Argentina nosedived into an economic crisis in 2018 and it's still far from fully recovered and for the common man and woman on the streets it is exceedingly complicated to understand.

Rising prices, inflation and the frequently government announced policy changes to curb the crisis are everyday news for the Argentinians, but nothing beats the news of the national team winning the coveted FIFA World Cup trophy for the third time.

All their economic worries were set aside by the emotional and ecstatic fans as they lined the boulevard in Qatar following Sunday's incredible World Cup final between Argentina and France. The smiling and victorious Argentinian team were spilling out of the open-top bus that led them down the parade route as they basked in the glory of champions and had a moment to enjoy their



win. Completing the celebrations, fireworks lit Qatar's cloudless midnight sky to the delight of the tens of thousands of people to celebrate the twin occasions -- final match of the 2022 World Cup tournament and the National day. Thousands of fans were a stadium, with 40,000 having made it to Qatar for the event. Others could not buy the unreasonable and exorbitant FIFA tickets sold at non-FIFA platforms, but all the sorrows and disappointments were

taxes, the parallel market, and a plethora of others depending on the industry sector, they had nothing to do with it in Qatar. It was football and only football which took over during the biggest football tournament. Some of them were not able to get inside the stadium, with 40,000 having made it to Qatar for the event. Others could not buy the unreasonable and exorbitant FIFA tickets sold at non-FIFA platforms, but all the sorrows and disappointments were

thrown in the winds to join the celebrations.

The infectious energy of Argentina's supporters at the World Cup final spilled out from the stadium into a large and boisterous parade down Lusail Boulevard, with the newly crowned champions as the star attraction.

Quite a few took to social media to share Argentine fans' reaction to their win at the World Cup at Lusail Stadium in Qatar wherein Argentina beat France 4-2 on penalties.

Ind vs Bangladesh

Rohit Sharma, Navdeep Saini ruled out of second Test

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma and pacer Navdeep Saini have been ruled out of the second Test against Bangladesh following their respective injuries.

Rohit is under the care of the BCCI Medical Team following his left thumb injury, which he sustained during the 2nd ODI against Bangladesh in Dhaka.

"The Medical Team is of the opinion that the injury needs some more time to heal completely before the Indian captain can bat and field with full intensity. He will continue his rehab and will not be available for the second and final Test against Bangladesh. Navdeep Saini is also ruled out of the second Test



owing to an abdominal muscle strain. The fast bowler will now report to the NCA for further management of his injury," the BCCI said in statement on Tuesday. India's updated squad for 2nd Test against Bangladesh: KL Rahul (C), Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar



Pujara (VC), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (WK), KS Bharat (WK), Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Shardul Thakur, Mohd. Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Saurabh Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat

BWF World Rankings

HS Prannoy back into the top 10

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Starting the year at 32 in the Badminton World Federation (BWF) rankings, India's HS Prannoy rode a consistent performance to end the season ranked 9th in the world.

In the latest BWF World Rankings released on Tuesday, Prannoy climbed two spots to ninth in the world, thanks to his fighting display in the BWF World Tour Finals in which he defeated World No.1, Viktor Axelsen. Though he did not make it to the knockout rounds, he figured in three hard-fought matches.

The rise in the 30-year-old Prannoy's rankings in 2022 is a testament to his consistent performance throughout the year which included reaching six quarterfinals and two semifinals, as well as the quarterfinal of the 2022 BWF World Championships. This enabled him to seal a maiden entry into the BWF



World Tour Finals. He also played a key role in India's historic maiden triumph in the Thomas Cup.

On Tuesday, Prannoy termed it a "tough journey" to be back in the top

10 after a gap of four years. Prannoy achieved his Highest ranking of World No. 8 in June 2018.

The Thiruvananthapuram-born shuttler thanked his support staff,

the Sports Authority of India (SAI), the Sports Ministry and GoSports for their support which made possible his return to the top 10 after a gap of four years.

"It was a good year for me. I started from being 32-33 in World Rankings to being 9th in the World today -- it's been a very tough journey for me to be back in the top 10 after four years. Extremely happy to be back among the top 10 in the World and the support has been incredible in the last four years," Prannoy said on the sidelines of the GoSports Athletes Conclave at a city hotel on Tuesday. While analysing his performance in 2022, Prannoy also hoped that 2023 would be even better. "The support from SAI, the ministry, and GoSports all has been incredible. It has been a consistent year for me and hopefully 2023 will be even better," he said on Tuesday.

Prannoy will be starting the new season at home in January in the Indian Open in New Delhi.

Tata Open Maharashtra

U.S. Open winners Ram-Salisbury; Bopanna, 3 other Indians in doubles fray

Pune | Agencies

The reigning U.S. Open champions Rajeev Ram and Joe Salisbury will headline the star-studded doubles field at the fifth edition of Tata Open Maharashtra along with four Indians, including the defending champions Rohan Bopanna and Ramkumar Ramanathan.

Ram-Salisbury will be the favourites for the title in South Asia's only ATP 250 event that will take place at the Balewadi Stadium in Pune from December 31 to January 7.

The pair of World No. 3 Ram and Salisbury, the World No. 4, has entered Tata Open Maharashtra with a combined team ranking of seven. The three-time Grand Slam champion American-British duo enjoyed an incredibly successful 2022 season, winning the U.S. Open title for the second time in a row and also won two ATP Masters 1000 titles before capping off the year by clinching the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin, the organisers informed in a release on Tuesday.



The other foreign pairs to receive direct entries are American duo Nathaniel Lammons and Jackson Withrow, who won their first ATP Tour doubles title together at the 2022 Southern California Open in San Diego, and the French pair of Sadio Doumbia and Fabien Reboul. The former World No. 24 Sander Gille and former World No.

28 Joran Vliegen also made the cut with a combined ranking of 121. Bopanna and Ramkumar, who clinched the title last year, will play along with different partners this time. The two-time champion Bopanna, who is also the top-ranked Indian doubles player in the world at 19, will team up with Dutchman Botic van de Zandschulp. Ramkumar, on the other hand, will join forces with Mexico's Miguel Angel Reyes-Varela. Saketh Myneni and Yuki Bhambhani are the other two Indians to feature in the doubles main draw. Playing together, Myneni and Bhambhani have won six titles on the ATP Challenger Tour in 2022. The 16-team draw will have two wild card entries, which are yet to be announced. The former U.S Open champion Marin Cilic and the last edition's runner-up Emil Ruusuvuori will lead a strong field in the singles main draw, which also includes 17 Top-100 players. The qualifying event will begin on December 31 while the main draw will be played from January 2-7.

World Test Championship

Pakistan's maiden whitewash 3-0 at home, slip in points table

Karachi | Agencies

Pakistan's chances of reaching the final of the next year's ICC World Test Championship (WTC) took a big hit on Tuesday following their crushing 3-0 series loss against England as they slipped to No.7 in the points table.

On Day 4, Ben Duckett and Ben Stokes made short work of the run chase on Tuesday morning to lead England to a comfortable eight-wicket win in the third and final Test at the National Stadium. Needing only 55 runs, the duo knocked off the required runs in less than 40 minutes to help the visitors complete a historic 3-0 whitewash over Pakistan.

This was the first time Pakistan were whitewashed 3-0 at home and the Babar Azam-led side need a host of results to go their way to have any chance of reaching the WTC final.

With the dominating win, England retained their 5th position while Pakistan slipped to the seventh spot. If Pakistan can win their final two Test matches this period -- they host



New Zealand in a quick-fire series that commences later this month -- they can finish with a win percentage as high as 47.62 per cent. That could be enough for Pakistan to finish in front of seven other sides and claim second place in the final standings, but the team will need lots of help from a large number of sides if they are to sneak in.

Australian Open 2023

Venus Williams given wild card into main draw

Melbourne | Agencies

American legend and seven-time major champion Venus Williams has been awarded a wild card into the women's singles main draw of the 2023 Australian Open, the year's first Grand Slam.

Venus, the former World No. 1, is a two-time finalist and the 42-year-old will be making her 22nd appearance in the tournament that begins on January 16 at Melbourne Park here. Venus made her first appearance here in 1998.

"I am very excited to be returning to Melbourne to compete at the Australian



Open in January," said Williams, who owns a 54-21 career win-loss record at the Australian Open where she made her debut 25-year ago. In addition to her appearances in the finals of 2003 and 2017, former world No.1 Williams has reached at least the quarterfinal stage on nine occasions.

IPL Player Auction

'KKR would go for an Indian wicketkeeper, CSK will look at Sam Curran'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Indian cricketer Robin Uthappa shared his thoughts on the list of players Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings would look at, during the IPL Player Auction on December 23.

Uthappa said KKR needs to find a backup for Andre Russell.

"KKR would be looking for three players in this auction -- one would be an Indian backup wicketkeeper for Gurbaz. In case, they want flexibility in playing both Tim Southee and Lockie Ferguson, Gurbaz is the one who would have to sit out as they are not going to drop Sunil Narine and Andre



Russell," said Uthappa, who is part of JioCinema's IPL Player Auction Expert Panel.

"Second player is a backup to Andre

Russell. IPL is going back to its original format. So, it is not going to be just one or two venues. There will be a lot of travel. KKR is one such team that travels the most. Kolkata is really far away and they travel at least 2-3 thousand kms more than all other teams. So, keeping those things in mind, you will have to have a backup just in case, Russell pulls up or he has not recovered due to back-to-back matches.

"Third would be an Indian fast bowler who would be a backup to Shardul Thakur and Umesh Yadav. They have a couple of youngsters in their group, but they would like to get somebody like Jaydev Unadkat," he said.

AFC President praises excellent show of Asian teams at FIFA World Cup

Doha | Agencies

The first FIFA World Cup held in the Middle East and the Arab world and the second time in the Asian continent turned out to be a football showcase event in which Asian dominated on and off the field. With three teams from the continent making it to the knockout stage, which was a record in itself along with hordes of Asian fans making it to Qatar to watch the action on the field, the biggest football tournament was well and truly an Asian affair.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) President Shaikh Salman bin

Ebrahim Al Khalifa praised the AFC member nations for the improvement in the game in their respective countries.

The AFC President also took a moment to reiterate the historic achievements of the AFC's representatives at the global showcase, which will be remembered for the manner in which Asian teams produced some of the most remarkable comebacks in recent times against the game's traditional powerhouses. "For the first time in the history of world football, Asia had three teams in the knockout stage and all credit must go to the AFC's Member Associations for raising the standard of Asian football.



TABU'S PART IN UPCOMING FILM WAS ORIGINALLY WRITTEN FOR MALE ACTOR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Tabu, who is gearing up for her upcoming black comedy film 'Kuttey', revealed that her role in the film was written for a male character but director Aasmaan Bhardwaj and his composer-filmmaker father Vishal changed it for her.

'Kuttey' is the directorial debut of Aasmaan. Talking to the media at the trailer launch event of the film in Mumbai on Tuesday, the actress, who has worked with Vishal in films such as 'Maqbool' and 'Haider', said, "This character was written for a male, but Aasmaan and Vishal ji changed it for me. Aasmaan has grown up in front of me." She also shared that working in the film brought in a sense of pride for her as she has seen Aasmaan growing up in front of her eyes.

"Aasmaan mere saamne hi bada hua hai, mere saamne sets pe lakki ka camera leke ghoomta tha (he has grown up in front of me, I remember seeing him walking around on the sets with a wooden camera) and he was so consumed by the world of films. To see him write something like 'Kuttey' brought in a sense of pride for me as Vishal ji, Rekha ji and Aasmaan are a family for me".

Ridhi Dogra left job in advertising agency to become an actor

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ridhi Dogra, who has joined the cast of the second season of the web series 'Pitchers', said she refused to work on other's terms and conditions and quit her job in an advertising agency to become an actress. She recalled: "I remember my boss dictating that this is not right, and this is wrong even after me working so hard. The first thought which crossed my mind was that who is he to judge what's right or wrong? Creativity is subjective. That was the day I decided to leave because I was not meant to be there. I am an actor and that's my start up," she said.

The actress is known for her roles in 'The Married Woman', and others. She added on leaving her comfort zone and exploring a more challenging profession of acting.

"I decided to be an actor and leave the comfort zone of a comfortable job. I was working in a TV channel, prior to that I was in an advertising agency. I have worked behind the camera, handled events and have been a part of the marketing and PR team as well," she added.

'Pitchers 1' is a story of four entrepreneurs, who left their jobs to establish their own ventures and for that they faced all the odds in their lives. Ridhi talked about the show, and its USP. "I feel what has worked phenomenally well for the show is the fact that it connects to the sentiments, heart and mind of start-up enthusiasts, freshers who are venturing into the corporate world or building up businesses. It speaks directly to the youth of today who are transitioning from their 20's to adulthood and have big dreams and aspirations to accomplish in future."

"Even if we are not in that phase, each one of us has definitely encountered that at some point in life and that's what 'Pitchers' season 2 wants to convey to the audience," she concluded.



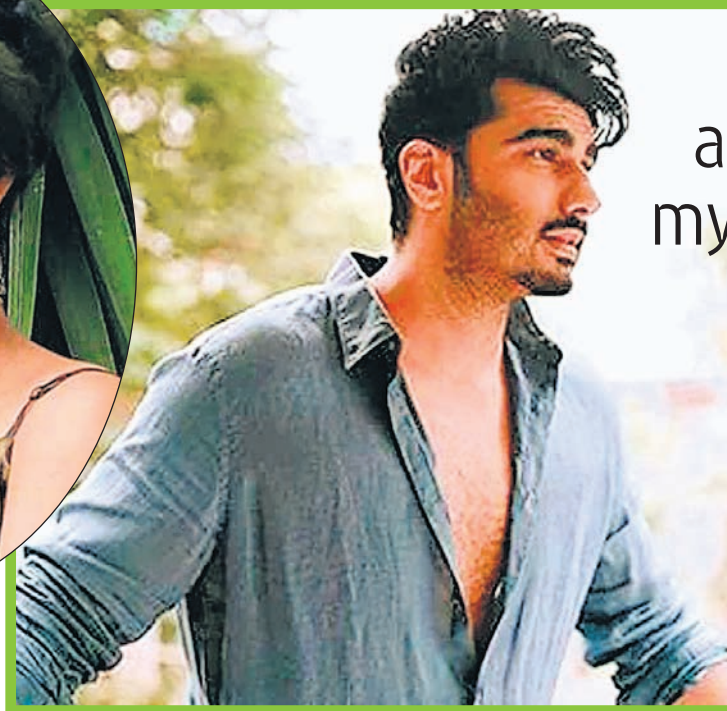
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Social media influencer Moose Jattana, who will enter the dating-based reality show 'Splitsvilla X4' as a wild card contestant, is looking forward towards making good connections on the show and opened up about the qualities she is looking for in her dating partner.

She shared: "I'm looking to find someone I can trust, and who is interested in me genuinely. I don't need romance, sex, commitment, that's all quite secondary. I would only be dating someone with whom the connection is real."

MOOSE JATTANA OPENS UP ON WHAT QUALITIES SHE WANTS IN HER DATING PARTNER

I look for honesty, empathy, and understanding. Humour too. This is my weakness. I find funny guys and they ruin my life but still this is one trait that I like most in guys whom I want to date. On 'Bigg Boss OTT', she made a lot of headlines for her friendship with Nishant Bhatt. In her interview, she spoke about relationships and why she will not fit in the concept of making connections on the show: "I'll probably clash with people in terms of how I feel about love. I'm not possessive, I don't crave commitment." On talking about her bond with the hosts including Sunny Leone and Arjun Bijlani, she added: "I loved how warm Arjun was, and he was always smiling on set. It was a good environment to work with both Sunny and Arjun. Sunny has been around so long, she really knows her job well."



'Having Gulzar's name attached to my film was on my bucket list': Arjun Kapoor

Team Absolute | Mumbai

It's a dream come true for actor Arjun Kapoor as legendary lyricist Gulzar has penned the lyrics for songs in his upcoming film 'Kuttey'. The actor said it was in his bucket list to have his name attached to his movie.

In the trailer launch of 'Kuttey', Arjun said: "'Kuttey' is a big tick mark for me because I got to work with so many unbelievable talents. It was in my bucket list to have

Gulzar sahab's name attached to my film. 'Kuttey' is the fruition of ten years of my journey."

'Kuttey' is touted to be a dark comedy that also has other outstanding actors like Konkona Sen Sharma, Kumud Mishra and Radhika Madan in it.

The film has been directed by debutant Aasmaan Bhardwaj, who is ace filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj's son. Arjun is seen playing the role of a cop in the film.



SUNNY'S BEHAVIOR WAS INAPPROPRIATE AND RUDE: SAKSHI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Sakshi spills the beans on her recent fight in 'Splitsvilla with Sunny

'Splitsvilla X4' contestant and social media star Sakshi Dwivedi opened up about her recent fight with show's host Sunny Leone in which the latter got furious and asked Sakshi to take her place.

Sunny held Sakshi's hand and dragged the contestant forcing her to take her place.

Sakshi got candid about the incident and said: "We all were in the dumping zone and there was a fight between two contestants. Everybody was speaking up and trying to prove their point. I was one of those contestants who was trying to put my point across and I was just saying something, and, in the flow, I didn't hear that she said something. Though my point was not complete, I interrupted her and said sorry about it. Unfortunately, Sunny got really furious and she just crossed the line."

She added: "Sunny is beautiful, but just from outside. If I get a chance to host a show, I will never disrespect other people by getting physical and by using foul language. Even in the Bigg Boss house, getting physical is not allowed. I don't know how 'Splitsvilla' is allowing this."

Sakshi continued to say that Sunny's behaviour was completely inappropriate and rude.

"It was very embarrassing for me. Maybe I should have not interrupted her but what she did was beyond acceptable. She dragged me and told me to stand at her place and she came to my place and stood in the dumping zone. Her behaviour was very rude and it wasn't a language that anyone would want to hear." "People are reacting very strongly and they are slamming Sunny. They are supporting me which is so good. There are still people who respect other people and nobody gives a right to a host to disrespect somebody like this and drag them. This is just like taking undue advantage of your position," she concluded.

It takes people some time to recognise me in the Sikh look: Vijayendra Kumeria

Team Absolute | Mumbai

TV actor Vijayendra Kumeria has to undergo a complete transformation to get into the look of a Sikh character in the show 'Teri Meri Doriyaan' and he said it was difficult for people to recognise him. Vijayendra said: "For the first time I am playing a Sikh character. I went through a complete transformation to attain the look of the character. I am playing Angad Singh Brar who is the eldest son of the family and a sharp businessman. Since a very young age, he has developed a tendency to weigh things with money and time and according to him, these two things are the most important things in the outer world and the language of money is the language that everyone understands."

"When it comes to his family he loves them the most and can do anything to keep them happy. It's the family space where his mind takes a back seat and his heart takes over. Being a perfectionist he has not found a perfect match for himself yet," he added.

"It is a very different show for me and the everyday experiences off-screen are interesting too. It takes people some time to recognize me in the Sikh look and their reactions are something I love to see. I met a few friends in film city, people who have known me for years even they could not recognize me till they heard my voice," said Vijayendra.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Divya Agarwal