

# absolute india



VOL. 8, ISSUE 61, BHOPAL | WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2023 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI

**NATION** > 02

ED seizes BMW in PMLA case against ex-IFS officer, family ...



**HOLLYWOOD** > 06

Margot Robbie improvised a kiss that wasn't in the script with Pitt ...



**SPORTS** > 07

Hugo Lloris hangs his boots ...

'MULTIPLE MISTAKES, HIGHLY AVOIDABLE SITUATION': DGCA ISSUES SHOW CAUSE TO GO FIRST

## AVIATION IN TROUBLE

Multiple mistakes such as lack of proper communication, co-ordination, reconciliation, and confirmation resulted in a highly avoidable situation, aviation regulator DGCA noted in the incident of a Go First flight leaving behind 55 passengers in the passenger coach at Bengaluru airport.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The DGCA on Tuesday issued showcause notice to account manager or Chief Operation Officer of Go First airline as to why enforcement action should not be taken against them for dereliction of their regulatory obligations. The incident of Go First flight G8-116 on sector Bengaluru-Delhi leaving behind 55 passengers in the passenger coach at the Bengaluru airport on Monday came to the notice of the DGCA, and it sought an incident report on the same day. A senior DGCA official said that as per regulations, the airline concerned is responsible to ensure adequate

arrangement for ground handling, preparation of load and trim sheet, flight dispatch and passenger or cargo handling and also ensure that all the ground handling staff engaged in passenger handling undergo periodic soft skill training for sensitisation, courtesy, behaviour and procedures for assisting the passengers. However, the regulator found that airline failed to comply with the relevant regulations in the case. While issuing showcause notice, the aviation regulator has given two weeks time to reply. "To follow the principles of natural justice, they have been given two weeks time to submit their reply to DGCA and based on that further action will be taken," said the DGCA.

### Russian flight lands in Goa safely after bomb hoax

Panaji: Moscow-Goa Russian flight Azur Air ZF2401, which received a bomb threat, landed in Goa on Tuesday at around 3 p.m. with passengers onboard, saying they were lucky to be safe. Goa-bound flight from Moscow made an emergency landing in Jamnagar airport on Monday night at 9.30 p.m. following the bomb threat. It was diverted to Jamnagar after an email warning of a bomb in the flight was received. After landing at Dabolim airport in Goa, the Russian tourists said that they are lucky to be safe. "Authorities thoroughly checked all our luggage and flight, but nothing suspicious was found. We are lucky as we are safe," one of the passengers said.



NSG and BDDS teams at Jamnagar had thoroughly checked the plane besides the luggage and hand baggage of the travellers but no suspicious object was found. Passengers also said that they were provided all the facilities at Jamnagar after they were de-boarded there. "We spent around 9 hours outside the flight at the airport (Jamnagar). But we are happy now that we have reached here," another passenger said.

### GO FIRST BEGINS PROBE, OFFERS FREE TICKET

New Delhi: Go First on Tuesday said that it has initiated an inquiry into the incident where 55 passengers on its Bengaluru-Delhi flight were left on a passenger coach at Bengaluru airport on Monday even as aviation regulator DGCA held that the airline failed to comply with the relevant rules. Moreover, the airline decided to offer all affected passengers one free ticket for travel on any domestic sector. "In line with our philosophy of customer centricity, the airline has decided to offer all affected passengers one free ticket for travel on any domestic sector in the next 12 months," said the airline in a statement.

## Home Ministry monitoring situation in Joshimath

THE AUTHORITIES ON TUESDAY STARTED THE DEMOLITION PROCESS OF TWO HOTELS -- MALARI INN AND MOUNT VIEW -- WHICH HAVE LEANED TOWARDS EACH OTHER DUE TO THE SINKING IN UTTARAKHAND'S JOSHIMATH.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As the crisis in Uttarakhand's Joshimath continues, the Union Home Ministry is keeping close tabs on the situation every moment, sources said on Tuesday. Officials of the Border Management Department and the NDMA under the Ministry of Home Affairs have also reached Joshimath and will review the situation and submit their report to the Central government. The survey work of the buildings is also being done continuously. According to information,



a team of the NDRF and four teams of SDRF have reached Joshimath. People are also being shifted. An officer said that if needed, some areas will also be sealed.

### U'KHAND GOVERNOR SEEKS REPORT

Dehradun: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Tuesday met Governor Gurmeet Singh to apprise him of the situation in Joshimath, which is facing land subsidence. During the meeting, the Governor sought a complete report on Joshimath from Dhami. Dhami gave detailed information about the relief and rescue operations being taken up in the subsidence-affected area in Joshimath and the steps taken for the safety of the people. The governor also inquired about the steps taken for the safety and rehabilitation of the affected people and about the progress in the immediate and long-term action plan.

### Tunnel work not responsible for land sinking: NTPC

New Delhi: With Joshimath having been declared a subsidence-hit zone amid sinking of land and threat of the entire town sinking under its own weight, state-owned NTPC has clarified that the tunnel for its Tapovan Vishnugad hydel project has nothing to do with the situation prevailing there. "The tunnel of Tapovan Vishnugad hydropower project is also being held responsible for the landslide in Joshimath. It is clarified that the tunnel constructed by NTPC is not passing under Joshimath town," a statement issued by the NTPC said. The statement came after local residents in Joshimath held protests against the tunnel work for the project, blaming it as one of the reasons behind the gradual sinking of the town. The NTPC said that the tunnel has been constructed with the help of a tunnel boring machine and currently no blasting work is being undertaken by the company at the project, which is being constructed on Dhaultiganga river in the hill state.

## 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Pehelwan', Rahul's message for Haryana

Karnal | Agencies

As the Bharat Jodo Yatra completed its journey of 8 days in Haryana, Rahul Gandhi thanked the people for their enormous support and coined a new slogan -- Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Pehelwan. Haryana has a huge number of wrestlers who have won medals for the country. "I especially thank the lakhs who attended our public meeting in Panipat, and the large numbers of women and youth who participated in the Yatra, often braving the cold, fog, and even smog. We have seen the diversity of Haryana by walking through the green fields of Nuh and Karnal, vibrant industrial centres of Faridabad and Ambala, and historic sites of Kurukshetra and Panipat," he wrote.



He said that he was honoured to join the residents of Ghasera in Nuh district to celebrate Mewat Diwas. Rahul Gandhi said that the people of Haryana are blessed with everything they need for a good life but alleged their potential is being wasted as the farmers of Haryana led the historic movement against the three black farm laws, and many

## PRACHANDA WINS VOTE OF TRUST WITH OVERWHELMING SUPPORT

Kathmandu: Nepal's new Prime Minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal aka Prachanda, won the vote of trust on Tuesday, receiving 268 votes in the 275-member Parliament. This is the first time in the history of Nepal's Parliament that a Prime Minister received such overwhelming support from different political parties. At present, there are 12 parties in the House, out of which 10 have supported Prachanda's bid. Earlier, while claiming the post of Prime Minister, Prachanda was supported by only 168 members. More political parties, including Nepali Congress, which is the largest party in the House, have now extended support to Prachanda. Even Nepali Congress, the single-largest party in the Parliament which was declared to sit in the opposition bench, also supported Prachanda.

## 'Mere demand for return of money can't be held as abetment to suicide'

Atul Krishan | New Delhi

Delhi court discharged two persons -- a father and his son -- of charges of abetment to suicide, noting that mere demand for return of money can't be said to be an act of instigating or abetting or aiding in the commission of suicide by the deceased. The accused would, however, face the prosecution for the offence punishable under Section 506 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The court was at the stage of framing charges in connection with the suicide of Vijender Singh, who took a loan of Rs 1.5 lakh and helped his friend in getting a loan of Rs 15 lakh from the accused, Dal Chand. It was alleged that Chand and his son Dinesh alias Titto Yadav had tortured Vijender, which led to him committing suicide. The Additional Sessions Judge at the Tis Hazari Courts, Devender Kumar Sharma, said that the suicide note itself made it clear that there were no allegations of abetment to suicide. "In the present case, there was demand for returning the loan amount and that has been attributed to be the



sole reason for committing suicide by the deceased in his suicide note. However, in no manner, the mere demand for return of the amount can be said to be an act of instigating or abetting or aiding in the commission of suicide by the deceased. Even if it was coupled with the allegation that in case of non-payment of the loan amount, the accused would get the deceased sent to prison, it can not be said to be a direct or indirect act compelling the deceased to commit suicide," the court noted. The court has now discharged the accused duo of abetment to suicide charges, but they will face prosecution under Section 506 of the IPC.

## DELHI-NCR TURNS INTO 'GAS CHAMBER', GURUGRAM'S AQI AT 529

New Delhi: The Air Quality Index in Delhi and its surrounding areas remained in "severe" category on Tuesday with PM 2.5 levels at 421 in the capital and PM 2.5 at 529 in Gurugram, according to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR). The AQI at Mathura road, Pusa, Delhi University, Lodhi Road, IIT Delhi and Ayanagar was recorded at 488, 425, 410, 410, 402 and 416, all in the "severe category", on Tuesday. The AQI in Noida reached 458 under the "severe" category. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe". According to Central Pollution Control Board data, the national capital was the most polluted city in India in 2022 with PM 2.5 levels more than double the safe limit and the third highest average PM10 concentration. PM2.5 is tiny particulate matter that can enter the lungs and bloodstream and it is less than 2.5 microns in diameter.

As per the age band, the risk seemed to be cumulative, with each subsequent course adding an additional 11 per cent, 15 per cent, and 14 per cent heightened risk, said the study. The highest risk of all was observed among those prescribed 5 or more courses of antibiotics -- 69 per cent heightened risk for 10-40 year-olds, a doubling in risk for 40-60 year-olds, and a 95 per cent heightened risk for those over the 60s. Among 10-40 year-olds IBD risk was 40 per cent higher 1-2 years after taking antibiotics compared with 13 per cent 4-5 years later. The equivalent figures for 40-60 year-olds were 66 per cent vs 21 per cent and for those over the 60s were 63 per cent vs 22 per cent.

## Frequent use of antibiotics may increase risk of inflammatory bowel disease

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Frequent use of antibiotics may increase the risk of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) -- Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis -- in people over the age of 40, a new study has shown. According to the study published in the journal Gut, the risk appears to be cumulative and greatest 1-2 years after use, particularly for antibiotics used to treat gut infections. In the study, more than 6.1 million people were included, and just over half of them were female. In total, 5.5 million (91 per cent) were prescribed at least one course of antibiotics between 2000 and 2018. During this period, some 36,017 new cases of ulcerative colitis and 16,881 new cases of Crohn's disease were diagnosed, according to the study. Moreover, compared with no antibiotic use, the use of these



drugs was associated with a higher risk of developing IBD, regardless of age, but older age was associated with the highest risk. In terms of antibiotic type, nitroimidazoles and fluoroquinolones, which are commonly used to treat gut infections, were associated with the highest risk of IBD, the study mentioned. These are referred to as broad-spectrum antibiotics because they target all microbes, not just those that cause disease. Nitrofurantoin was the only antibiotic that was not linked to an increased risk of IBD at any age, the study added.

## Bombay HC pulls up Maha Govt for uncertainty over Bike - Taxi policy

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court today rapped the Maharashtra government for its uncertainty on framing a policy permitting bike taxis in the state, and said it has to clarify its stand one way or the other. The bench was hearing a petition filed by Roppen Transportation Services Private Limited, operator of Rapido bike taxi services in Pune and Mumbai, against a communication issued to it by the state government on December 29, 2022, refusing to allow them a bike taxi aggregator licence. Appearing for the government, Advocate General Birendra Saraf on Tuesday told the court that as on date, bike taxis are not allowed to



ply, as the government has not issued any policy or guidelines for the same. The court, however, said that it found it difficult to accept the government's stand that such bike taxis cannot ply till a policy is framed but at the same time the government is not even clarifying when it would come up with its policy. "How can you (government) refuse for want of policy or guidelines? You may refuse it on any other ground but this. You cannot keep it hanging like this on fire. You have to take a decision even if it is on a temporary basis. We find it difficult to accept the government's stand," Justice Patel said. The court said while it understands that the government has certain constraints, but the issue cannot be kept in limbo.





# APARTMENTALISATION OF RESIDENTIAL UNIT IN PHASE I OF CHANDIGARH PROHIBITED: SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday observed that it is necessary that a proper balance is struck between sustainable development and environmental protection, as it ruled that fragmentation, division, bifurcation, and apartmentalisation of a residential unit in Phase I of Chandigarh is prohibited.

It said it appeals to the legislature, the executive, and the policy makers at the Centre as well as at the state levels to make necessary provisions for carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment studies before permitting urban development.

A bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and B.V. Nagarathna said: "We hold that in view of Rule 14 of the 1960 Rules, Rule 16 of the 2007 Rules, and the repeal of the 2001 Rules, fragmentation/division/ bifurcation/apartmentalisation of a residential unit in Phase I of Chandigarh is prohibited."



"Such a haphazard growth may adversely affect the heritage status of Phase I of Chandigarh which is sought to be inscribed as UNESCO's heritage city. It is further to be noted that though the Chandigarh Administration is permitting one dwelling unit to be converted into three apartments, its adverse effect on traffic has not been addressed," he said. The bench noted that with the increase in number of dwelling units, a corresponding increase in the vehicles is bound to be there. However, without considering the said aspect, one dwelling unit is permitted to be

converted into three apartments, it added. The bench directed the Chandigarh Heritage Conservation Committee to consider the issue of redensification in Phase I of the city. "After the Heritage Committee considers the issues, the Chandigarh Administration would consider amending the CMPA2031 (Chandigarh Master Plan) and the 2017 Rules insofar as they are applicable to Phase-I in accordance with the recommendations of the Heritage Committee," said the bench. It further added that such amend-

ments shall be placed before the Central government, which shall take a decision with regard to approval of such amendments keeping in view the requirement of maintaining the heritage status of Le Corbusier zone.

"Till a final decision as aforesaid is taken by the Central Government: the Chandigarh Administration shall not sanction any plan of a building which ex-facie appears to be a modus operandi to convert a single dwelling unit into three different apartments occupied by three strangers," said the bench. The top court said the number of floors in Phase I shall be restricted to three with a uniform maximum height as deemed appropriate by the Heritage Committee keeping in view the requirement to maintain its heritage status. Justice Gavai said: "We observe that it is high time that the legislature, the executive and the policy makers at the Centre as well as at the state levels take note of the damage to the environment on account of haphazard developments and take a call to take necessary measures to ensure that the development does not damage the environment".

The top court's judgment came on a plea by Resident Welfare Association and others against Union Territory of Chandigarh and others.

# Bengaluru school bomb scare: Institution says accused not its student

The National Academy for Learning (NAFL) School in Bengaluru on Tuesday clarified that the student who got arrested for making a bomb threat last week is not from the school.

Bengaluru | Agencies

NAFL Principal Indira Jayakrishnan said: "We wish to inform you that a student from another school in the city is under police investigation for sending our school, National Academy For Learning, Bengaluru, a bomb threat by email. He is not a student of NAFL."

Karnataka Police have cracked the case of bomb threat to the NAFL, taking a minor boy studying in a private school into custody and handed him over to the state Juvenile Justice Board.

According to police, the police detected the boy through his IP address and when questioned, the boy maintained that he did it for having some fun. He had told police that he got the official email id of the school from the internet.

Tension prevailed in the premises of the NAFL School, run by the National Public School (NPS) group, in Basaveshwara Nagar locality of Bengaluru on last Friday following the threat, sent with email.

The mail claimed that four gelatin sticks have been kept in the premises, which are going to explode at the time of lunch.

The school staff had immediately informed



the local police. About 1,000 school children were sent out of the classrooms and taken to safe places. The development had also triggered panic among parents and local residents.

# ED seizes BMW in PMLA case against ex-IFS officer, family

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday said that it has carried out a search in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering case involving Abhay Kant Pathak, a 1987 batch ex-IFS officer of the Odisha cadre.

He was working as Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Plan, Programme and Afforestation, government of Odisha during the relevant period.

The ED has seized a BMW 620D GT, a luxury car worth Rs 74.22 lakh in the matter.

"During investigation being conducted under PMLA it was revealed that Pathak had surreptitiously attempted to sell the said



BMW car to a resident of Belagavi in Karnataka who was a dealer in old cars, working in Mumbai," the ED said.

The ED initiated the PMLA investigation on the basis of a FIR registered by the Vigilance Cell PS, Cuttack in Odisha for disproportionate assets (DA) amounting to Rs

9,35,42,594 of Pathak and his family members.

There were seven other FIRs and chargesheets registered by the Odisha police involving Pathak and his son Akash Kumar Pathak where they had been charged with duping gullible people in the name of providing jobs in Tata Motors.

# 10-YR RI TO THREE WHO HELPED DAWOOD SET UP GUTKA FACTORY IN PAK

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A Special MCOCA Court in Mumbai has awarded ten years rigorous imprisonment to three accused in a case related to the nexus between the underworld and gutka manufacturers. Don Dawood Ibrahim wanted to establish a gutka factory in Pakistan and they helped him in the matter.

The court while awarding jail terms to Jamiruddin Ansari, Mohd Farooq Mansuri and J. M Joshi also imposed a fine of Rs 15 lakh on each of them.

The CBI had registered the case on February 9, 2005 on the request of the Maharashtra government and took over the investigation of the case registered at the Sir JJ Marg police station, Mumbai.

It was alleged that during February-May in 2002, Ansari and Ibrahim had threatened to kill a businessman and his associate and forced them to purchase five gutka pouch packaging machines worth Rs 2.64 lakh from Rajesh Panchariya



and sent them to Anees Ibrahim in Karachi, Pakistan through their associate Farooq Ahmed Mansoori in Dubai.

The case was transferred to the CID, Mumbai Police. After investigation, the Mumbai Police filed a chargesheet on January 24, 2005 against four accused.

The CBI conducted a thorough investigation. It was learnt that two more accused J. M. Joshi and R. N.

Dhariwal were in nexus with Dawood Ibrahim. Dhariwal used his links with Dawood to settle a long-standing financial dispute with Joshi. As per the settlement Joshi was to receive Rs 20 crore from Dhariwal and in lieu Joshi was to provide all assistance (financial/technical/ operational) to Dawood in running an organized crime syndicate for establishing a gutka factory in Hyderabad, Sind Province, Pakistan. The accused had

also kidnapped an employee of Joshi in India and took him to Hyderabad, Sind Province and forcibly made him work for three years in the gutka factory (established/ financed/operationalized) in Pakistan by Joshi for Dawood.

Dhariwal was abetting the activities of the organized crime syndicate of Dawood by supplying gutka to a Dubai based company owned by Abdul Hamid Antulay (brother-in-law of Dawood) and Saleem Mohd Ghaus Sheikh. During the period from 1996 to 2001, Dhariwal supplied gutka worth of Rs 46.1 crore to his company, thereby providing gains to the organized crime syndicate of Dawood.

After investigation, the CBI filed a chargesheet in 2016 against nine accused -- Zamiruddin Ansari, Rajesh Panchariya, Anees Ibrahim Kaskar (absconder), Farooq Mansuri, J. M Joshi, R. M. Dhariwal, Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, Abdul Hamid Antulay (absconder) and Salim Mohd. Ghaus Shaikh (absconder).

# DMK's 'Get Out Ravi' campaign against TN Guv

Chennai | Agencies

The ruling DMK has commenced a campaign 'Get Out Ravi' with the party cadres erecting huge banners in several parts of Chennai asking the Governor to leave the state.

The Governor and the ruling DMK coalition have been on a confrontation path for the past several months but gained momentum after the recent statement of the Governor that Tamil Nadu can be called 'Thamizhagam'.

The Governor had in a function said that the name 'Thamizhagam' would be more inclusive than Tamil Nadu. This led to the DMK and its allies coming out strongly against the Governor with the DMK allies, including VCK, Congress, CPI(M),



CPI and the Indian Union Muslim League members staging a protest in the Assembly on Monday.

The protest reached its peak after the Governor skipped certain portions from the written speech which included references to Dravidian ide-

ologue and founder of Dravida Kazhagam, Thanthai Periyar, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, former Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu K. Kamaraj and C.N. Annadurai.

This led to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister moving a resolution against the Governor's speech and to include all the portions of the written text.

The Governor in another development did not use the state government emblem in his invitation to political party leaders and other prominent persons for Pongal invitation. The Governor has in the letter also mentioned himself as 'Governor-Thamizhagam'.

Sources in the DMK told IANS that the social media handles of the party have already commenced campaigning extensively on 'Get Out Ravi'.

# CASH VAN GUARD SHOT DEAD, MONEY LOOTED IN DELHI

New Delhi: A cash van guard was shot dead and the money looted by an armed assailant near Jagatpur flyover in North Delhi on Tuesday evening, police said.

According to a senior police official, a police control room (PCR) call was received at around 5 p.m. regarding a firing incident and loot of a cash van, following which a police team rushed to the spot.

"At around 4.50 p.m., one cash van had arrived at ICICI ATM near Jagatpur flyover for depositing cash. One person came from behind and fired at the cash van guard and fled away taking the money," the official said.

"The guard was declared brought dead at the hospital. Police teams are on the spot," said the official. More details are awaited

# Minor arrested in TN for raping, impregnating 14-year-old girl

Chennai | Agencies

A 16-year-old school dropout in Tamil Nadu's Cuddalore was arrested by woman police station officials for repeatedly raping and impregnating a 14-year-old girl from the same locality, police said.

The 16-year-old boy was charged under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Police said that the boy and girl had dropped out of school and were living in the same area.

After the girl complained of stomach pain, her mother took girl to a government hospital and after conducting a few tests, she was found to be three months pregnant. When the doctors questioned her, she admitted to having a



relationship with the boy who had repeatedly entered into a physical relationship with her.

The doctors registered a complaint with the Police

who arrested the 16-year-old boy under Sections 5 and 6 of the PocsO Act. He was sent to the Cuddalore Government Observation Centre being a minor.

# UP: WOMAN RAPED, KIDS PLEAD FOR MERCY

Shamli: In a shocking incident, a 32-year-old woman was allegedly raped by a man in an abandoned house in Uttar Pradesh's Shamli district, while her two minor children, aged 2 and 10, pleaded for mercy.

According to the FIR, the main accused, Mohd Shehzad, 25, whom the victim knew, offered the woman and her children a lift in his car.

Two of his accomplices were also inside the vehicle.

Once the woman and her children boarded the car, Shehzad drove to an isolated place and forcibly took the woman inside the abandoned house and raped her while the other two men stood guard outside with her children. When some passers-by spotted the children and asked them what they were doing at the place, the two men fled.

SHO Pankaj Tyagi said: "The woman was sent for medical examination. The three men have been booked under IPC sections 376 (rape) and 120B (criminal conspiracy). The accused are absconding but teams have been deployed to arrest them at the earliest."

# 16th JLF to discuss climate crisis, Russia-Ukraine war, Indo-China relations

Jaipur | Agencies

Global issues like climate crisis, geopolitics, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Indo-China relations, agriculture, and energy will be discussed at the 16th edition of Jaipur Literature Festival scheduled to take place from January 19-23, said Sanjoy K. Roy, Managing Director, Teamwork Arts, the producer of the annual literature festival, while addressing a press conference at the Clarks Amer Hotel, the official venue for the event, here on Tuesday.

"The festival will host a few of the greatest literary minds, including Nobel laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah; International Booker Prize recipient Geetanjali Shree; author and translator Daisy Rockwell; author Deepti Kapoor; Booker Prize winning author Bernardine Evaristo; author Siddharth Mukherjee; Booker Prize winning Sri Lankan author Shehan Karunatilaka; celebrated poet, lyricist and author Gulzar; filmmaker and producer Onir; winners of 2022 JCB Prize for Literature Khalid Jawed



and Baran Farooqi; and classical musician Hariprasad Chaurasia, among others," Roy said.

Also, the literary extravaganza will dis-

play 21 Indian and 14 international languages.

For its 2023 edition, the festival will host about 400 speakers from across a vast array of nationalities, as well as recipients of major awards such as the Nobel, International Booker, Pulitzer, Sahitya Akademi, Baillie Gifford, PEN America Literary Awards etc.

It will feature a range of themes including the ongoing climate justice debate, great women writers and artists focusing on the female voice and identity, crime fiction, memoirs, translations, poetry, economics, tech morality and artificial intelligence, the global crisis in agriculture, Russia-Ukraine conflict, violence of the British Empire, cutting-edge science, India at 75, remembering Partition, geopolitics, art and photography, health and medicine, among others, said Roy. This season, the festival pass for all the students will be available for Rs 100, which will be applicable for all the festival days. The literary show will also live-stream some key sessions which will be available on the festival's microsite.

# Eight of a family killed in Bihar road accident



Patna | Agencies

Eight persons of a family were killed after a truck rammed a three-wheeler in Bihar's Katihar district, police said.

The deceased were natives of Kheria village and were on their way the Katihar railway station during the accident on Monday night.

According to the police, the truck was coming from the opposite direction was

being driven at a very high speed and the visibility in the area was also low.

Roopak Ranjan Singh, the SHO of Khora police station, said that the victims died on the spot.

"We have recovered the dead bodies and sent for the post-mortem. The other family members of the deceased were informed about the accident," Singh said.

Of the eight victims, two were children, he added.





Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

PRESIDENT MURMU WELCOMED AT INDORE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

President Droupadi Murmu was welcomed by Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai C. Patel and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan after she landed at Indore airport on Tuesday.

The President arrived here to address the Indian diaspora on the occasion of 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

The President will facilitate over 50 overseas Indian and firms for their achievements, and building a better relationship between India and foreign countries.

According to the organising team of Madhya Pradesh government, over 3500 delegates from different countries, including, the US and the UK were received in Indore for three days of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas that started on January 8.

The President is scheduled to attend several programmes including meeting with delegates arrived from overseas nations. Murmu will also attend a welcoming meeting for Suriname Republic President Chandrika Prasad Santokhi and Guyana Republic President Mod. Irfan Ali.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the formal inaugural session on Monday reminding that - Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is held after every two years but this time it is being organised after a gap of four years - due to the Covid pandemic.



INDIA IS THE COUNTRY MAKING ECONOMIC PROGRESS RAPIDLY: SITHARAMAN

India has made progress at a very rapid pace after the year 1990. Production is being done as per global standards. In the next 25 years of Amrit Kaal, NRIs should actively contribute in progress focused on "Four-I's" - Infra-Structure, Investment, Innovations and Inclusiveness. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made this call while chairing the session on "Harnessing the Potential of Women Diaspora Entrepreneurs towards an Inclusive Approach to Nation Building" on the third day of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention today.

AREY YAHIN REH JAO NA: CM CHOUHAN'S EMOTIONAL APPEAL

Bhopal/ New Delhi: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan gave an emotional address at the 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in the state. Comparing the event to a daughter's wedding, he said he is emotionally overwhelmed, with a lot of joy and happiness in his heart, but there's also sadness in some corner. "We had your company for three days. Indore became one with you. Truly, Indore prepared to host the convention as one prepares for a daughter's wedding. But the daughter's vidai pains the heart too. Three days of hope and festivities went by so quickly. Now, the heart is heavy thinking you will leave...arey yahin reh jao na," he said. Over 3,500 diaspora members from nearly 70 different countries have registered for the convention, which is annually celebrated on January 9 to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards their homeland.

Pradhan asks diaspora to cement India's capacity to serve global family

Bhopal/ New Delhi: For a skilling approach under the new education policy we are envisioning a flexible model with multiple entry-exit and skilling pathways that focus on building competencies, said Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday.

The Indian workforce is hardworking, honest, and responsible and India can emerge as the global hub of skilled manpower, he added. He was addressing the plenary session on 'Enabling

Global Mobility of Indian Workforce - Role of Indian Diaspora' at the 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2023. Addressing the gathering, Pradhan said that our diaspora is an integral part of India's civilization and has played an important role in its great journey.

He spoke about the diaspora's role in enhancing the capacity and mobility of India's workforce and in creating a new Indian model for serving humanity.



Kolkata Police arrest 3rd IS man from MP's Khandwa

Team Absolute | Bhopal/Kolkata

Based on the inputs from Mohammad Saddam and Syed Ahmed, the two Islamic State (IS) linkmen arrested from West Bengal's Howrah district on January 7, the Special Task Force (STF) of Kolkata Police arrested an important link of the terror module from Khandwa in Madhya Pradesh. The arrest was made on Monday night, and the person has been identified as Abdul Raqib Qureshi. The STF sleuths are bringing him to Kolkata on a transit remand on Tuesday only, city police source said.

It is learnt that Qureshi has been booked under Section 120B (criminal conspiracy) and Section 121 (waging or attempting to wage war or abetting waging of war against Indian government) of the Indian Penal Code. "Before his active association with IS, Qureshi was a senior and active leader of the banned outfit, Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and he was the key person in inspiring Mohammad Saddam to join the IS. Later Saddam



brainwashed and roped in Syed Ahmed to the terror module," the city police source said.

It is learnt that besides brainwashing local youths to join the IS, Qureshi was also responsible for procuring arms and distribution of the same to the new recruits. Meanwhile, from the diary seized from the residence of Mohammad Saddam, the STF sleuths have tracked an oath statement of joining the IS, which was written in Arabic. Mohammad Saddam and Syed Ahmed were arrested on Saturday afternoon by the STF sleuths while the two were on their way to attend a secret meeting at Khidirpur area in Kolkata. Earlier, the STF sleuths recovered from their devices, crucial clues on how the two, especially Mohammad Saddam, used to contact his IS handlers in Syria and Saudi Arabia using the Telegram Web medium. The recovery of such crucial clues, especially the ones related to the videos and still photographs about the activities of the suicide squad modules of IS have kept the investigating sleuths worried.

40 BUFFALOES, TWO MEN KILLED IN ACCIDENT

Team Absolute | Sagar

Forty buffaloes were killed when a container truck carrying them crashed into a roadside mosque in Mahoba district.

The driver and the owner of the buffaloes, who was in the truck was from Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh, also got killed in the incident which took place on Monday night. The truck was carrying 50 buffaloes, 10 of whom survived.

The police identified the truck driver as Rajesh Patel while the owner of the buffaloes as Chhote of Rahatgarh in Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh.

The incident took place when the speeding container truck hit a concrete pillar by the road and the driver lost control over the wheels. A shop built next to the



mosque and a house were also damaged.

After seven hours of rescue operation under the supervision of SDM and CO Kulphar, two people, including the driver trapped inside the truck were taken out by cutting the cabin of the truck with a gas cutter and taken to the community health centre in Kulphar.

While Chhote died on the spot, Rajesh died while being taken to the district hospital.

The police said that a truck going from Mahoba towards Panwadi, crashed into the gate of the mosque near the Sugira village on the highway, damaging its boundary wall as well as the house and a building next to the mosque.

Later, the officials requisitioned JCB machines and cranes, and pulled out the dead buffaloes by breaking the entire enclosure of the truck.

Green corridor formed to transport kidney to Indore

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A green corridor was made from Bansal Hospital, Bhopal, to Indore on Monday. Four people were benefited with donation of kidneys and eyes. The green corridor was 35 kilometre long till Phunda toll Nakka from Bansal hospital. Around 80 policemen were deployed. The distance was covered in 30 minutes. Kidney was transported to Indore while eyes to Gandhi Medical College (GMC), Bhopal. Chandra Bhushan Singh (63) of Sector-C of Shahpura, died in Bansal Hospital. His eyes have been transported to Gandhi



Medical College (GMC), Bhopal and Kidney has been transported to Indore. Dr Rakesh Bhargava, Paediatrician of Kiran Foundation said, "A green corridor was made to transport

kidney to Indore. Eyes have been transported to GMC. Family of Shahpura resident CB Singh has donated the organs." Dr sanjiv Jain counselled the family for organ donation.

Investors will get acquainted with the capabilities of Madhya Pradesh in the 7th GIS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh, the heart of India, is all set to write a new chapter of development by showcasing the development of the state's capabilities, promotion of investment climate and infrastructure along with display of its capabilities to potential investors through the Global Investors Summit. The Global Investors Summit is going to be held on January 11-12 at the Brilliant Convention Centre in Indore, the country's cleanest city and commercial capital. PM Modi will also virtually inaugurate the seventh summit and address it. The President of Suriname Chandrika Prasad Santokhi and the President of Guyana Dr. Mohammed Irfan Ali will also attend the inaugural session and they will also address.

Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will also address the inaugural session. Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal will have a virtual address in the session. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will also address the summit. The summit will be inaugurated at 10:30 am at Brilliant Convention Centre Indore.

In order to bring investors from the country and abroad to the state in the Investor Summit, various scenarios of favourable environment for industrial investment in Madhya Pradesh will be demonstrated. The objective of the



INVEST MADHYA PRADESH GLOBAL INVESTORS SUMMIT

summit is to promote the policies of the state, create an investor friendly environment in the state in consultation with industrial associations to formulate industry friendly policies, enhance co-operation opportunities and export potential. Since the year 2007, Global Investors Summit of Madhya Pradesh has become a great opportunity for the investors and business community from all over the world. Delegations from more than 65 countries will participate in this Global Investors Summit being held in Indore. It will be attended by ambassadors, high commissioners, consulates and diplomats

from more than 20 countries. In the International Pavilion of GIS, 9 participating countries and 14 International Trade Organisations will showcase different aspects of their countries. The summit will also provide an opportunity to the exporters of the state to connect with potential overseas buyers.

Prominent industrialists who have agreed to attend the Global Investor Summit include over 500 leading industrialists from India including Sarvshri Kumar Mangalam Birla, Noel Tata, Nadir Godrej, Puneet Dalmiya and Ajay Piramal. The programme will see participation of leading industrialists from various sectors such as pharma, IT, automobile, textile, clothing, chemical, cement, food processing, logistics, petrochemical, tourism, renewable energy, services etc.

Bhopal gas tragedy

HOW CAN SETTLEMENT BE REOPENED, IS RS 50CR LYING UNDISBURSED: SC TO CENTRE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday grilled the Centre on how the settlement can be reopened, when Union Carbide has already paid over \$ 470 million to the Bhopal gas tragedy victims, and also expressed concern over Rs 50 crore undisbursed funds.

A five-judge bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul asked the Attorney General (AG) R. Venkataramani, representing the Centre, that the settlement was arrived at a particular stage of time, and can the court say that 10 years hence, 20 years hence or 30 years hence, open the settlement on the basis of fresh documents? Senior advocate Harish Salve, representing Union Carbide, said there is a new set of documents. The bench further queried the AG, can any fresh documents



be permitted in curative petition? The bench -- also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna, A.S. Oka, Vikram Nath, and J.K. Maheshwari - said no review was filed by the government and a curative petition was filed after a gap of 19 years. It added that the settlement is between two parties and one of the par-

ties is the Union of India and it is not a weak party. The AG replied that just have a look at the settlement, did it bring about a just conclusion? Justice Kaul asked the AG, what was the scope of such a curative petition, especially at this point in time? Venkataramani replied that there was an amendment to the settlement and "we are not asking for a settlement to be annulled". Justice Kaul asked why Rs 50 crore were lying undisbursed. He further added this means that the people were not getting the money, and was the government responsible for the money not going to the people? The AG said the number of claimants had gone beyond what the review judgment had in mind. Justice Kaul said, "Attorney, please address us why and how not having filed a review a curative is moved?" The bench asked a specific query to the AG, how can settlement be reopened?

Tigress T4 gives birth to 4 more cubs in Pench Reserve, her offspring count reaches 20

Team Absolute | Seoni

Tigress T4, also known as Patdev, has given birth to four more cubs in Pench Tiger Reserve, taking her offspring tally to 20, officials said on Tuesday. Patdev is the daughter of supermom 'Collarwali', who gave birth to 29 cubs over a span of 11 years, they said.

On Monday, some officials and visitors during a safari spotted tigress T4 with four cubs, Pench Tiger Reserve's deputy director Rajneesh Singh said. This was the first time that tigress T4 was spot-



ted with her cubs, who appeared to be about two months' old, he said. The tigress has so far given birth to 20 cubs in five litters since 2014, the official said.

Singh said T4 was born in 2010 to tigress Collarwali, who gave birth to 29 cubs in eight litters between 2008 and 2018.





## EDITOR'S SPECS

## Covid vax and Youngsters

The global acceptance of Covid-19 vaccines increased from 75.2 per cent in 2021 to 79.1 per cent in 2022, according to a survey in 23 countries (including India) that represent more than 60 per cent of the world's population. The willingness of parents to vaccinate their children also rose slightly, from 67.6 per cent in 2021 to 69.5 per cent in 2022. However, vaccine acceptance decreased in eight countries and almost one in eight vaccinated respondents, particularly younger men and women, were hesitant about receiving a booster dose, according to the study published in the journal Nature Medicine. Worryingly, almost one in eight (12.1 per cent) vaccinated respondents were hesitant about booster doses. This hesitancy was higher among the younger age groups (18-29). The 23 highly-populated countries that were hit hard by the pandemic part of the study were Brazil, Canada, China, Ecuador, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the UK and the US. The data reported here correspond to the third survey conducted between June and July 2022. Of the 23,000 respondents, 79.1 per cent were willing to accept vaccination. The finding represented an increase of 5.2 per cent from June 2021. However, eight countries observed increased hesitancy (from 1 per cent in the UK to 21.1 per cent in South Africa). The survey also provides new information on Covid-19 treatments received. Globally, ivermectin was taken with the same frequency as other approved medications, even though the WHO and other agencies do not recommend its use to prevent or treat Covid-19. Also, almost 4 per cent respondents reported paying less attention to new Covid-19 information than before and having less support for vaccine mandates.

## Bashar al-Assad, a pariah no more

Asad Mirza

Russia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have initiated plans to start talks with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, an unthinkable step till date, and establish peace once again in the war-torn nation.

It seems as if the pariah of the Arab world, Assad may soon get a reprieve, as the global and regional powers rally together to forgive him and try to bolster his regime. The latest efforts may also result in further weakening of the US influence in the region.

## Turkish efforts

This change in Turkish stand is sponsored by Assad's major military ally Russia and the UAE, which have sought to improve his standing in the Middle East to help balance Iranian influence in Syria.

Whereas several years ago countries in the region would have looked on such a rapprochement negatively, they are now supportive and that may be construed as an important shift.

Events of the last week report that regional players Turkey and UAE, in partnership with global player Russia have initiated diplomatic efforts to rehabilitate Assad, and try to find an end to the decade-old war in Syria.

Turkey, which previously backed the 2011 rebellion against Assad, is now prepared to publicly recognise his rule over Syria and work to rebuild diplomatic, security and trade ties, in a complete about turn, in order to ensure peace on its south-western border.

Basically, Turkey wants Assad to rule out allowing the US-backed Kurdish dominated, People's Defence Units or People's Protection Units (YPG), to form an autonomous area in northern parts of the country that they currently control, as part of any future peace agreement, if the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan restarts any reconciliatory process.



Reports say that Erdogan floated the idea of meeting with Assad as recently as last Thursday, after high-level meetings between Syrian and Turkish officials earlier in Moscow. Erdogan has been reported as saying that, we will come together as leaders according to the developments, hinting at a meeting with Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin, soon.

Turkey has lately indicated that it was preparing to put aside hostilities with neighbouring Syria. Frustrated by Washington's refusal to end military assistance to Kurdish militia in Syria, Erdogan is seeking to resolve the matter through other brokers in the conflict.

## Russian and Emirati stand

For Russia, such a deal will help it show it can successfully challenge US influence in Syria and the region.

Putin ordered his military to intervene in support of Assad in 2015, helping to tip the balance in the civil war in Syria, in favour of the latter's regime.

As part of a flurry of diplomatic

activity around Syria, the UAE's foreign minister met Assad in Damascus last week and reiterated support for a political solution to the conflict.

The UAE has moved closer to Assad, with the Syrian president visiting the country last year, his first trip to an Arab state since the start of the civil war. The visit signalled strongly that Gulf leaders who initially supported a rebellion against him are ready to welcome Damascus back into the Arab fold.

Syria's uprising quickly morphed into an international conflict drawing in Russia, Iran, Turkey and the US and reverberating across the Middle East and Europe. Assad remains under US and European sanctions over the war, which according to UN estimates has killed more than 350,000 civilians.

## US response

Reportedly, the US is 'very concerned' about possible Turkish meddling in Syria. US State Department spokesperson Ned Price when asked last week, about a potential Erdogan-Assad meeting said that the US will not normalise and we do not support other coun-

tries normalising relations with the Assad regime.

But there are voices in the region that the US needs to understand that its presence in Syria is unnecessary and unjustified and further, countries in the region are increasingly acting independently of the US.

The YPG and allied fighters in northern areas of Syria bordering Turkey are supported by the US and estimated to control roughly a third of Syria's territory. Ankara views the YPG as a threat due to its ties to an outlawed Kurdish group, which has sought self-rule in Turkey for decades. The Syrian government also opposes any form of eventual Kurdish autonomy in Syria.

Erdogan has repeatedly warned of a Turkish incursion in northern Syria to push back the YPG, something the US has said could embolden Islamic State militants and other headline fighters still present there.

Earlier, the Defence Ministers from Turkey and Syria met for the first time in December last year since the civil war erupted in the Arab state in 2011, the high point so far

in a rapprochement that's been months in the making.

Turkey's Hulusi Akar and his Syrian counterpart Ali Mahmoud Abbas held talks at a summit in Moscow, hosted by the Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu.

The discussions then had focused on the Syrian civil war and collaboration against "all terrorist groups" in the Middle East state, Turkey said, in a thinly veiled reference to Kurdish militia in Syria.

## Erdogan's gain

A political deal with Assad could help Erdogan claim a victory against the YPG without risking a military operation and greater US ire, the people said, adding that Russian and Turkish troops are expected to start joint patrols along border areas with northern Syria soon. Syria could also start coordinated patrols in the future there.

Syria remains under strict Western sanctions and is suspended from the Arab League. Improved relations between Turkey and Syria will be a major success for Russia.

Ankara's new partnership with Damascus will strengthen the Kremlin's role in the Middle East and put pressure on Washington pull out its remaining foothold in Syria.

Putin had originally proposed Turkey repair ties with Assad last year during a meeting with Erdogan in Sochi. Now Erdogan has warmed to such a deal as he heads into elections this summer, the people said, as he seeks to use foreign policy to bolster his popularity at home.

Erdogan has asked Russia to ensure the safety of Syrian refugees who could return home as fighting eases. He wants to ease the political and economic cost of hosting the world's largest refugee population, or some 3.5 million people according to UN estimates. Pushing for a return, or the start of one, may help boost his popularity ahead of elec-

## international

## BIDEN DECLARES EMERGENCY IN CALIFORNIA AS WINTER STORMS CONTINUE

Washington | Agencies

US President Joe Biden has declared an emergency in California as winter storms continue to pummel the most populous state in the country.

According to a statement released by the White House late Monday, Biden has ordered federal assistance to supplement California, tribal and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions resulting from successive and severe winter storms, flooding and mudslides, reports Xinhua news agency. The federal emergency declaration will authorize the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate all disaster relief efforts.

On January 4, California Governor Gavin Newsom had declared an emergency for the entire state which is home to around 40 million residents, due to the severe winter storms.

He submitted a request on Sunday to the White House for a presidential emergency declaration to support ongoing storm response and recovery efforts in the state.

Since late December, 12 people have died from storm-related impacts, including flooding, more than the number of civilians who lost their lives to wildfires in the past two years combined, according to a statement released by the governor's office.

"We are in the middle of a deadly barrage of winter storms -- and California is using every resource at its disposal to protect lives and limit damage," said Newsom in the statement.

"We are taking the threat from these storms seriously, and want to make sure that Californians stay



vigilant as more storms head our way," the Governor added. Winter storms continued to hit California with heavy rains, causing flooding, road closures and power outages in many regions across the state. "California is expecting a stronger and more widespread atmospheric river that will bring strong winds, heavy rain, and thunderstorms," the Governor's office tweeted on Monday, adding that "this is serious -- stay safe, make the necessary preparations, and limit non-essential travel".

Nearly 100,000 homes and businesses in California were still without power as of Monday, according to PowerOutage.us, a website which collects live power outage data from utilities all over the country.

Tens of thousands of people across Northern California are dealing with continued power outages on Monday, as heavy rain and strong winds caused issues on roadways but spared the region from widespread devastation, reported KCRA-TV, a television station in Sacramento, the capital of the

state. Many school districts across the region and some individual schools facing power outages have canceled classes for Monday, the news outlet added. No significant letup is expected in the recent very wet weather pattern that has been plaguing much of California and the ongoing heavy rains Monday afternoon across central California will be dropping into Southern California Monday night into early Tuesday, said the US National Weather Service (NWS).

The NWS noted that nearly all of California has seen much above average rainfall totals over the past several weeks, with totals 400-600 percent above average values.

"This has resulted in nearly saturated soils and increasingly high river levels. Additional heavy rains on Tuesday will exacerbate ongoing flooding and continue the risk of flash flooding and mudslides, especially across recent burn scar regions."

"Dangerous life-threatening flash flooding across southern Santa Barbara county and central Ventura county through this evening as additional heavy rain moves into the area. Follow orders from emergency officials," the NWS tweeted on Monday afternoon. Thousands of people were ordered to immediately evacuate Southern California's Montecito on Monday.

All residents in the community in Santa Barbara County were urged to "leave now" by local officials as "the heaviest rain is yet to come this afternoon and evening".

A total of 23 people were killed in January 2018 when a massive mudslide caused by heavy rains swept through the coastal community and destroyed 130 homes.



## EXTREME COLD WEATHER HITS NORTHERN PART OF RUSSIA'S FAR EAST

Moscow: Extreme cold weather hit the northern part of Russia's Far East on Tuesday, with temperatures falling below minus 60 degrees Celsius.

In the Oleneksky district of the Republic of Sakha, temperatures dropped to as low as minus 61 degrees Celsius on Tuesday morning, Xinhua news agency reported citing local media. In Yakutsk, capital city of Yakutia, classes for grade one to grade eight students were cancelled due to the cold weather. Schools in some rural areas were also forced to close down.

The local emergency agency has warned people to insulate their cars and bring enough supplies should they travel outside their settlements.

## DESTROYER RUNS AGROUND, LEAKS OIL IN WATERS OFF WEST JAPAN



Tokyo | Agencies

A Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) destroyer ran aground in waters off the western prefecture of Yamaguchi on Tuesday, local media cited the Coast Guard and the Ministry of Defence as saying.

According to the local media, the JS Inazuma destroyer is leaking oil following the vessel apparently hitting some rocks on the seabed, reports Xinhua news agency.

The incident was reported to the coast guard at around 12.30 p.m. by the crew of the destroyer who said they felt a

powerful "vibration in the hull" Japan's public broadcaster NHK said that the Ministry of Defence and the Coast Guard confirmed the destroyer came into contact with rocks on the seabed and was unable to move.

According to the latest reports, no one was injured in the incident, although a small amount of oil may have leaked into the sea as a result of damage to the vessel.

Around 20 crew members on the deck of the stranded vessel were seen throwing what appeared to be a white sheet into the sea to absorb the oil that had flowed out of the stricken destroyer, NHK said.

## China blocks South Korea, Japan visas over Covid

Seoul | Agencies

China has stopped issuing short-term visas to individuals from South Korea and Japan in retaliation for Covid restrictions on Chinese travelers, media reports said on Tuesday. Visas for South Koreans entering China as tourists have been suspended, Beijing's embassy in Seoul said, the BBC reported. And Japanese media reported China was imposing similar measures there, it said.

It's a tit-for-tat move which Beijing says will remain in place until "discriminatory" entry restrictions against China are lifted. Last week, South Korea stopped issuing tourist visas for those coming from

China, which the Chinese Foreign Ministry called "unacceptable" and "unscientific". Reacting to China's latest move, South Korea's Foreign Ministry told the BBC that its policy towards arrivals from China was "in accordance with scientific and objective evidence". Japan, meanwhile, is currently allowing Chinese visitors into the country - provided they test negative for Covid. According to South Korea's Disease Control and Prevention Agency, around a third of all arrivals from China tested positive for Covid prior to the visa restrictions being put in place. At Seoul's Incheon International airport - the only South Korean airport still allowing flights from China - arrivals are met by military person-

nel in personal protective equipment, BBC reported. Many South Koreans support the idea of protecting their country from China's coronavirus surge - but not all are convinced that the decision is a purely medical one. The South Korean curbs are supposed to last at least until the end of the month, which would give scientists time to analyse for any potential new variants coming from China. "There's no transparency at the moment in China about any monitoring for new variants. If a new variant comes from China, it would be a very difficult situation for the whole world," Professor Kim Woo Joo, an infectious diseases expert at Korea University and a government adviser, told the BBC.

## 7 MILLION PEOPLE LAID OFF IN PAK TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Islamabad | Agencies

About seven million people in textile and textile-related industries in Pakistan have been laid off due to dwindling exports and the government's failure to end the economic crisis, associations claimed.

Representatives of the value-added textile associations said the current government does not have any policy to end the various crises affecting textile producers and exporters, Dawn reported.

The industry is on the verge of closure as many units have already closed down. Several others are planning to either shut down or shift their production abroad.

Textile factories are being deprived of necessary raw material



and accessories. Letters of credit worth as low as \$5,000 are being refused, which has hit in-progress export orders of \$500,000 per consignment.

It's causing severe disruption and production delays and has led to the cancellation of export

orders. Demurrage on various consignments has increased the cost too much, the associations said.

Despite such a difficult situation, the government is importing expensive luxury cars like BMWs for cabinet members. These imports will have no contribution

to foreign exchange earnings. They won't generate any taxes for the national exchequer and create zero employment, they said.

The government performance in the last nine months is poor, they said. Two finance ministers during this period have failed to resolve the ongoing economic crisis, they added. Neither the Prime Minister nor the Finance Minister have bothered to set aside some time to meet the exporters, they noted.

The industrial sector cannot operate under extreme financial stress as the alarm bells for sovereign default have been continuously ringing while the government's finance and economic team appears to be asleep at the wheel, Dawn news quoted the associations as saying.





# EKNATH SHINDE VS UDDHAV THACKERAY: SUPREME COURT TO HEAR CASE ON FEB 14

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Supreme Court on Tuesday scheduled the hearing of the matter arising out of the rebellion by Eknath Shinde and other MLAs against Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray in Maharashtra, on February 14. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the Thackeray faction, submitted before a five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud that the matter was urgent as the Election Commission was conducting proceedings on the issue of control over the party and the symbol. Sibal further argued that the court has to primarily decide the issue whether the 2016 five-judge judgement of the Nabam Rabia case should be referred to the seven-judge bench. The judgment restricted the power of the Speaker to decide disqualification petitions if a resolution seeking his removal was pending.



Senior advocate Neeraj Kishan Kaul along with advocate Abhikalp Pratap Singh appeared for Eknath Shinde's group of the Shiv Sena. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta represented the Governor. In August this year, a three-judge bench of

the apex court had said that a five-judge constitution bench will hear a batch of petitions filed by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Uddhav Thackeray faction on queries related to defection, merger, and disqualification.

A three-judge bench of the apex court, in its reference order, had framed first issue whether notice for removal of a Speaker restricts him from continuing with disqualification proceedings under Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, as held by this court in Nabam Rabia (by a five-judge bench). Thackeray suffered a major setback after Eknath Shinde and other MLAs rebelled against him and ousted him as the Maharashtra CM. They also laid claims to the Shiv Sena party and its symbol as well. The top court restrained the Speaker from proceeding on disqualification petitions against Shinde and other MLAs and subsequently allowed a fresh vote of confidence in the Assembly, after which Thackeray resigned. The apex court on July 11 last year asked the newly appointed Maharashtra Assembly Speaker not to go ahead with proceedings on the disqualification petitions.

## Shiv Sena 'rebel', who changed his mind in Guwahati, gets ACB notice now

Team Absolute | Mumbai



Pressure further mounted on the Shiv Sena-UBT after an MLA - who had "rebelled" in June last year and then changed his mind in Guwahati - has been slapped with an Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) notice, party leaders said here on Tuesday. Balapur (Akola) MLA Nitin Deshmukh has been served the ACB notice, making him the third MLA in the past two months to get such notices for allegations pertaining to holding disproportionate assets. The Sena-UBT has again cried foul at the hounding of its legislators by various probe agencies by the government. In recent months, two of its MLAs - Vaibhav Naik from Kudal (Sindhudurg) and Rajan Salvi from Rajapur (Ratnagiri) - had received ACB notices in October and December 2022, respectively. After going to Gujarat and Guwahati with the rebel camp led by Eknath Shinde - now the Chief Minister - Deshmukh had mysteriously resurfaced in Mumbai and rejoined the faction led by Uddhav Thackeray. The party had wholeheartedly rejoiced, whenever praises on him and he was felicitated by both Thackeray and son Aditya Thackeray later. Unfazed after getting the ACB notice, Deshmukh

said that "attempts are being made to implicate me", and he would report to the probe agency on January 17 in Amravati to record his statement. He said that around a fortnight back, Shinde's Balasaheb Chavan Shiv Sena (BSS) MP Bhavna Gawli had filed a case against him after which the ACB Amravati notice was received. Deshmukh pointed out that the ACB notice is vague, with no mention of the complainant's name, the nature of the complaint and he would not be scared even if central agencies send him a notice as he has no illegal properties. The Sena MLA said that after going to the ACB Amravati office, he would hold a media conference and expose the conspiracy against him. At the height of the rebellion drama in June, Deshmukh had alleged that he was "kidnapped", whisked off to Surat and then to Guwahati where attempts were made to subject him to some "medical procedure" but he managed to escape.

## TARIKH PE TARIKH: AMBADAS DANVE SENA (UBT) ON DEFERMENT OF SC CASE

Team Absolute | Mumbai



Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Leader of Opposition Ambadas Danve on Tuesday said that a game of 'tarikh pe tarikh' is on in the party's case in the Supreme Court pertaining to the power struggle here. Reacting to the SC's decision on Tuesday to hear the case on February 14, Danve said, "The entire situation is clear; there is a law prohibiting defections, and even the Election Commission of India's viewpoint is before us. We hope that on February 14, there will be a decision in the matter," Danve said, saying he was reminded of a famous Bollywood film dialogue referring to 'Tarikh Pe Tarikh' (Date Upon Date), or frequent postponements. Danve also wondered why the Election Commission of India (ECI) was in such a hurry to give its decision on the party name and symbol when the MLAs' disqualification matter is pending before the SC, especially since this (the state government) is illegal. In New Delhi, Sena (UBT) MP and Chief Spokesperson Sanjay Raut said that the hearing will be on a continuous basis on a very auspicious date - Valentine's Day - and expressed hope that the outcome would also be 'lovely' for all. The Sena (UBT)'s response came after a five-judge SC bench postponed to February 14 the hearing in the case of the rebellion by legislators led by Eknath Shinde in the erstwhile Shiv Sena government headed by Uddhav Thackeray.

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### ICICI-Videocon case

## Bombay HC grants CBI 3 days to reply on Dhoot's plea

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday granted the Central Bureau of Investigation 3 days time till Friday to file its reply in a plea filed by Videocon Group Chairman Venugopal N. Dhoot seeking to quash the FIR against him in the ICICI-Videocon case. A division bench of Justice Revati Mohite-Dere and Justice Prithviraj K. Chavan has now posted the matter for further hearing on Friday. The CBI's lawyer Kuldeep Patil had earlier sought at least a week's time to file its reply. In his plea, Dhoot, 71, who was arrested on December 26, 2022, has sought bail on the grounds that his arrest without a warrant was arbitrary, illegal and



grossly flouting the CrPC's Sections 41 and 41A. His lawyer Sandeep Ladda informed the court that Dhoot is a senior citizen suffering serious ailments including major heart blockage needing urgent treatment, and has undergone multiple surgeries and hospitalisation in the past seven years. Moreover, Dhoot had cooperated with the CBI probe and appeared before the agency on his own, the CBI failed to prove his non-cooperation as a ground for the arrest and he was nabbed carelessly and mechanically

without necessary cause or reasons. Ladda added that Dhoot was nabbed in a connected case of money-laundering in which he was already granted bail by the Bombay High Court after observing that there were reasonable grounds to believe he was not guilty of the alleged offences. Accordingly, Dhoot - a co-accused along with Chanda Kochhar and Deepak Kochhar in the ICICI Bank-Videocon Group fraud case - termed his arrest as illegal and sought to be released on bail. Incidentally, Chanda Kochhar, the former MD of ICICI Bank and her businessman husband Deepak Kochhar were granted bail on Monday after the high court termed their arrest as flouting the laws.

### BANGLADESHI NATIONAL HELD FOR OPERATING SEX RACKET

Palghar: A 36-year-old Bangladeshi national has been arrested for allegedly running a sex racket in Nalla Sopara area of Maharashtra's Palghar district, police said on Tuesday. Acting on a tip-off, the anti-human trafficking cell (AHTC) of the police conducted a raid on Monday and arrested the accused, senior inspector Santosh Chowdhary said. The police also rescued a woman who had been forced into sex trade by the accused, he said. An offence under section 376 (rape) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (PITA) and Foreign Nationals Act has been registered, he said, adding that a manhunt has been launched for seven other accused involved in the racket.

## Mumbai man honey-trapped to smuggle cocaine worth Rs 28cr from Ethiopia

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A Mumbai man was honey-trapped by a woman and forced to smuggle cocaine worth Rs 28.10 crore from Ethiopia into India. This came to light when the man was held with 2.81 kg of cocaine by the Customs officials at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai after his arrival from Ethiopia. A customs official on the condition of anonymity, told IANS that the 49-year-old man, a Mumbai resident, had met a woman on social media. Soon they became friends and the woman lured him to come to Ethiopia. The man left his private job and went there to meet her. But, on reaching there, when he tried to contact the woman, she told him that she was in Mumbai only. Some men there forced him to carry the bag which had the cocaine in it. The man had no choice but to carry the bag,

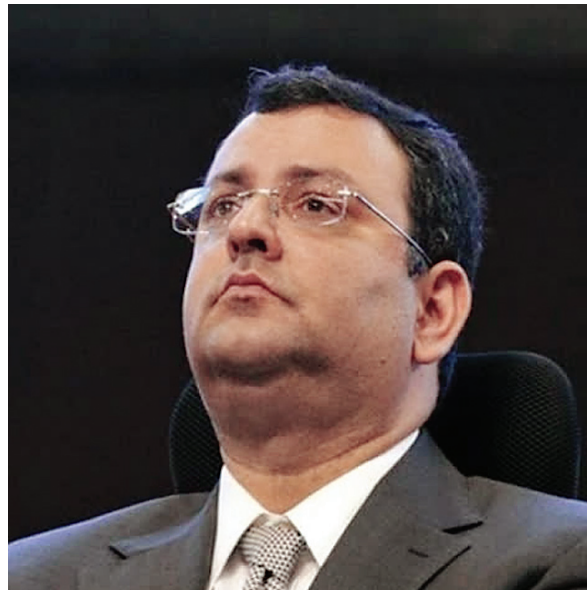


said a source. "He was sent back to Mumbai with the cocaine consignment. The accused concealed cocaine in a duffel bag. It was intercepted by the customs officials on the basis of intelligence surveillance," said the official. The official said that during the investigation he broke down and told the officials that a woman was forcing him to do all this. He said that he was being blackmailed. "The man has violated provisions of section 8 of the NDPS Act, and has committed an offence punishable under Section 21, Section 23 and Section 29 of NDPS Act. Accordingly, he was placed under arrest. The said drugs, which is cocaine, has been seized along with concealing material under section 43(a) of NDPS Act," said the official. The official said that they have informed the local police about the honey-trap matter to investigate.

## "How Are You Concerned?": Court Asks Petitioner In Cyrus Mistry Car Crash Case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday sought to know a man's locus standi, his right to approach the court, over his PIL seeking the inclusion of culpable homicide charge against Dr Anahita Pandole, who was driving the car that crashed and killed former Tata Sons chairman Cyrus Mistry. Petitioner Sandesh Jedhe, who claims to be a self-spirited citizen concerned about road safety, in his PIL sought a direction to Kasa police station in Palghar district to invoke section 304 of the Indian Penal Code, against the accused in the accident case. Mistry and Jehangir Pandole were killed on September 4, Dr Anahita Pandole, who was at the wheel, and her husband Darius Pandole were seriously injured. The police later registered a case against Anahita Pandole for rash and negligent driving. While hearing the PIL on Tuesday, a division bench of acting Chief Justice S V Gangapurwala and Justice Sandeep Marne sought to know Jedhe's locus standi in the case and how the high court can do the job of a magistrate. "This is a job of a magistrate. It is the magistrate who can



decide what charges to put. You (petitioner) want the high court to do the functions of the magistrate? What is your locus standi? How are you concerned in this case?" the court asked. The bench added that the concerned police can add any charge and it is for the magistrate to consider the same and see if any more charge needs to be included. Jedhe's advocate Sadiq Ali claimed that the petitioner has evidence that Anahita Pandole was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the accident. In his petition, the petitioner refers to a CCTV footage allegedly indicating that Anahita Pandole had been consuming liquor at a cafe on the previous night (September 3, 2022) before she drove the vehicle carrying Mistry, among others. Senior counsel Rafique Dada, appearing for Darius Pandole, sought for the PIL to be dismissed. Appearing for Anahita Pandole, senior counsel Abad Ponda said, "It is premised on the imagination that she was under alcohol. There were tests conducted by the police." Public prosecutor Aruna Kamat Pai, appearing for the police, clarified that "The tests were negative." Ali then claimed that he has more material to prove his case and sought a last chance. The court then posted the matter for further hearing on January 17.

## SHIFTING OF RACE COURSE CAUSES NEW EPISODE B/W TEAM THACKERAY VS BJP

Mumbai: A plan to shift Mumbai's iconic Mahalaxmi Racecourse to an abandoned dump yard in Mulund has opened up a new front between the Eknath Shinde-BJP government and Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena faction. The lease for the racecourse ended a decade ago, and reports that the Mumbai civic body has revived its plan to build an amusement park at the site have triggered controversy and anger.



Aadiya Thackeray, a former minister of the state and the son of Uddhav Thackeray, has accused the state government of trying to "sell the racecourse to commercial interests" and "destroy open spaces". The Uddhav Thackeray government, he said, had planned to build a space like London's Hyde Park in the area that is also a heritage site. "The idea was to create an urban green space open for children, the elderly, runners, Yoga lovers, music lovers, artists, pets and horse lovers too. A free, open urban green park for all," he tweeted yesterday. A state minister today insisted that no decision has been taken. Cabinet Minister and Mumbai Guardian minister Deepak Kesarkar conceded that the original plan was to shift the race-course, but asserted, "No such decision has been taken yet". "There should be open space. Mumbai is short of open spaces. This could be a recreational area for common people. This is one option where open space remains like that and it remains for the common man. But this should not happen at the cost of the game that is racing," Kesarkar said. Without naming Aadiya Thackeray, he added, "A few young people are doing politics on this issue ahead of the upcoming BMC (Brihanmumbai Corporation) elections. They are unnecessarily raising this issue as they



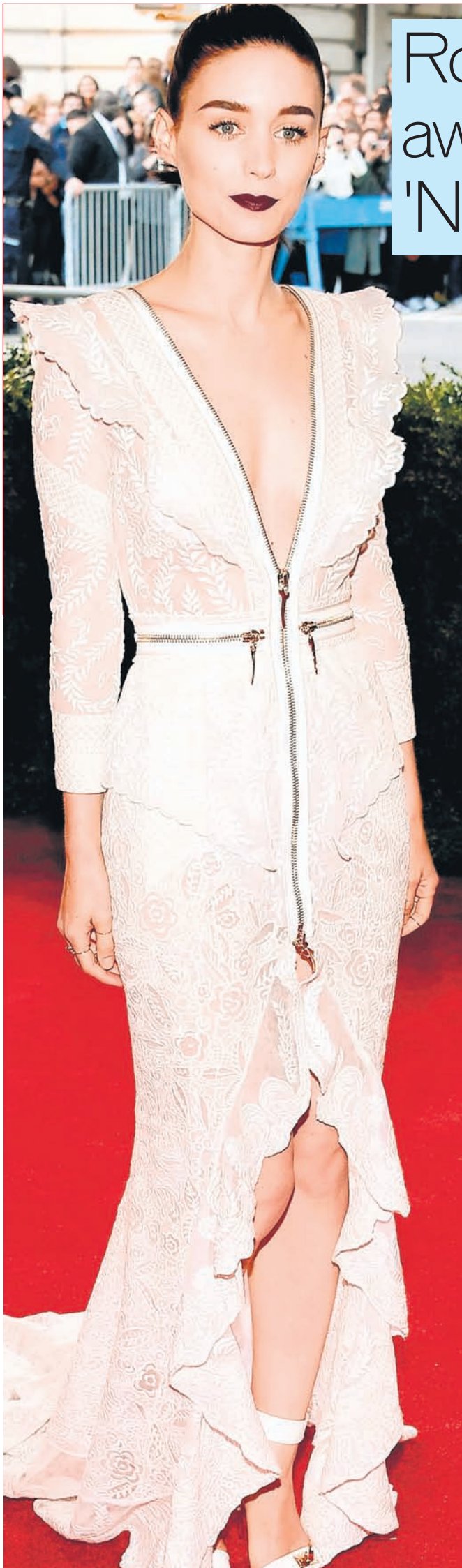
## Watchman kills minor boy over dispute with his mother

Team Absolute | Thane

A watchman allegedly kidnapped a seven-year-old boy and killed him following a dispute with the child's mother in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Tuesday. The accused, Nitin Kamble, kidnapped the child from his school in Kalyan town after classes on Monday, Khadakpada police station's assistant police inspector S S Survase said. When the boy did not return home, his family members filed a police complaint of kidnapping against unidentified person.

The police launched a search and found the child's body in the swimming pool of a housing complex, the official said. The police subsequently registered a case of murder. During the probe into the case, the police got to know the accused and the victim's mother had an affair. She later started avoiding him due to which they had a quarrel. The accused, in a bid to settle the score with her, allegedly kidnapped the child and killed him by drowning him in the swimming pool of the housing complex where he worked earlier, the official said.





## Rooney came close to walking away from Hollywood after 'Nightmare on Elm Street'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Rooney Mara almost quit acting after filming the 'A Nightmare on Elm Street' reboot as she didn't have "the best experience" while filming the 2010 remake of Wes Craven's classic 1984 horror movie.

She said that she came close to walking away from Hollywood for good unless she found a project she really cared about, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"A few years before (The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo), I had done (A Nightmare on Elm Street) remake, which was not a good

experience," she explained when speaking on the LaunchLeft podcast.

"(I have to) be careful with what I say and how I talk about it. It wasn't the best experience making it."

"I kind of got to this place that I still live in, that I don't want to act unless I'm doing stuff that I feel like I have to do. After making that film, I kind of decided, 'OK, I'm just not going to act anymore unless it's something that I feel that way about.'"

After finishing work on the horror remake, she landed a part in David Fincher's Facebook drama 'The Social Network' which took her career to a whole new level as

the director later hired her to star in his next later project 'The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo.'

She said of the role that "David didn't want to audition me for it (The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo) because he didn't think I was right for it based on what I did in 'The Social Network' and I kind of insisted they put me on tape anyway so I did ... Then he had to fight really hard for me to get the part because the studio didn't want me for it. It was a definite real turning point in my life and my career."

The role in the 2011 film earned Rooney an Academy Award for Best Actress and her career took off.



## ABBEY CLANCY OPENS UP HER MAGICAL MALDIVIAN WEDDING ALBUM

Los Angeles | Agencies

Abbey Clancy has shared her wedding album with fans after renewing her wedding vows with Peter Crouch 11 years on from their first nuptials.

The model and former footballer said I do again in a beachside ceremony in Yje Maldives on December 17 in front of their four children, Abbey's mum Karen and friends on a private island at the Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort.

Posting on Instagram, Abbey shared a look at the intimate ceremony and her sheer lace dress. The model wore a stunning sheer vintage lace dress and veil made by her dressmaker friend Silvia, flashing her underwear as she danced down the aisle with Peter. The ex footballer looked dapper in a crisp white shirt and chinos as he joined his wife by going barefoot for the low-key ceremony. The photos show the couple exchanging vows on the beach under a floral arch adorned with white roses, while their delighted friends and family showered them with red rose petals as they walked down the aisle. The dress code for guests was white, with Abbey and Peter's daughter Sophia, 11, in a white shift dress while Liberty, seven, looked sweet in a tulle-skirted number.

Their sons Johnny, four, and three-year-old Jack meanwhile matched their dad in white shirts, paired with tan shorts. The girls were seen helping their parents perfect their looks before they headed down the aisle in sweet behind the scenes glimpses.



## Margot Robbie improvised a kiss that wasn't in the script with Pitt in 'Babylon'

Los Angeles | Agencies

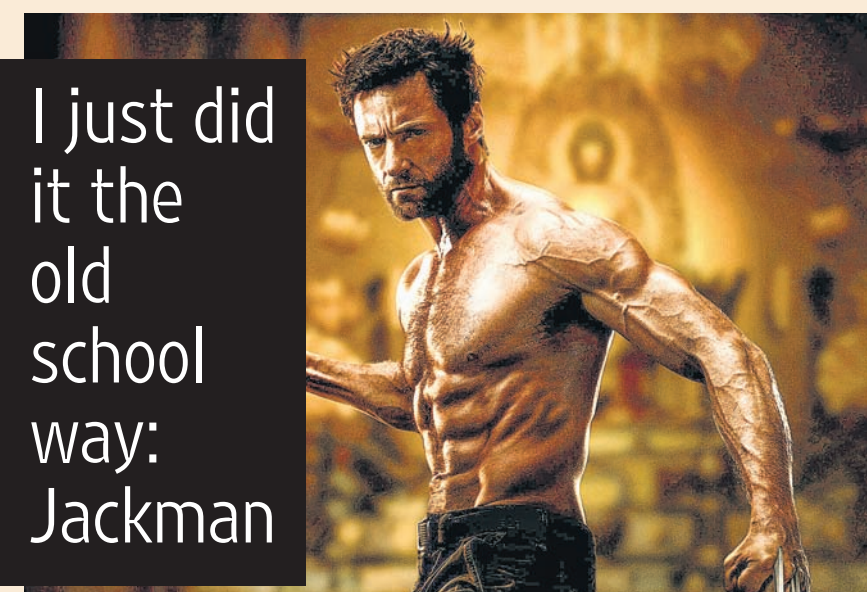
Actress Margot Robbie insists she improvised her kiss with Brad Pitt in 'Babylon'. The 32-year-old 'The Wolf of Wall Street' actress previously claimed it wasn't in the script of her latest film, in which she plays self-destructive silent film star Nellie LaRoy in the debauched Hollywood of the Roaring Twenties. But Brad said in December that he asked its makers to write in his screen kisses with co-star Robbie.

Robbie told the new issue of W magazine: "In 'Babylon', Nellie kisses a lot of people. I actually improvised a kiss that wasn't in the script. We were doing a party scene, and Nellie goes up to Brad Pitt's character and Katherine Waterston's character, and I was like, 'F\*\*\* it.'"

"I'm just gonna kiss them and see what happens. They were a little bit shocked. I don't know if it made it into the movie." Pitt said during an interview with Australian news show 'The Project' it was him who didn't want to pass the opportunity to kiss Margot.

He said: "No (it wasn't scripted.) I had asked for it, if we can write that in. You know, when was I going to get a chance to do this again? And we did it. I might add too that Nellie (Margot's character) kisses 15 people in this movie."

Pitt is said to be dating jewellery executive Ines de Ramon, 32, after divorcing Angelina Jolie in 2019, while Margot has been married to 32-year-old film producer Tom Ackerley since 2016.



## I just did it the old school way: Jackman

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Hugh Jackman has finally addressed speculation that he used steroids to transform into Wolverine.

Shutting down the rumours once and for all, the 54-year-old hunk said that he's not interested in taking the performance enhancing drug after learning of the possible side effects, reports aceshowbiz.com.

In an interview with CNN's Chris Wallace for his series 'Who's Talking to Chris Wallace?' the host mentioned fans' questions: "Over the years people have wondered, did he juice? Did he take steroids?" He also remarked: "You got so jacked for these movies." Jackman, seemingly amused, laughed at the question before denying it, "No". He explained why steroids were not an appealing option: "I love my job, and I love Wolverine - I got to be careful what I say here, but, I had been told, anecdotally, what the side effects are of that, and I was like, 'I don't love it that much.'"

He added: "So no, I just do it the old school way." Sharing his secret to get in shape for the role, the Australian actor spilled: "And I tell you, I've eaten more

## Shutting down the rumours on taking steroids to transform into Wolverine

chickens - I'm so sorry to all the vegans and vegetarians and to the chickens of the world." He went on joking that he may get in trouble because of his diet, saying, "Literally the karma is not good for me. If the deity has anything related to chickens, I'm in trouble."

"I've learned you can't rush it. I've learned that it takes time," he said in the same interview. "So, we have six months from when I finish (Broadway's 'The Music Man') to when I started filming. And I'm not doing any other work. I'm going to be with my family and train. That's going to be my job for six months."

Feeling confident that he can do it, the 'Real Steel' star boasted about how his Broadway role helps him for his Wolverine return. "And I'm really fit right now. There's one thing about eight shows a week being on Broadway, singing and dancing, is I'm fit. So, I'm healthy. I have a good place to start."

## 'Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantummania' trailer

Multiple Paul Rudd's face a brutal ending



Los Angeles | Agencies

The makers of 'Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantummania' dropped a brand new trailer during the College Football Playoff National Championship, and it features Paul Rudd.

Rudd's Scott Lang strikes a deal with the multiverse-hopping villain Kang the Conqueror, played by Jonathan Majors, as he seeks to recoup the five years he lost during the blip in 'Avengers: Endgame', reports Variety.

During that time, his daughter, Cassie Lang, grew into a teenager, and it seems like Scott will do anything to make up lost time with her. And when his agreement with Kang backfires, he's even willing to sacrifice himself. Plus, we get some Paul Rudd-multiverse mayhem as two identical versions of Ant-Man come face to face, and even more run around wild in the Quantum Realm.

The third installment of director Peyton Reed's 'Ant-Man' trilogy also brings back Evangeline Lilly, Michael Douglas and Michelle Pfeiffer as Janet van Dyne, aka Wasp, inventor Hank Pym and Hope van Dyne, who was rescued from the Quantum Realm in 2018's 'Ant-Man and the Wasp'.

The trailer showcases the brutal Kang, who was last seen as He Who Remains in the Season 1 finale of 'Loki' on Disney+.

He Who Remains, a variant of Kang from an alternate timeline, was killed by Sylvie (Sophia Di Martino) in the show's finale, which unleashed waves of multiversal chaos and the wrath of Kang, a universe-traversing threat. The purple-and-green-suited villain will be a big player in the current Multiverse Saga of the MCU. At the 2022 San Diego Comic-Con, Marvel Studios chief Kevin Feige revealed the upcoming slate of films for the MCU's Phases 5 and 6, which end with two 'Avengers' movies in 2025 and 2026.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Bella Hadid





### 1st ODI: India vs Sri Lanka

# KOHLI'S 45TH CENTURY; ROHIT, GILL FIFTIES PROPEL TEAM INDIA TO 67-RUN VICTORY

Guwahati | Agencies

Virat Kohli's 45th ODI century and captain Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill fifties powered India to a 67-run victory over Sri Lanka in the first game and 1-0 lead in the three-match series at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium, here on Tuesday.

An opening stand of 143 between Gill, who made 70 off 60 and Rohit, who smashed 83 off 67 balls, put India into ascendancy early and set the tone for a big total. Then Kohli smacked his second consecutive ODI century, 113 off 87 balls, making the most out of two reprieves while hitting 12 fours and a six for India to make an improbable 373/7.

In reply, Sri Lanka made 306/8, with Shanaka's 88-ball 102 coming too late after opener Pathum Nissanka made 72 off 80 balls. Young tearaway pacer Umran Malik picked figures of 3/57, while Mohammed Siraj scalped an impressive 2/30. Mohammed Shami, Yuzvendra Chahal, and Hardik Pandya had a wicket each as the hosts' now have 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

On a flat pitch with a lightning fast outfield, Kohli was initially watchful. He had some serious timing in his drives. He was magical in whips off wrists, like the one which went over mid-wicket for six and got him his fifty.

Kohli was in imperious touch, picking slower deliveries with ease and ramping short balls over keeper's head while maintaining the balance between front foot and back foot stroke-play and earned reprieves when his catches were dropped on 52 and 81.



Pushed into batting first, Rohit and Gill's partnership ended when Gill was beaten on the flick and was trapped lbw by Shanaka. Four overs later, Rohit got a big inside edge off Madushanka and saw his off-stump being uprooted. Chasing 374, Sri Lankan batters didn't showed passion. Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka slammed a valiant unbeaten 102 but that only reduced the margin of defeat.

#### Brief scores

India 373/7 in 50 overs (Virat Kohli 113, Rohit Sharma 83; Kasun Rajitha 3/88, Dasun Shanaka 1/22) beat Sri Lanka 306/8 in 50 overs (Dasun Shanaka 108 not out, Pathum Nissanka 72; Umran Malik 3/57, Mohammed Siraj 2/30) by 67 runs

### GLAD I COULD PLAY AT TEMPO OF THE GAME: KOHLI

Guwahati: After smashing his 45th ODI century in the series opener against Sri Lanka on Tuesday, Virat Kohli said he was glad to have played at the tempo of the game to make two hundreds in a row in the format and propel India to a score of above 370, here.

With the ton, Virat Kohli now has 20 ODI tons at home. He has equalled the record of batting legend Sachin Tendulkar, who too has 20 centuries in the format at home - most by any batter. Virat took only 99 innings to accomplish 20 tons at home while Sachin did so in 160 innings. On way to his 73rd international ton, Kohli also became the fastest to score 12500 ODI runs in 257 innings. Kohli now is four tons short of Sachin's record of 49 ODI tons. With his 45th ODI ton, Kohli now has nine centuries against Sri Lanka. It's the most number of tons scored by an Indian batter against the islanders.

## 'I am in good shape': Nadal confident of his Aus Open title defence



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Defending Australian Open champion Rafael Nadal is confident of his title defence in Melbourne, saying "I am in good shape" despite back-to-back losses in the United Cup in Sydney.

Nadal had a brilliant start to the 2022 season that saw him win four titles including the Australian Open and French Open - but the abdominal injury ruined his latter half of the season. Even the Spaniard did not get the start he wanted in the 2023 season as he lost both his singles rubbers at the United Cup. "It's true that the last couple of tournaments I wasn't able to play to my standards and here at the begin-

ning of the season I lost two matches in Sydney, but honestly, I am not unhappy with the preparation," new.com.au quoted Nadal. "I need to win matches for sure. But the preparation is going quite well, practising a lot and I think I am in good shape. Then you need to demonstrate that in the matches, in the official tournaments." "But I'm confident that if I am able to have this last week of positive practices, why not?" he said. Ahead of the main round of the season's first Grand Slam, starting from January 16, the 22-time Grand Slam champion is slated to take on Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in a charity match at Rod Laver Arena on Friday.

## FA Cup: Arsenal fend off Oxford United to reach fourth round

Oxford | Agencies

Mohamed Elneny and Eddie Nketiah struck for Arsenal in a 3-0 victory over hosts Oxford United in the third round of the Emirates FA Cup.

A tense first half at the Kassam Stadium saw both sides struggle to create chances, with neither team able to produce a moment of magic when it mattered, reports thefa.com.

However, the second half showed renewed intent from the 14-time champions and Elneny's header and Nketiah's brace saw them seal a deserved victory on the night.

Arsenal were largely in control in the opening 20 minutes and ultimately throughout the first half,



though neither side were able to generate an early opportunity.

It was the hosts who eventually produced the first shot on goal 25 minutes in, though Cameron Brannagan's long-range strike was easily blocked.

A string of corners went Arsenal's way though some stern defending, particularly from the likes of Lewis Bate, saw the U's stay on level terms. However, just after the hour mark Elneny rewarded Arsenal's pressure with a goal.

## Malaysia Open TREESA-GAYATRI DUO ADVANCES; SRIKANTH, SAINA BOW OUT EARLY

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies

Rising Indian women's doubles pair Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Pullela Gopichand on Tuesday sailed into the Round-of-16 of the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament while ace shuttlers Kidambi Srikanth and Saina Nehwal suffered first-round exit on Tuesday.

Commonwealth Games bronze medallist pair Treesa and Gayatri registered a straight game 21-19, 21-14 victory over Hong Kong's Yeung Nga Ting and Yeung Pui Lam of Hong Kong here at Axiata Arena.

The world no. 16 Indian pair will cross swords with the world no 14 Bulgarian sisters Gabriela Stoeva and Stefani Stoeva for a spot in the quarterfinals.

Earlier, World championships silver medallist Srikanth, who is struggling with his form lately, failed to



register a win in the year's first tournament and lost 19-21, 14-21 to world No. 17 Kenta Nishimoto of Japan. On the other hand, Nehwal went down fighting 12-21, 21-17, 12-21 to Han Yue of China. After losing the opening game, Nehwal bounced back into the

contest taking the second game 21-17 and managed to force the decider. However, the Indian shuttler could not maintain the momentum in the deciding game and ended up on the losing side against the world No. 11 Chinese.

In other action, Aakarshi Kashyap too suffered defeat in her first round at the hands of Wen Chi Hsu of Chinese Taipei 10-21, 8-21. Men's doubles pair Krishna Prasad Garaga and Vishnuvardhan Goud Panjala lost to South Korea's Kang Min Hyuk and Seo Seung Jae 10-21, 18-21 in the preliminary round.

The women's doubles pair of Treesa and Gayatri registered India's only win on the opening day of the Super 1000 tournament.

On Wednesday, two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu will face Spain's Carolina Marin in her first match while Lakshya Sen will lock horns with his compatriot HS Prannoy for a place in the round of 16.

World championships bronze medallist men's double pair Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy will be up against South Korea's Choi Sol Gyu and Kim Won Ho in their season's first tournament.

### U19 Women's T20WC warm-ups

## INDIA CLAIMS CONFIDENCE-BOOSTING WIN

South Africa | Agencies

India, Pakistan and Indonesia claimed confidence-boosting wins to open their official warm-up matches of the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup.

It might not have been the best day with the bat for Shafali Verma (run out for 10), though the 18-year-old with 72 senior white-ball appearances came through with her off-spin, reports icc-cricket.com.

Verma has taken just seven senior international wickets across 24 overs, though she proved tough for Australia's batting line up, claiming opener



Paris Bowdler and ripping through the middle order to take 3/8 from four overs that included a maiden.

Parshavi Chopra's 2/14 (3 overs) combined with Verma to keep Australia to 79/7, successfully defending their 97/8. Hrishita Basu's 28 at No.7 proved invaluable in India's first innings, with Richa Ghosh's 12 the next best with the bat.

### ICC Player of the Month award for December 2022

## Ashleigh Gardner, Harry Brook claims Women's-Men's award respectively



Los Angeles | Agencies

Australia's off-spin all-rounder Ashleigh Gardner on Tuesday claimed the ICC Women's Player of the Month award for December 2022 after her contributions with bat and ball helped her team get to

T20I series victory in India. Her performances also meant she now sits on top of Women's T20I Player Rankings for all-rounders.

Ashleigh saw off challenges from New Zealand's Suzie Bates and England's Charlie Dean to become the fourth Australian female to win the award in 2022 following in the footsteps of Rachael Haynes (who won in March), Alyssa Healy (April) and Tahlia McGrath (July).

England batter Harry Brook on Tuesday claimed his maiden ICC Men's Player of the Month award thanks to a blistering run of scores in December 2022 which helped the Ben Stokes-led



side claim a historic Test series victory in Pakistan. Brook, who also fetched a deal worth INR 13.25 crore with Sunrisers Hyderabad during IPL 2023 mini player

auction, was largely unstoppable during England's triumphant Test return to Pakistan, scoring centuries in each match as the tourists sealed a 3-0 victory.

## HUGO LLORIS HANGS HIS BOOTS

Paris: France captain and goalkeeper Hugo Lloris has announced his retirement from international football three weeks after the 2022 World Cup loss to Argentina.

Lloris made his international debut as a 21-year-old in a friendly against Uruguay in November 2008. The goalkeeper captained the French side on record 121 occasions since 2010. He also has a record of 145 appearances for France in 14 years of his career.

"I've decided to stop my international career, with the feeling that I have given everything," Lloris told France's Sports daily L'Equipe. "I think it is important to announce this now, two-and-a-half months before the start of Euro qualifying."

The 2018 World Cup champion played his last match on December 18, during the final of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar which France lost against Argentina (3-3, 2-4) on penalties.



## ASB Classic Barrere survives Isner serving storm, Cyclone Hale in Auckland

Auckland | Agencies

French qualifier Gregoire Barrere survived an ace deluge from two-time champion John Isner and a move indoors due to Cyclone Hale to move into the second round of the ASB Classic, here.

The World No. 88 survived 28 aces from sixth-seeded Isner to advance 6-7(3), 7-6(5), 6-3, reports aptour.com. Avenging a four-set loss to Isner in the second round of Roland Garros last year, Barrere cracked a clean

cross-court service return winner off an aggressive Isner second serve in the eighth game of the third set to claim the only break of serve in the match. Barrere notched just his fourth win in 23 outings against Top 50 opposition. He has never beaten a Top 50 player outdoors, but didn't need to today after matches were moved indoors due to torrential rain. Barrere was solid on his own serve, winning 84 per cent of first serves and 69 per cent of second serves. He did not face a break point.

## HUGE HONOUR TO PLAY MY FOURTH WORLD CUP FOR INDIA: PR SREEJESH

Rourkela | Agencies

All set to play his fourth World Cup for India, experienced goalkeeper PR Sreejesh emphasised that it's the results that matter more than the number of times a player turns up for a marquee event like the World Cup.

While he admits it's a huge honour to turn up for his fourth World Cup, Sreejesh knows very well that this is a great opportunity to change India's fortunes at the ultimate tournament for hockey, in which India awaits to finish on the podium since 1975 triumph when the illustrious Ajit Pal Singh-led team won the tournament beating Pakistan in the Final.

"It is a great honour for me to play my fourth World Cup for our country and



the special part is, this is my third World Cup on home soil. I don't think any player has had this privilege of playing three World Cups at home," expressed

Sreejesh who was instrumental in India's Bronze Medal feat at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

While this achievement in itself puts Sreejesh among the world's greatest players, he was quick to add that results are what make one great. "Most of the time, I have always felt it's not about how many times you have played a tournament but whether you have won it or not is what matters the most for me. This time too, it's important for me to give my 100 per cent and get the desired result from the tournament," he added.

Sreejesh also got nostalgic about his first outing at the World Cup when his former Coach asked him to pad up to guard India's post against nemesis Pakistan. This was during the FIH Men's World Cup in New Delhi back in 2010.

## Judoka Tulika Maan credits Khelo India for her CWG 2022 success

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian Judoka Tulika Maan, who aims for a medal in the Asian Games, has credited the Khelo India scheme for her performance at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, where she bagged the silver medal in +78kg category.

Prior to her Birmingham success in 2022, Maan also clinched two gold medals in the 2019 Commonwealth Championships. Moreover, she also has a gold medal in the South Asian Games, held in the

same year. "Khelo India really helped me for the Commonwealth Games. If Khelo India was not there then I would not be in SAI Bhopal, where I had a fixed training cycle that includes my diet and sleep routine. I played my first competition in 2018 Khelo India in Pune. In total, I played four Khelo India tournaments that include University Games. This scheme helps in the upliftment of athletes from a grassroots level," Maan said in an interaction facilitated by Sports Authority of India (SAI).





## I would love to play most beautiful Madhubala's biopic: Yami

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Yami Gautam Dhar envisions doing a biopic of the iconic and her "favourite" actress Madhubala. When asked whose biopic she would like to do, Yami said: "The most beautiful one would be Madhubala. I know that there are some films being announced, but it's nothing to do with those announcements."

She added: "I have always said this in my make-up room, because I used to watch her songs at night. So at night, I have this habit till date, of watching either some old songs or some old interviews."

"It could be Madhubala to Smita interviews, and my God! How well-spoken they were. I wish again, one of those actors were still alive. There was so much more that was left to be seen and I wish she was here today, because she's one of my most favourite actors." Meanwhile, on the work front, Yami has more power-packed performances lined up with projects like 'Chor Nikal Ke Bhaga', 'OMG2' and 'Dhoom Dham' among other unannounced projects.



Ill-health makes Shruti to miss pre release launch event

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Shruti Haasan is gearing up for two big-ticket releases this week with 'Waltair Veerayya' starring Chiranjeevi and 'Veera Simha Reddy' led by Balakrishna.

She could not, however, be a part of the 'Waltair Veerayya' pre-release launch. According to unit sources, Shruti could not make it to the event due to ill-health brought on by fatigue and exertion.

Shruti had a hectic 2022 and spent most of last year shooting for her various projects across industries.

According to sources close to her, Shruti hasn't been 100 per cent fit since the Greece schedule of her international film 'The Eye', as it was a physically gruelling shoot and she was practically living out of a suitcase for more than four months because of back-to-back shoots.

Despite this, she ensured that she was back on sets to complete the shoot for her January releases so as to not hamper their release in any way.

Tollywood's 'Mega Star' Chiranjeevi, who's opposite Shruti in 'Waltair Veerayya', praised her for her professionalism as she completed the film's shooting as per schedule despite being under the weather.

Fans of the actress were worried about her health after she put out a status on her social media accounts ruing the fact that she could not be part of the 'Waltair Veerayya' event, but she assured them that with adequate rest and medication she will be back soon.

## GURU & SHEHNAAZ'S UPCOMING IS A HEARTBREAKING MELODY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Suit Suit' and 'Lahore' hitmaker Guru Randhawa is back with another music video, this time in the form of 'Moon Rise' featuring himself and Shehnaaz Gill. The music video, directed by Gifty,

presents a palpable chemistry between Guru and Shehnaaz.

Talking about the music video, Guru said, "I'm extremely happy to be releasing the music video of 'Moon Rise' after the amazing response that we got on the audio. I don't think there could be a better co-star than Shehnaaz for this song because she is such a fun loving person who lights up the entire mood. We had an absolutely amazing time while shooting with so many fun and frolic moments. I hope the audience enjoys watching the music video as much as we enjoyed shooting." The melodious yet heartbreaking song has been composed and written by Guru Randhawa while the music production is done by Sanjoy Shehnaaz Gill, who features alongside Guru in the video, shared her experience of shooting for the song. She said, "Shooting with Guru was definitely a memorable experience, as it was our first time working together on something. We've known each other for a very long time and finally coming together for such a beautiful song was absolutely amazing. We had a lot of fun and pleasant moments while filming the music video and I'm looking forward to more such projects together in the future."

The Director of this music video, Gifty said, "Both Guru Randhawa and Shehnaaz Gill have had amazing chemistry throughout the music video.

Since both of them have cheerful personalities they looked amazing on the screen and their chemistry is phenomenal too. The two have done complete justice to the song."



## 'Playing Tanhaji was a dream and an honour': Ajay Devgn

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As his film 'Tanhaji: The Unsung Hero' turned three on Tuesday, actor-filmmaker Ajay Devgn shared how playing the titular role was an honour and a dream come true for him. Ajay took to his Instagram story and wrote: "Playing the role of Tanhaji was a dream and an honour that resulted in the highest grosser of 2020 and also won us two National Awards. Happy & Humbled." His production house, Ajay Devgn Films shared a video featuring moments from

the film on Instagram and the caption mentioned: "A film that united the entire nation."

'Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior' released in 2020. The film is a historical action film directed by Om Raut. Tracing the life of Maratha warrior Tanaji Malusare, it stars Ajay as the eponymous lead, Kajol and Saif Ali Khan. It also features Neha Sharma, Sharad Kelkar and Luke Kenny. Set in the 17th century, it revolves around Tanaji's attempts to recapture the Kondhna fortress once it passes on to Mughal emperor Aurangzeb who transfers its control to his trusted guard Udaybhan Singh Rathore.

## Samantha replies to the tweet that said she's 'lost her charm and glow'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu, who is gearing up for the release of her upcoming historical drama film 'Shaakuntalam', recently reacted to a tweet which claimed that the actress has "lost her charm and glow." A verified Twitter handle posted a picture of the actress from the trailer launch event of 'Shaakuntalam' and wrote on the picture: "Feeling sad for Samantha. She lost all

her charm and glow. When everyone thought she came out of divorce strongly and her professional life is seeing heights, myositis hit her badly, making her weak again."

Samantha, who looked beautiful in an ivory-coloured saree and accessorised her look with glasses, replied to the said tweet: "I pray you never have to go through months of treatment and medication like I did...And here's some love from me to add to your glow."

Samantha was diagnosed with an autoimmune condition called Myositis last year. The autoimmune disorder that makes a person's immune system attack their muscles. It causes chronic inflammation - swelling that comes and goes over a long time. On the professional front, Samantha, who made her big digital debut with the Prime Video series 'The Family Man 2', will reportedly also feature in the Indian Prime Video original of 'Citadel' as well.



## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Vaani Kapoor