

absolute india

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INDIA SUCCESSFULLY TEST NUCLEAR CAPABLE MISSILE AGNI-5

"The missile, which uses a three-stage solid fuelled engine, is capable of striking targets at ranges up to 5,000 kilometres with a very high degree of accuracy," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

India on Wednesday successfully tested its nuclear-capable surface to surface ballistic missile Agni-5 that can hit a target at a range of 5,000 km from A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Island.

"The missile, which uses a three-stage solid fuelled engine, is capable of striking targets at ranges up to 5,000 kilometres with a very high degree of accuracy," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

The successful test of Agni-5 is in line with India's stated

policy to have "credible minimum deterrence" that underpins the commitment to "No First Use."

The Agni-5 has been developed by the DRDO and the Bharat Dynamics Ltd and weighs close to 50,000 kgs.

The missile is 1.75 meters tall with a diameter of 2 metres. It's 1,500 kg warhead will be placed on top of the three-stage rocket boosters that are powered by solid fuel.

Scientists have said that at its fastest, the Indian inter-continental ballistic missile will be 24 times faster than

the speed of sound travelling 8.16 kilometres per second, and achieving a high speed of 29,401 kilometres per hour.

It is equipped with a ring laser gyroscope inertial navigation system that works with satellite guidance.

It is also capable of hitting its target with pinpoint precision. It can be launched from mobile launchers.

It is programmed in such a way that after reaching the peak of its trajectory, it turns towards the earth to continue its journey to the target with an increased speed, due to the earth's gravitational pull.

Compelled to determine truth: SC sets up expert panel to probe Pegasus allegations

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it was compelled to take up the cause to determine the truth, as it appointed an independent expert technical committee supervised by a retired top court judge, Justice RV Raveendran, to probe the Pegasus snooping allegations.

A bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana said the court's effort is to uphold the rule of law, without entering the "political thicket", and added the alleged use of Pegasus on the citizens of the country, was of "grave concern." The bench also comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli said while technology is a useful tool for improving the lives of the people, at the same time, it can also be used to breach that sacred private space of an individual.

"Privacy is not the singular concern of journalists or social activists. Every citizen of India ought to be protected against violations of privacy," emphasized the bench, adding

this right is directly infringed when there is surveillance on an individual, either by state or any external agency.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, had refused to divulge details whether Pegasus was used or not, stating the information may affect the national security concerns of the country.

The bench said it is a settled position of law that in matters pertaining to national security, the scope of judicial review is limited. "However, this does not mean that the State gets a free pass every time the spectre of 'national security' is raised.

National security cannot be the bugbear that the judiciary shies away from, by virtue of its mere mentioning", said the bench.

The top court said invocation of national security by the state does not render it a mute spectator when foreign governments have seriously taken the purported spyware attack, and some governments have initiated proceedings internally to determine the truth.

"Certain grave allegations of

infringement of the rights of the citizens of the country have been raised, assuming great significance. In this light, this court is compelled to take up the cause to determine the truth and get to the bottom of the allegations made herein", said the bench.

Stating that snooping impacted the right to privacy and freedom of speech, the top court cited several compelling circumstances for it to constitute the committee.

The top court pointed out that documents filed by petitioners, which record certain material, cannot be brushed aside, such as the reports of reputed organisations like Citizen Lab and affidavits of experts.

Justice Raveendran would oversee the functioning of the technical committee and he will be assisted by Alok Joshi, former IPS officer and Dr. Sundeeep Oberoi, Chairman, Sub Committee in (International Organisation of Standardisation/International Electro-Technical Commission/Joint Technical Committee).

The three members of the techni-



cal committee are -- Dr. Naveen Kumar Chaudhary, Professor (Cyber Security and Digital Forensics) and Dean, National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat; Dr. Prabhakaran P., Professor (School of Engineering), Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, Kerala; and Dr. Ashwin Anil Gumaste, Institute Chair Associate Professor (Computer Science and Engineering), Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, Maharashtra.

The bench directed the committee to submit its report expeditiously and scheduled the matter for further hearing after eight weeks.

India fully determined to protect its maritime interests: Rajnath Singh

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India is fully determined to protect its maritime interests, while it supports the mandate of the UN Convention on Law of Seas, 1982, said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday. He pointed out the need for efficient and collaborative harnessing of the maritime potential of the Indo-Pacific region for a steady path to prosperity.

While addressing the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) 2021, being held virtually from October 27-29, 2021, the minister said: "India is committed to respecting the rights of all nations as laid down in the UN Convention on the Law of Seas (UNCLOS), 1982. We are fully determined to protect the legitimate rights and interests of our country in relation to our territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone, while supporting the maintenance of rule-based maritime systems, as mandated under UNCLOS, 1982."



Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's description of the Indo-Pacific as a region where the destinies of entities are interlinked, Singh said the seas are a vital communication link to facilitate transport of goods, exchange of ideas, catalysing innovations and contributing to bringing the world closer. "Although the Indo-Pacific is characterised by diversity, marked by a multiplicity of cultures, ethnicities, economic models, governance systems and varied aspirations, the oceans remain a common binding link," he said. Singh emphasised on the need for an efficient, cooperative and collaborative harnessing of the region's maritime potential for sustaining a steady path to prosperity.

He pointed out that while the seas offer abundant opportunities for sustenance and growth of mankind, they pose challenges such as terrorism, piracy, drug trafficking and climate change. He called for a cooperative response to these challenges which, he said, has considerable trans-national implications. "There is a need to find convergence of interests and commonality of purpose on maritime issues," he added.

Sharing his views on the broad theme of IPRD 2021, "Evolution in Maritime Strategy during the 21st Century: Imperatives, Challenges and Way Ahead", Singh said it dwells upon the region's past, gauges the present and then arrives at tenets that will form the foundation of maritime strategies for the future.

He hoped that the Dialogue will further the country's shared and collective vision for the Indo-Pacific.

Singh said he is looking forward to the recommendations that will result from the deliberations.

India says China's new boundary law is a concern

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India on Wednesday said that China's latest unilateral decision to bring about a legislation on land boundary law can have implications on existing bilateral arrangements on border management. Responding to media queries on China's Land Boundary law, official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Arindam Bagchi said, "We have noted that China has passed a new 'Land Boundary Law' on October 23, 2021. The law states among other things that China abides by treaties concluded with or jointly acceded to by foreign countries on land boundary affairs. It also has provisions to carry out reorganisation of districts in the border areas."

He further said that it may be noted that India and China have still not resolved the



boundary question. Both sides have agreed to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable resolution to the 'Boundary Question' through consultations on an equal footing. "We have also concluded several bilateral agreements, protocols and arrangements to maintain peace and tranquillity along the LAC in India-China border areas in the interim," Bagchi said.

In this regard, China's unilateral decision to bring about legislation which can have implications on our existing bilateral arrangements on

border management as well as on the boundary question is of concern to us. Such unilateral move will have no bearing on the arrangements that both sides have already reached earlier, whether it is on the Boundary Question or for maintaining peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in India-China Border areas.

"We also expect that China will avoid undertaking action under the pretext of this law which could unilaterally alter the situation in the India-China border areas," the MEA spokesperson said.

"Furthermore, the passage of this new law does not in our view confer any legitimacy to the so-called China Pakistan 'Boundary Agreement' of 1963 which the Government of India has consistently maintained is an illegal and invalid agreement," he added.

EC warns Assam Chief Minister over breach of model poll code

Team Absolute | Guwahati

The Election Commission on Wednesday warned Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and cautioned him to be more careful and exercise restraint in future and strictly follow the provisions of Model Code of Conduct (MCC), while making public utterances.

The EC's warning came a day after the Chief Minister sought "unconditional apology" in case of any inadvertent commission or omission of any provision of the MCC in response to the poll panel's show cause notice over his alleged violation of MCC during campaigning for the October 30 Assembly by-elections, following a complaint from the Congress.

EC Secretary N.T. Bhutia in an order said that in his reply on Tuesday, the Chief Minister denied the allegations on the ground that all the announcements for various development works and also the announcement for giving financial assistance to self-help groups of tea garden workers are either ongoing projects or had already been announced by the state government in the budget speeches of 2020-21 and 2021-22 in the state Assembly.

"No new or fresh announcements as alleged by the complainants have been made by him. He has also cited documentary evidence of the same," the order said quoting the CM's reply.

The EC order said: "Sarma, star Campaigner for Bharatiya Janata Party



has acted in contravention to the spirit of the advisory and instruction issued by the Commission vide its letter dated January 7, 2007 concerning the MCC. The Commission issues warning to him and cautions him to be more careful and exercise restraint in future and strictly follow the provisions of the MCC, while making public utterances."

The poll panel said that notice was served to Sarma on Monday following separate complaints by Assam state Congress President Bhupen Kumar Borah and leader of Opposition in the Assembly Debabrata Saikia, that the Chief Minister, during the campaign, promised the construction of medical colleges, roads, bridges, stadiums, development projects and financial grant to self-help groups of tea garden workers. Bhutia in his Wednesday's

order said that a delegation of the Congress met the commission on Tuesday and reiterated the issues stated in the written representation and also added a fresh allegation of discriminatory treatment vis-a-vis Indian National Congress over use of school field at Srirampur High School for the purpose of holding an election rally.

They requested the Commission for urgent intervention and necessary directions as per the MCC. "...On the basis of the report of Assam Chief Electoral Officer, it found that the said school field had not been allotted to any political party," the order stated.

By-elections will be held for five Assembly seats - Bhabanipur, Mariani, Thawra, Tamulpur and Gossaigaon - on October 30. The counting of votes will take place on November 2.

PM Modi has given a 'human angle' to GDP: Amit Shah

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a 'human angle' to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) keeping the poor at the forefront.

Delivering a lecture at a conference on 'Delivering Democracy: Reviewing two decades of Narendra Modi as head of the government' organised by Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini, Shah said the GDP must grow but its beneficiary should be the poor and the needy, adding that the Prime Minister's reforms have always been based on the needs of the poor.

Describing Modi as the best Prime Minister after independence, the Union Home Minister said houses for the poor were built earlier, too, but Modi has changed the scale of the policy.

"Two crore people have also been provided houses and I assure you that by August 15, 2022, every poor will have a house," Shah



added. Toilets have empowered women across the country, and providing water to every household will further improve the health of all Indians, he said.

Pointing to Modi's agricultural reforms, Shah said the previous governments chose the path of loan waivers but under Modi's leadership, Rs 6,000 are deposited into farmers' accounts which help pay their input costs as there are 60 per cent marginal farmers and this amount is enough for the input cost of

his agricultural activities.

Pointing out that the Prime Minister brought in governance reforms which are about transforming the ground reality and not superficial administrative changes, the Minister said for the first time a separate security policy was formulated under Modi's leadership and he differentiated the security policy from the shadow of the foreign policy.

After 2014, the Prime Minister took various bold decisions like demonetisa-

tion, abolition of Triple Talaq and One rank One Pension for the benefit of the defence forces, Shah added.

After 2019, when people of the country elected Modi for a second term, he announced the abrogation of Article 370 and 35-A from Jammu and Kashmir.

Referring to International Yoga day, Shah said under his leadership and policy, 177 countries in the world decided to celebrate June 21 as International Yoga Day every year.

Shah referred to the Ujjwala Yojana, clean drinking water to every household, 100 per cent electrification of villages across the country, Ayushman Bharat health card to seven crore people. The Home Minister said the country has recently touched the 100 crore vaccination mark under Modi's leadership.

Keeping in view the new challenges in all fields, the Prime Minister brought a separate drone policy, space policy, and merged green, blue and white revolutions into one integrated policy for agriculture.



Whether Pegasus acquired by centre or state agency, SC sets out terms for probe

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the three-member technical committee to probe whether any Pegasus suite of spyware was acquired by the Centre, state government, central and state agency for use against the citizens of the country. If yes, then under what law such deployment was made.

A bench headed by justice NV Ramana, giving details of terms of reference of the expert committee, whose functioning will be overseen by retired top court judge R.V. Raveendran, said the committee will investigate whether Pegasus suite of spyware was used on phones or other devices of the citizens of India to access stored data, eavesdrop on conversations, intercept information and/or for any other purposes. The top court asked the committee to find details of the victims affected by the spyware attack

and what steps were taken by the Centre after the hacking of WhatsApp accounts surfaced in 2019.

The top court also asked the expert committee to make recommendations, "to ensure prevention of invasion of citizens' right to privacy, otherwise than in accordance with law, by state and/or non-state entities through such spywares." The bench also comprising justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli entrusted the panel to make recommendations regarding the setting up of a well-equipped independent premier agency to investigate cyber security vulnerabilities, for threat assessment relating to cyber attacks and to investigate such instances in the country. The top court also asked the committee to suggest the establishment of a mechanism for citizens to raise grievances on suspicion of illegal surveillance of their devices. The bench tasked the committee to find, "If any gov-

ernmental agency has used the Pegasus suite of spyware on the citizens of this country, under what law, rule, guideline, protocol or lawful procedure was such deployment made?"

The bench also tasked the expert panel to make recommendations regarding enactment or amendment to existing law and procedures on surveillance and for securing improved right to privacy. "Regarding any ad hoc arrangement that may be made by this Court as an interim measure for the protection of citizen's rights, pending filling up of lacunae by the Parliament. On any other ancillary matter that the Committee may deem fit and proper", said the bench seeking panel's suggestions.

The top court asked the committee to expeditiously carry out the task assigned and scheduled the matter for further hearing after eight weeks.

CONG WELCOMES SC'S DECISION TO SET UP PROBE PANEL ON PEGASUS

New Delhi: After the Supreme Court on Wednesday set up a three-member committee to probe the Pegasus spyware snooping allegations, the Congress has welcomed the decision and said that the government was evading and diverting the issue. The Congress in a statement said, "dystopian state, where the government oppresses free speech, manufactures false propaganda on a daily basis and violates the personal lives of its citizens through constant surveillance," said Randeep Surjewala party chief spokesperson.

He added, "Pseudo-nationalism is the last refuge of cowardly fascists everywhere. Welcome SC order setting up Special Committee to examine misuse of spyware Pegasus despite Modi Govt's embarrassing attempts to evade, avoid & divert attention in the name of National Security. Satyamev Jayate!" The Congress had been on the forefront demanding enquiry into the snoogate. The committee set up by the Supreme Court will be supervised by a retired top court judge Justice R.V. Raveendran, who will be assisted by Alok Joshi, former IPS officer and Dr Sundeeep Oberoi. The Centre had argued that disclosing the details on the use of Pegasus spyware involves national security issues, as it refused to divulge any details.

Lalu blasts Nitish in first poll rally after 6 years

PATNA | Agencies

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad on Wednesday said that the current NDA government headed by Nitish Kumar is anti people. "They have stolen the mandate of the 2020 assembly elections and formed the government. Now, they are making policies to hurt people. Hence, the fight turns between common people and this government," Lalu Prasad said while addressing over 50 thousand people in Eidgah ground of Tarapur in Munger district on Wednesday.

Lalu Prasad further said, "Nitish Kumar is afraid of me when I said that I came here in Bihar to do his 'Visarjan' (end game)." "Nitish Kumar and the entire government are afraid of me. He (Nitish Kumar) said that Lalu Prasad will get him killed. Today he is ruling the state, he is a chief minister and also keeping home ministry. He is governing the police and living in tight security and he is saying that Lalu Prasad would get him killed. He believes that I have only one thing to do -- to kill people," Lalu Prasad said. "Nitish Kumar is a Paltu Ram. In the 2015 assembly elections RJD had more seats than JDU. Tejashwi can easily become the chief minister of the state but I made him (Nitish Kumar) the chief minister of Bihar. What happened then, he broke the alliance and sat in the lap of those who were responsible for killing Mahatma Gandhi. I arrested L.K. Advani and prevented him from demolishing Babri mosque. I never compromised with my



ideology but what Nitish did. He fought against the saffron party in the 2015 assembly elections and joined hands with them 15 months later," Lalu Prasad said.

"When I was the railway minister of the country, I reduced the fare every time I presented the railway budget to help the common man. Despite slicing the fare, I managed to give Rs 60,000 crore profit to the department. Now what is happening, the Narendra Modi government is selling Indian Railways, aviation industries, Navratna companies, ports and every profitable entity of the country to his business partners Ambani and Adani. As a result, the platform tickets are available at Rs 50 in the country," Lalu Prasad said.

"They are responsible for the price rise of petrol, diesel and every other commodities, even fruits and vegetables.

Something dangerous happening on Indo-Pak border: Amarinder

CHANDIGARH | Agencies

Slamming the state government for its repeated denial of any serious security issues, former Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Wednesday said there was something wrong and dangerous happening at the borders, which the state could ill-afford to ignore.

He trashed allegations that the Border Security Force (BSF) would take over the state's administration or will be deployed in the Golden Temple, and said such misconceptions were being spread by certain people to score brownie points in the run-up to the Assembly elections.

"The BSF is here for helping maintain national security as we are a border state," he said, calling for full support by the state to the Centre in the interest of national security.

Addressing a press conference here, Amarinder Singh said he was not an alarmist but his experience in the Indian Army and as chief minister of the state told him that "something is going to happen". "Yet a home minister who has been in his chair for one month claims to know more than me!" he quipped, taking a dig at Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa.



"Sleeper cells of the Pak ISI and Khalistani forces are creating trouble, technology is becoming more advanced. The capacity and range of drones is increasing, first they came in just 5-6 kms from the border, now they reach 31 kms," he

pointed out.

"We have to be very careful of the clandestine war from across the borders," he added. It was the duty of every responsible government to tackle such threats, Amarinder Singh stressed, countering those who mock his concerns over national security. The state government, he said, should put the facts before the people and take their help in getting information instead of denying the danger.

It should own up and take necessary action to combat the threat, he said, adding that even at the all-party meeting held on the issue, it seems the political parties were not properly briefed. While Punjab Police was a first class and well-trained force, they were, however, not trained to combat such threats, said the former Chief Minister, asserting they need the help of the BSF and the CRPF to tackle the problem.

He pointed out that even in the days of terrorism, the army was helping out and nobody took over the state government's job. The BSF's assistance was essential to maintaining peace in Punjab, he said, adding the state has been through tough times and nobody wants it to suffer again.

Another BJP lawmaker in Bengal joins Trinamool

KOLKATA | Agencies

Nearly a month after resigning from the BJP, Raiganj MLA Krishna Kalyani on Wednesday joined West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress.

Kalyani, who had fallen out with BJP MP Debasree Chaudhuri, took the party flag from party veteran and state General Secretary Partha Chatterjee.

Following heavyweights like Mukul Roy, former Union Minister Babul Supriyo, and Sabyasachi Dutta into the Trinamool, he is the fifth MLA to switch to the ruling party.

Besides Roy who won from Krishnanagar in Nadia district, the other MLAs who joined Trinamool are Soumen Roy from Kailaganj in north Bengal, Tanmay Ghosh from Bishnupur in



Bankura, and Biswajit Das from Bagda constituency in North 24 Parganas.

After joining Trinamool, Kalyani, a very influential leader of North Dinajpur, said: "There is no place for work in the BJP. There is only conspiracy and backstabbing. Nothing good can happen in this situation and so it is better to stay away from the

party." He had resigned from the BJP on October 1, this year alleging that Chaudhuri was conspiring against him. Terming her as a traitor, he had said: "I have come here to give service to the people. I cannot work with people who are more interested in other things and so I resigned. "More specifically I resigned because of Debasree Chaudhuri. She has backstabbed me. I cannot work with people like her."

Kalyani, who joined the BJP from Trinamool in January this year, said: "I made a mistake by joining BJP and I have rectified it within six months. I am inspired by the development and social work done by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and I want to be a part of that."

BJP joins hands with smaller outfits in UP

LUCKNOW | Agencies

The BJP in Uttar Pradesh is leaving no stone unturned to ensure its return to power in the 2022 Assembly elections. The party is joining hands with small -- even minuscule parties that presently have no presence in the political horizon of the state.

At a press conference held here on Wednesday, state BJP president Swatantra Dev Singh announced that several parties had decided to support the BJP in the upcoming elections.

These parties, he said, included Apna Dal B, Manav Samaj Party, Shoshit Samaj Party, Prithviraj Janshakti Party, Bhartiya Suheldev Janata Party, Musahar Andolan Mancha, Garib Party, Manav Samaj Party, Bhartiya Samta Samaj Party and Pragatisheel Samaj Party.

Singh said that for the BJP no party was big or small. "We welcome everyone into our fold



and everyone contributes to a bigger goal," he said. Incidentally, these smaller outfits announced their support to the BJP on a day when a former BJP ally, Om Prakash Rajbhar, who heads the Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP), held a massive rally in Mau district and mounted a blistering attack on the BJP government. The SBSP also formalised its alliance with Samajwadi Party and its president Akhilesh Yadav also attended the rally.

Plea filed in Delhi court against Haryana CM

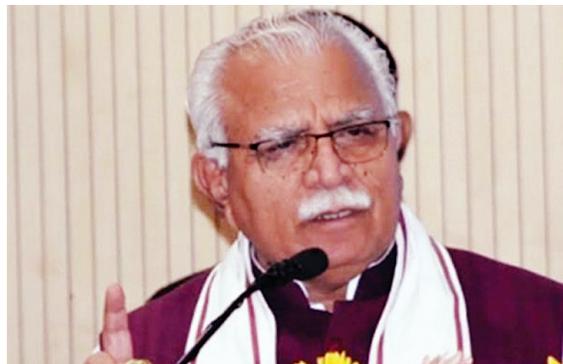
Team Absolute | New Delhi

A plea was filed in a court here on Wednesday against Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar over his statement during a meeting with workers of BJP's Kisan Morcha on October 3, in which he allegedly asked the party members to stand up against protesting farmers.

The petition alleged that as per the video of the meeting, the CM was asking party workers to make "500-600-1,000 volunteers" in every district of north and west Haryana, and be ready to "face sticks, imprisonment", which will make them "big leaders".

In the plea filed before Sachin Gupta, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Rouse Avenue Court, complainant Advocate Amit Sahni, contended that the link of the CM's meeting with partymen was live on YouTube.

However, after the portion of his controversial remarks went viral on



social media, the video was taken off, but it was broadcast by several persons connected with the Chief Minister Office, Haryana.

The video is still available on various social platforms and news websites, the petitioner said.

"The contents of the videos make it abundantly clear that the accused has committed offence under sections 109, 153, 153A and 505 IPC by giving provocation with intent to cause riot, promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race,

place of birth, residence, language, etc, and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony and making statements conducing to public mischief under section 109, 153, 153 A, 505 IPC," the plea stated.

Pointing out a series of related events, the plea said that earlier Haryana IAS officer Ayush Sinha made a controversial statement to "break heads" of farmers.

It also highlighted the controversial incident that took place during Khattar's 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' in 2019 as part of his campaign in the run-up to the Haryana assembly elections, in which he was allegedly heard saying "I will chop your head off," in a viral video. Quoting "Be ye never so high, the law is above you", the words of English Judge Lord Denning, the petitioner said that no one is above the law and that the law applies to everyone equally, regardless of anyone's rank or position.

Small LPG cylinders, financial services at FPS proposed

The Centre on Wednesday proposed to sell small LPG cylinders through Fair Price Shops (FPS) across the country. There is a proposal to provide financial services through FPS and extending MUDRA loans to its dealers for capital augmentation.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

There are a total of 5.32 lakh FPS in the country. With this step, the Centre is aiming at taking its services closer to poorer and needy consumers.

Focussing on enhancing financial viability of FPS, Department of Food and Public Distribution Secretary, Sudhanshu Pandey in a video conference with representatives of multiple ministries and PSUs stressed on the need of taking proactive measures for the same.

The representatives from oil marketing companies appreciated the proposal for retail selling of small LPG cylinders through FPS and informed that "necessary support required would be provided for the same in coordination with interested state or Union Territory (UT) governments," said a release from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution in New Delhi.

The representative from the Department of Financial Services appreciated the government's proposal to provide financial services through FPS, extending MUDRA loans to FPS dealers for capital augmentation and informed that necessary support would be provided for it



in coordination with interested state or UT governments.

Earlier, the CEO, Common Service Centre (CSC), gave a presentation about the various service offerings provided by it. An update on the activities undertaken by CSC to tie-up with individual state or UT governments to take this initiative forward was presented, too.

Set up under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the CSC scheme provides a centralised and collaborative framework for delivery of services to the citizens.

In his concluding remarks, Sudhanshu Pandey mentioned that different states or UTs can take up these initiatives and tailor them to suit their individual requirements.

Representatives from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, CSC e-Governance Services India Limited and all states/UTs participated in the virtual conference, the release added.



NAWAB MALIK ALLEGES WANKHEDE'S LINKS WITH GLOBAL DRUGS MAFIA, SEEKS PROBE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Continuing the war against the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede, Nationalist Congress Party Minister Nawab Malik on Wednesday accused the officer of alleged links with the international drug mafia and demanded a probe.

Addressing the media, Malik claimed that during the October 2 raid on the party aboard the luxury ship Cordelia Cruise at the International Cruise Terminal, there was one "bearded man" present in the alleged party, who is a former jailbird with stints in Delhi's Tihar Jail and a Rajasthan prison.

"That person belongs to an international drug mafia and was there with his girlfriend who was carrying a gun. Why no action taken against them? The cruise ship's CCTV footage of that day should be investigated and the truth will be revealed," Malik said.

The Minister alleged that Wankhede is connected with that bearded man whose antecedents everybody in the NCB knows seen dancing in the party



along with his gun-toting girlfriend, and there are some drug rackets going on even in Goa -- all of which needs to be probed. The NCP leader said that the drug party was organised by a private TV channel without taking due permissions from the state government or the police, no Covid-19 protocols were followed and the home department was not informed. Malik said the CDR records of two 'Panch-Witnesses'

Prabhakar Sail and Kiran Gosavi, along with Wankhede must be probed to unravel the complete truth.

In the ongoing serial revelations, earlier this morning, the minister posted a wedding photo of Sameer Dawood Wankhede's first marriage with Dr. Shabana Quraishi and a copy of their 'nikaah-nama' of 2006, and charged the officer of using forged documents to grab a reserved quota job in the IRS.

DELHI NCB TEAM TO QUIZ 'PANCH-WITNESS' PRABHAKAR SAIL

Mumbai: Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) vigilance team has summoned a 'Panch-Witness' Prabhakar Sail in connection with the allegations of extortion he levelled in his affidavit of October 23, here on Wednesday. The NCB team is likely to reach here later in the day and will question Sail for his statements claiming another 'Panch-Witness' Kiran Gosavi was the conduit for an alleged Rs 18-crore extortion bid from Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan. He had also said that a part of this amount, Rs 8-crore was allegedly to be given to the NCB Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede, currently in the eye of a huge storm with a series of charges hurled against him. In a related development, a businessman H.B. Bafna has claimed that his photo has been circulated as that of Sam D'Souza, one of the players in the alleged extortion bid, circulated by Sail.

NCB team questions Wankhede for over four hours

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In an unusual turn of events, a Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) vigilance team from New Delhi on Wednesday questioned the agency's Mumbai Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede for nearly four and a half hours at its Bandra camp office, a top official said.

The team leader Gyaneshwar Singh said that they have collected lot of documents and other evidences from him and he has submitted his version in the matter.

"If needed, we shall probe further and ask for more documents in the case," Singh said this evening. Simultaneously, he said the NCB vigilance team has requested the other two "Panch-Witnesses" "Prabhakar Sail" and Kiran Gosavi to appear before them to record their statements. "We have tried to serve them the summonses at their known addresses, but we could not do so. We appeal through the media. They should both appear before us in the next two days and record their statement - especially Prabhakar Sail - whose affidavit (October 23) has resulted in this enquiry," Singh said. The NCB team plans to question Sail for his statements claiming Gosavi - currently absconding - was the conduit for an alleged Rs 18 crore extortion bid



from Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan to get his son Aryan released. Sail also said that of this amount, Rs 8 crore was allegedly meant to be given to Wankhede, currently in the eye of a huge storm with a series of charges hurled against him. The NCB probe comes as an offshoot into the NCB's swoop on an alleged rave party aboard a cruise ship on October 2 in which 8 youngsters from the entertainment industry, including Aryan Khan, were nabbed, sparking off a huge controversy. In a related development, businessman H.B. Bafna has claimed that his photo has been circulated as that of Sam D'Souza, one of the players in the alleged extortion bid, circulated by Sail. Bafna has expressed fear for his life and sought a probe into how his photo came to be released as that of D'Souza on October 24.

Defence invokes Aryan's constitutional rights, matter adjourned to Thursday

Arguing strongly for bail, Aryan Khan's lawyers on Wednesday termed his arrest was "illegal" and invoked his constitutional rights even as the Bombay High Court adjourned the matter till Thursday afternoon.



reply to their arguments at the Thursday's hearing.

"The arrest memo did not give the true and correct grounds for arrest - Article 22 of the Constitution is more important than Section 50 of the CrPC. It states that no person should be held without being informed about the grounds of arrest and the person shall have the right to consult a lawyer of their choice," said Rohatgi.

He contended that the courts were misled by the NCB to believe that large quantities of drugs were recovered from the accused and said that the agency had proceeded in sheer violation

of Article 22. Pointing out that while "bail is the rule and jail is the exception", Desai argued that now it has become "arrest is the rule and bail is the exception" for the police.

He submitted that the first remand application of Merchant made no mention about the conspiracy and the court at that time was misled into believing that the accused were also charged under the NDPS Act's Sections 28 and 29.

"This is a direct infringement of Constitutional guarantees. We are all available to the agencies. Bail may be granted.

Now Nawab Malik celebrates 'nikaah' of 'sweet couple Sameer Dawood Wankhede-Shabana Quraishi'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In another shocker, the Nationalist Congress Party Minister Nawab Malik on Wednesday presented the purported 'nikaah' (Muslim marriage certificate) of Narcotics Control Bureau Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede, a day after the latter's wife and sister rubbished all allegations.

In a series of tweets, Malik posted the wedding photo of the 'Sweet Couple' and the 'nikaah-nama' of Sameer Dawood Wankhede's first marriage with Dr. Shabana Quraishi, performed on December 7, 2006 at 8 p.m. in Lokhandwala Complex in Andheri west.

The witness No. 2 was Aziz Khan, husband of Yasmeen Dawood Wankhede, the sister of Sameer Dawood Wankhede," Malik said.

He reiterated that the exposures about Sameer Dawood Wankhede were not about his religion, as is being portrayed in some quarters, including the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party.

"I want to bring to light the fraudulent means by which he has obtained a caste certificate to get an IRS job and has deprived a deserving Scheduled Caste (SC) person of his future," Malik



declared. Wankhede has earlier stated that he and Dr. Quraishi divorced with mutual consent and he later married Marathi actress Kranti Redkar-Wankhede. The latest revelations came a day after Redkar-Wankhede and Yasmeen Wankhede-Wankhede's wife and sister, respectively -- slammed the minister for the personal attacks and resorting to 'kitchen politics', and challenging him to prove his allegations before the courts. Their ire stemmed from the serial exposes by Malik over the past three weeks on Wankhede, topped off

Tuesday with a stunning claim that the over Rs 1,000-crore has been extorted from Bollywood people in Mumbai and Maldives.

The NCP Minister's contention is that Wankhede had allegedly submitted forged caste certificates to get a central government job under SC quotas even though he is a Muslim a charge vehemently denied by the Wankhede's father, sister and others.

The NCP leader now plans to forward all the documents to the Caste Verification Committee for probe and necessary action. Malik's independent



investigations into Wankhede's background and the allegations of corruption plaguing the NCB has both rattled and regaled many in the central probe agency, besides triggering a massive political row with a series of accusations and counter-accusations hurled.

The NCB is sending a team to investigate and verify the charges against Wankhede after a 'Panch-Witness' Prabhakar Sail's purported affidavit making startling allegations of an extortion bid from Shah Rukh Khan, accused in the cruiser party raid.

COVID-19: Maharashtra cumulative vaccination tally crosses 9.62 crore

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In the ongoing vaccination drive, Maharashtra on October 26 has vaccinated 4,74,928 in 4,596 sessions. According to data released by the government, Maharashtra has inoculated 9,62,83,551 people.

As per the state government data 3,58,64,406 individuals aged between 18 and 44 years received their first vaccine dose and 1,13,57,818 received their second dose since the inoculation drive for this age group began on May 1. So far, 12,93,833 health care workers have been administered the first dose of the vaccine, while 11,14,068 of them have got their second dose.

Similarly, 21,46,363 frontline workers in the state have till now received their first vaccine dose and of them, 18,35,72,844 got their second dose.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra has achieved a milestone with over 3 crore persons now fully vaccinated against Covid-19, the Chief Minister's office informed on late Tuesday evening. In a



tweet by the Chief Minister's office in Marathi, it informed, "Today, Maharashtra crossed the milestone of 3 crore fully vaccinated citizens, the high-

est for any state in the country. It's a big feat for our healthcare system. We are also making sure to reach the goal of fully vaccinated households = fully vac-

inated Maharashtra!" Maharashtra on Tuesday logged 1,201 new COVID-19 infections, taking the tally to 66,05,051, the health bulletin informed.

Maharashtra Govt Announces Diwali Vacation For Schools

In view of the festive season, the education department of Maharashtra has announced a Diwali vacation from October 28 to November 10, 2021.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In view of the festive season, the education department of Maharashtra has announced a Diwali vacation from October 28 to November 10, 2021. During the Diwali vacation, no offline or online classes will be held, said the state government in an official statement on Wednesday. Offline classes in Maharashtra started on October 4 after state education Minister Varsha Gaikwad announced the reopening of the schools.

The 13-day vacation will provide a good opportunity for the students to celebrate festivals at home. Notably, schools in Maharashtra were closed for a very long time due to the prevalent COVID-19 situation, but after it was resumed, the schools were functioning in the offline mode under strict COVID measures. So far, physical classes for 1st to 7th in urban areas and 1st to 4th standards in rural areas

have not resumed. According to the government's guidelines, the schools are following a staggered school hours and entry system, along with social distancing inside the classroom.

Meanwhile, Ahmedabad's state education department has also announced the extension of Diwali vacation for colleges from 13 days to 21 days. As per the latest orders issued by the state education department, the Diwali vacation will now be from November 1 to 21. The announcement was made by the state education minister, Jitu Vaghani. This decision was taken due to the requests forwarded by several staff members and college representatives. On the other hand, the Delhi government has announced it will resume schools on November 1 in offline mode. Notably, several other states are yet to make announcements regarding the Diwali vacation.

ADB, India sign \$100 million loan for agribusiness development in Maharashtra

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India today signed a \$100 million loan to promote agribusiness network to boost farm incomes and reduce food losses in the State of Maharashtra.

Rajat Kumar Mishra, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance signed for the Government of India, the agreement for the Maharashtra Agribusiness Network (MAGNET) Project, while Takeo Konishi, Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission signed for ADB.

After the signing of the loan agreement, Mishra stated that the project supports agribusiness development in Maharashtra with holistic support to on-farm improvement in productivity, up-gradation of post-harvest facilities, and establishing efficient marketing structures to benefit horticulture producers.

"The project will help small and marginal farmers in Maharashtra improve their post-harvest and marketing capacity, reduce food losses, and increase incomes through access to finance, capacity building, and horticulture value chain infrastructure development," said Konishi. "The project interventions also align with ADB's ongoing support to rural sector transformation in the state through mutually complementary projects for improving irrigation efficiency through rural electrification and for enhancing rural connectivity."

Though Maharashtra produces 11% and 6% of India's fruit and vegetable production, respectively, and accounts for about 8% of the country's floriculture



exports, most smallholder farmers lack capital to scale up and do not have direct access to emerging high-value markets. The ADB loan will help provide financing opportunities for farmer producer organizations (FPOs) and value chain operators (VCOs) through matching grants and financial intermediation loans to support 300 subprojects.

The project will upgrade 16 existing post-harvest facilities and construct 3 new ones to provide individual farmers and FPOs clean, accessible, and sustainable crop storage and processing facilities. It will also build the capacity of FPOs and VCOs on value chain acceleration and post-harvest handling and management, especially those owned and led by women. The project is expected to benefit 200,000 farmers.

ADB will provide a \$500,000 technical assistance (TA) grant from its Technical Assistance Special Fund and \$2 million from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction on a grant basis to improve market linkages for FPOs. The TA will establish crop-based centers of excellence networks, promote innovative technologies in agribusiness and agriculture value chains, and support capacity building, including the asset and financial management capabilities of the MAGNET Society and the Maharashtra State Agriculture Marketing Board.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members-49 from the region.



EDITOR'S SPECS

End the impasse over three farm laws

The time may have come for a more concerted effort by the Government and the protesting farmers to find a solution to the prolonged impasse over the three agriculture-related laws enacted last year. The Supreme Court has emphasised that public roads cannot be blocked indefinitely by protesters. In an observation in the context of more petitions from members of the public, complaining that their right of free movement has been curtailed by the ongoing protests by farmers, the Court has said a solution has to be found, that roads cannot be blocked for long and there is no reason for it to lay down the law again and again. The reference was to last year's judgment on the Shaheen Bagh protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, wherein it was held that public ways and public spaces cannot be blocked indefinitely even during a peaceful protest. The observation can be seen either as a disapproval of the tactic of holding interminable protests or as an implicit criticism of the Government for being unable to find a solution to the farmers' grievances. Even while denying that they are responsible for the hardship faced by the public, and blaming the police for the blockade, the farmers say they should be allowed to continue their agitation at the Ramlila Maidan. There seems to be no attempt to break the deadlock on the core issue, with the farmers demanding an outright repeal of the laws and statutory validation for the claim that the MSP regime will not come to an end. Late last year, the protesting farmers and Union Ministers did come to a partial agreement on decriminalising stubble-burning and safeguarding power subsidies, but the two core demands have not seen any breakthrough. Any reform that seeks to eliminate distortions in the sector must also win the confidence of farmers, the principal stakeholders.

'Developed countries fail to meet climate goals, while India exceeds targets'

"When the developed world is exhibiting shortfall in actions with just 14.8 per cent (greenhouse gas emission) emission reduction against the target of 18 per cent reduction in the pre-2020 period, India is overachieving its voluntary target of emission reduction," Environment and Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav

While the developed countries are failing to meet their targets for fighting climate change, India has exceeded its targets, according to Environment and Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav. "When the developed world is exhibiting shortfall in actions with just 14.8 per cent (greenhouse gas emission) emission reduction against the target of 18 per cent reduction in the pre-2020 period, India is overachieving its voluntary target of emission reduction," he told the General Assembly's high level meeting on climate action on Tuesday. "Our 2030 targets under the Paris Agreement are considered ambitious and compatible with the Paris Agreement goals. We are on the path to achieving those targets," he said.

The UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) Emissions Gap Report released also on Tuesday confirmed India's achievement and suggested it should set higher targets.

The report said that India was projected to reduce "emissions to levels at least 15 per cent lower than their previous unconditional NDC (Nationally Determined Contributions) emissions target levels under current policies" and has "significant room for raising their NDC ambition."

NDCs are targets set by countries for cutting emissions to achieve the Paris Climate Change goal of keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and the NDC ambition is increasing the targets. According to the report, only Russia and Turkey are projected to meet the same levels as India.

The report, which is an annual report card on how the goals to meet the climate change challenges are being met, was released ahead of the summit of the G20, the group of 20 large economies in Rome this weekend and next week's UN climate change conference in Glasgow. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is attending both meetings.

Speaking at the release of the UNEP report, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned



that the world was "still on track for climate catastrophe" with global temperature rising around 2.7 degrees Celsius.

That will be below the Paris agreement's target of limiting global temperature increase by the end of the century to 2 degrees Celsius.

The report said that only ten of the 20 countries in the G20 group of large economies are likely to reach their original NDC targets -- and significantly the US and Canada, whose leaders preach the loudest to the rest of the world about global warming, are not among the ten. "It is worth noting that Canada and the United States of America have submitted strengthened NDC targets, while independent studies suggest that they are not on track to meet their previous NDC targets with currently implemented policies. These two countries therefore need to make significant additional efforts to meet their new NDC targets," according to the report.

US President Joe Biden is still struggling to get his own party to agree before the Glasgow meeting to his ambitious climate change agenda that is to be codified in his budget bill.

Yadav said in his address to the General Assembly that the developing countries that created the problem by enriching themselves through the use of fossil fuels must take the responsibility for it and support the developing countries that are facing the consequences of global warming.

"Those who are historically responsible for climate change and have benefited in the past through a carbon intensive development must step up their action and take lead in providing timely and adequate finance and technology to support developing countries to accelerate their actions," he said.

He said, "The current stock of greenhouse gases is a result of the economic growth in the industrialised countries in the past which demanded increasing amounts of energy in the form of fossil fuels and they became today's prosperous countries with capital stock and infrastructure. In contrast, the adverse impacts of climate change falls disproportionately on developing countries who contributed little to the stock of greenhouse

gases." Highlighting the problem, the UNEP report acknowledged that per capita emissions vary significantly across G20 members, with India's emissions about half the G20 average.

The media and politicians in developing countries downplay their countries' destructive emissions by diverting attention away from per capita emissions to the total emissions of the country without regard to its population. While they often say that India is the third biggest polluter, an Indian puts out only 1.8 tonnes of CO₂, while an American emits 15.2 tonnes and a Canadian 15.5 tonnes.

According to the UNEP report, India's NDC is for reducing the measure known as the emission intensity of gross domestic product (GDP) by 33 to 35 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030 and increasing the share of non-fossil fuels in primary electricity production to 40 per cent

"We have reduced our emission intensity of GDP by 24 per cent between 2005 and 2016, thereby achieving our pre-2020 voluntary target," Yadav said.

Emission intensity of GDP is the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted to produce a unit of GDP, which means that if the intensity is lowered, economic growth can be achieved with less pollution.

"India has also set out an ambitious target of 450 GW (gigawatts) of renewable energy by 2030. It may be noted that currently we have 389 GW total installed capacity. We have already achieved 155 GW of non-fossil fuel installed capacity as of now. We are accelerating action and we are confident to achieve this ambitious target by 2030," Yadav said.

The report said that China was the only large economy where carbon dioxide emissions from the use of fossil fuels rose last year, registering an increase of 1.3 per cent. In India it fell by 6.2 per cent.

international

BEIJING, MOSCOW EXPLORING OPTIONS TOGETHER ON AFGHANISTAN

Team Absolute | New Delhi

When Russia hosted a meeting with senior Taliban leaders in Moscow this week -- after both Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping sent junior deputies to an earlier G-20 leaders' meeting on Afghanistan -- it raised the question of whether this is part of a broader strategic plan for how Beijing and Moscow plan to work together on the world stage, Nikkei reported.

Afghanistan represents something of a paradox for both China and Russia. Though fearful of the large American military presence that was on their doorsteps, Moscow and Beijing were secretly happy that Washington was taking responsibility for the security situation on the ground, the report said. Now, irritated at the mess the US has left behind, China and Russia have decided that the way forward is to engage with the Taliban and explore options together. Both engaged publicly with the Taliban long before



Kabul fell, and both have left a substantial diplomatic presence since the Taliban took over. At the United Nations, Russia and China have both pushed for Taliban sanctions to be lifted, something highlighted during this week's Moscow Summit, the report said. China has strengthened its small base in Tajikistan, undertaking a number of bilateral exercises with Tajik special forces,

and the Russians have bolstered the Tajik armed forces as well as strengthened their own 7,000-strong military presence there and participated in larger regional exercises with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, it added. But it is hard to tell how many of these actions are coordinated, with some reports hinting at Moscow's frustration at the lack of cooperation with Beijing on the

ground in Tajikistan. At the other end of the scale, both have engaged in regular large-scale joint military exercises on Russian soil, including regular exercises overseen by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Eurasian security pact that includes China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Pakistan and Tajikistan, the report said.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Saudi Arabia has agreed to revive its financial support to Pakistan, including about \$3 billion in safe deposits and \$1.2bn to \$1.5bn worth of oil supplies on deferred payments, Dawn reported.

An agreement to this effect was reached during the visit of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan to the kingdom this week, a senior government official told Dawn. However, a formal announcement would be made by the PM's adviser on finance and revenue Shaukat Tarin and Energy Minister Hammad Azhar on Wednesday at a news conference.

The development was later confirmed in a midnight tweet by Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry. "Saudi Arabia's announcement support Pakistan with 3 billion US dollars as deposit



in Pakistan central bank and also financing refined petroleum products with 1.2 billion US dollars during the year," he wrote.

The Saudi government would immediately deposit \$3bn in Pakistan's account for a year and keep it rolling at least until the completion of the IMF programme in October 2023, the official earlier said, as per the report.

The facility is expected to help Pakistan convince the IMF about its financing plan.

In addition, the Saudi government would provide crude oil to Islamabad on deferred payments worth up to \$1.5bn per annum.

Saudi Arabia had also provided \$3bn in cash deposits and promised a \$3bn oil facility to Pakistan to help the latter shore up its foreign exchange reserves in 2018. However, as the bilateral relations deteriorated later Islamabad had to return \$2bn of the \$3bn deposits, the report added.

China's Kuaizhou-1A rocket launches satellite

Jiuquan: China sent a new satellite into space from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in the northwestern Gansu Province on Wednesday.

The Jilin-1 Gaofen 02F satellite was launched by a Kuaizhou-1A (KZ-1A) carrier rocket at 2:19 p.m. (Beijing Time) and entered the planned orbit, Xinhua news agency reported. It is an optical remote sensing satellite that can provide high-resolution images and high-speed data transmission.

Kuaizhou-1A, which is Chinese for fast ship, is a low-cost small solid-fuel carrier rocket that has a short preparation period. Developed by the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, the rocket is designed to launch low-orbit satellites weighing under 300 kg.

US Senators urge Biden administration to waive sanctions against India for purchase of Russian arms

Team Absolute | New Delhi

US Senators and India Caucus Co-Chairs Mark Warner and John Cornyn sent a letter to President Biden encouraging him to waive Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) sanctions against India for buying military arms from Russia.

However, in the case of this current \$-400 transaction involving India, "we believe that the application of CAATSA sanctions could have a deleterious effect on a strategic partnership with India, while at the same time, not achieve the intended purpose of deterring Russian arms sales," the US Senators wrote in the letter to Biden.

They wrote: "While India has taken significant steps to reduce its purchases of Russian military equipment, it has a long history of purchasing arms from the Soviet Union,



and later Russia. In 2018, India formally agreed to purchase Russian S-400 Triumf air-defense systems after having signed an initial agreement with Russia two years prior. We are concerned that the upcoming transfer of these systems will trigger sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which was enacted to hold Russia accountable for its malign behavior."

Warner, a Democrat Senator and Cornyn, a Republican said, "As such,

we strongly encourage you to grant a CAATSA waiver to India for its planned purchase of the S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile system. In cases where granting a waiver would advance the national security interests of the US, this waiver authority, as written into the law by Congress, allows the President additional discretion in applying sanctions." "We share your concerns regarding the purchase and the continued Indian integration of Russian equipment, even with these declin-

ing sales. We would encourage your administration to continue reinforcing this concern to Indian officials, and engaging with them constructively to continue supporting alternatives to their purchasing Russian equipment."

They added that India has taken significant steps to reduce its imports of Russian military hardware in recent years. From 2016 to 2020, there was a 53 percent drop in Russian arms exports to India compared to the preceding five-year period. Meanwhile, India has shown its intent to purchase equipment from the United States, with sales reaching \$3.4 billion in FY20. These are positive trends that show India's effort to reduce reliance on Russian equipment, and a desire to take advantage of its new status as a Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) partner, the letter said.

The Senators said we believe there is a national security imperative to waiving sanctions.

US revokes licence of China Telecom on national security concerns

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Washington has revoked the US licence of one of China's biggest telecoms companies citing "national security" concerns, BBC reported.

China Telecom must stop providing services in America within 60 days.

Officials said the Chinese government's control of the company gave it the opportunity "to access, store, disrupt, and/or misroute US communications", the report said.

This in turn could allow it "to engage in espionage and other harmful activities against the US", they said.

China Telecom, which has provided telecoms services in the US for nearly 20 years, called the decision "disappointing". "We plan to pursue all available options while continuing to serve our cus-

tomers," a statement said. China Telecom is one of three companies that dominate China's telecoms market. The firm has hundreds of millions of customers in 110 countries, with services ranging from broadband internet to mobile and landline telephone networks.

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) warned it might shut down China Telecom Americas in April 2020, claiming the firm "is subject to exploitation, influence, and control by the Chinese government".

It said the company was "highly likely to be forced to comply with Chinese government requests without... independent judicial oversight", the report said.

It is the latest Chinese telecoms firm to be targeted by US officials over national security concerns.



CAMPAIGNING ENDS FOR BY-POLLS; BJP AND CONGRESS LOCKED IN STRAIGHT CONTEST

As per the poll schedule, the silence period is 72 hours before the polling ends- 6 pm on October 30.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The high-decibel campaign for the October 30 by-polls to four constituencies in Madhya Pradesh, including one Lok Sabha seat and three Assembly segments, where 55 candidates are in the fray in the straight contest between ruling BJP and opposition Congress, ended on Wednesday evening.



Of these four constituencies, two seats, including the Khandwa Lok Sabha constituency, were held by the BJP while the rest two seats were represented by Congress MLAs. As per the poll schedule, the silence period is 72 hours before the polling ends- 6 pm on October 30. Election Commission (EC) officials said polling will be held from 7 am to 6 pm in the four constituencies--Khandwa Lok Sabha seat and Assembly constituencies of Jobat (ST) in the Alirajpur district, Raigaon (SC) in the Satna district and Prithvipur in the Niwari district. 26.50 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise for these four seats, where 3,944 polling booths are being set up. Of these, 865 booths are declared sensitive while 361 will be under the surveillance of CCTV cameras, the officials said. Two ballot units will be deployed at each booth in Khandwa and Raigaon as the number of candidates exceeds 15. Overall, 10,027 ballot machines, including those kept in the reserve, will be used, they said.

The counting of votes will be taken up on November 2. The main contest lies between the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress. In a high-octane campaign, Union ministers

Prahlad Patel, Narendra Singh Tomar, Jyotiraditya Scindia and former union minister Uma Bharti canvassed for the nominees of BJP. At the state level, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and the state BJP chief VD Sharma led the campaign trail.

On the other hand, it was relatively low-key electioneering for Congress. Apart from former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh, no other prominent leader participated in the campaigning except Rajasthan's former deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot who addressed a couple of rallies on Wednesday.

55 Candidates In Fray For 3 Assembly and 1 Parliamentary Seat In By-polls

The outcome of the by-polls on three assembly and one parliamentary seat in the state would not have any impact over the Shivraj Singh Chouhan led BJP government of Madhya Pradesh but these by-polls are acid test for the chief minister in the light of the fact that the saffron party is reshuffling chief ministers in several states.

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The outcome of the by-polls on three assembly and one parliamentary seat in the state would not have any impact over the Shivraj Singh Chouhan led BJP government of Madhya Pradesh but these by-polls are acid test for the chief minister in the light of the fact that the saffron party is reshuffling chief ministers in several states.

The BJP has deputed 12 ministers and 40 MLAs to campaign for the by-polls. In his 31-year electoral career, Shivraj Singh Chouhan was, for the first time, heard saying, "I'm out with a stick. I won't spare anyone who indulges in wrongdoings." He even suspended quite a few officers from the stage during campaigning.

The by-polls were necessitated as seats fell vacant due to the deaths of the MLAs and MP. Sympathy will play a major role in the by-polls apart from the serious issues being raised by the

Congress like inflation, corruption, and the governance of Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

The Assembly segments going to the polls are spread across the state. Prithvipur is in Bundelkhand, Raigaon is in Baghelkhand and Jobat is near the Gujarat border. The Khandwa Lok Sabha seat is in Nimar.

Congress MLA Brijendra Singh Rathore, an MLA from Prithvipur - a general seat, died in May.

Congress MLA Kalawati Bhuria, representing Jobat - reserved for Scheduled Tribes, died in April and BJP MLA Jugal Kishore Bagri, an MLA from Raigaon constituency - reserved for Scheduled Castes, died in May. The Khandwa Lok Sabha seat - a general constituency - fell vacant after BJP MP Nand Kumar Singh Chauhan died of Covid in March.

Former Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Kamal Nath said, "Many lives were lost due to the shortage of oxygen, beds, and necessary medicines in the state during Covid. The

Shivraj Chouhan government had promised to provide compensation to all the affected families but not a single family has been compensated so far."

"This is the first election in the state since the pandemic and the people should not forget the harrowing time. At a time when people were banking on the state for help, Shivraj Chouhan and his ministers failed them. Now is the time to settle scores with the government."

BJP has fielded defectors like Sulochana Rawat, former two-term Congress MLA who joined BJP in October, and Shishupal Yadav, who defected from the Samajwadi Party. However, the road ahead is not easy for the ruling BJP as the unprecedented fuel price hikes, food inflation, a spike in cases of atrocities against the tribals, and issues related to the farmers continue to grab headlines ahead of the elections.

The bypolls will be held on October 30 and the votes will be counted on November 2.

Why Petrol Has Crossed Rs 120 Per Litre In Some Districts of State

Petroleum is brought to Anuppur from Jabalpur oil depot, about 250 km from the district headquarter, hence, fuel is costlier in the district than in other parts of the state due to higher transportation cost, Abhishek Jaiswal, a petrol pump owner said.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Some districts of State are bearing the brunt of the hike in fuel prices, with the cost of petrol in Anuppur district in the state crossing Rs 120 per litre and diesel nearing Rs 110 per litre on Wednesday.

Similarly, the price of petrol in Balaghat, which shares borders with Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra, reached Rs 119.23 per litre. Abhishek Jaiswal, a petrol pump owner in Anuppur's Bijuri town bordering Chhattisgarh, said

the price of petrol has gone up to ? 120.4 per litre after an increase of 36 paise on Tuesday. The cost of diesel reached Rs 109.17 per litre, following an increase of 37 paise, he said. Petroleum is brought to Anuppur from Jabalpur oil depot, about 250 km from the district headquarter, hence, fuel is costlier in the district than in other parts of the state due to higher transportation cost, Jaiswal said. The price of petrol and diesel in Balaghat reached Rs 119.23 and ? 108.20 per litre respectively, after an increase of 37 paise, said Ravi Vaidya, the owner of a petrol pump on Lalburra road in Balaghat.

Meanwhile, the price of petrol in Bhopal touched Rs 116.62, after a hike of 36 paise, while diesel is being sold at Rs 106.01 per litre following a rise of 37 paise on Tuesday, a petrol pump owner said. According to petrol pump owners, the fuel business in border districts of the state is severely hit, as most vehicles prefer to refuel in Maharashtra or Chhattisgarh, where petrol and diesel are cheaper.

CM PLANTS SAPTAPARNI SAPLING



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a Saptaparni sapling in the resort premises during his stay in Satna. Mining Minister Brijendra Pratap Singh, MP VD Sharma, Ganesh Singh were also present. Chouhan plants a sapling every day as part of his resolve. Saptaparni is an evergreen medicinal tree, which has great importance in Ayurveda. In a message to the media, Chouhan said that this is a tree of development and public welfare. The Saptaparni plant is a symbol of "Sabka Saath-Sabka Vikas" (development for all with all) and trust of all.

Congress MLA in MP booked for abetment to suicide

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A Congress MLA and his associates were booked allegedly for abetment to suicide on Wednesday. It came after a property dealer who was identified as Sita Ram Sharma committed suicide by consuming poison in front of Congress MLA Ajab Singh Kushwaha's house in Gwalior district.

He had consumed poison late on Monday and was admitted in a nearby hospital where he was declared dead early on Wednesday.

Following which, Sharma's son filed a complaint in the local police

station stating that his father had purchased some land from MLA Ajab Singh Kushwaha but the latter did not give the possession letter and started harassing the deceased.

"My father had paid Rs 1.84 crore to MLA Ajab Singh Kushwaha against the portion of land, but possession of land was not given, which forced his father to end his life," Manoj Sharma, son of the deceased, claimed in his complaint.

In his complaint, Sharma also alleged that the MLA had fraudulently developed colonies on government land in Vikram Nagar and Sohan

Nagar localities in Gwalior district.

Based on the complaint a case of abetment to suicide has been registered against Kushwaha and his associates, said a senior police official in Morena district.

Sita Ram Sharma went to Kushwaha's house located in Kalpi Bridge locality and demanded his money back but the latter refused to pay, his son told the police.

When Kushwaha refused to give his money back, Sharma consumed poisonous substances. "He was admitted in Jaya Arora Hospital where he died early on Wednesday," police said.

Works of Atma-nirbhar MP Road Map being done on priority: Tomar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the Atma-nirbhar Madhya Pradesh Road Map-2023, the works are being done expeditiously on the priorities set by the Energy Department. In the expansion programme of the transmission system, construction works of very high tension sub-stations and their associated lines are being done through green energy corridor project and tariff based competitive bidding process. Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar has informed that about 97 percent works of Green Energy

Corridor have been completed. The remaining works will be completed by the month of March, 2022. The work of the first project through tariff based competitive bidding is in progress which will be completed by the year 2023.

About 23 lakh smart meters are also to be installed in the ambitious plan of metering the houses of all the electricity consumers of the state. One lakh 20 thousand smart meters have been installed in Indore city.

In order to encourage the local manufacturers of the state, it has been decided by

the department that in future, a minimum amount of 10 percent of the total material purchase should be purchased from the local manufacturers.

All distribution companies are setting up their own testing laboratories for testing core materials like transformers, meters, cables and conductors. From among them, the testing work has started in the laboratories of 3 places Bhopal, Indore and Jabalpur. The work of setting up seven other laboratories is in progress. All these laboratories will also be certified by NABL.

Tapwater will soon be available in 35 thousand villages under JJM

Till now more than 42.5 lakh rural families have got tap connections

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, the works of water supply schemes in the state were started from May 2020 and till now tap water connections have been given to 100 percent households of 3528 villages. So far 42 lakh 59 thousand 350 rural families are being provided water through tap connections. The state government is making efforts at a fast

pace in Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) to provide pure drinking water to the entire rural population. Under the mission, 90 to 100 percent work in water supply schemes of 2118 villages is under completion, 80 to 90 percent in 1763 villages, 70 to 80 percent in 1496 villages and 70 percent work in 29804 villages is near completion. In this way, drinking water will soon be made available through tap connection in 35 thousand 181 villages of the

state as a whole.

The work of providing water through tap connections is also being done rapidly in the Anganwadi centers and schools operating in rural areas.

Out of about 94 thousand 800 schools in rural areas, drinking water has been provided to 61 thousand 500 schools and to 37 thousand out of 66 thousand Anganwadis through tap connections.

20 PERCENT DISCOUNT WILL BE GIVEN IN COMPOUNDING CASES

Bhopal: The state government is giving a special discount of 20 percent on fees in the compounding cases till February 28, 2022 in urban bodies. The limit for compounding of extra construction beyond building permission and construction without building permission has been increased from 10 to 30 percent by the state government.

Commissioner Urban Administration and Development Nikunj Kumar Srivastava has informed that for compounding of construction without building permission and excess construction against building permission, the online system ABPAS (Automated Building Plan Approval System) is being operated for building permission through Directorate of Urban Administration, Development and Housing where the facility of online compounding of cases and receiving fee online is available. All the bodies have also been directed that it is mandatory to resolve the cases of compounding through online ABPAS only.

Srivastava has directed all the collectors to ensure compounding of maximum number of cases by running a campaign in all the urban bodies of their district. He has said that it should also be widely publicised in the district. Along with this, the cases of compounding should also be resolved by organising camps in the urban bodies. With this, more and more citizens will be able to benefit from the exemption given by the state government. Along with this, citizens will also be able to take action to legalize the illegal construction of their building.

CM PAYS HOMAGE TO FREEDOM FIGHTER JATINDRANATH DAS

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has paid tributes to freedom fighter Jatindranath Das on his anniversary. Chouhan tweeted and said that Jatindranath Das ji laid down his life for the freedom of the country at the age of just 24. Indians can never forget his sacrifice. The patriotism of the freedom fighters is inspiring for all of us.

CM CONDOLES DEATH OF EMINENT GANDHIAN SUBBARAO

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has condoled the demise of Padma Shri awardee veteran eminent Gandhian thinker and philosopher SN Subbarao "Bhai Ji." Chouhan said that Subbarao ji's death is an irreparable loss. Chouhan said that Subbarao had dedicated his entire life to social service. He played an important role in freeing the Chambal Valley from the terror of dacoits. Padmashree Subbarao passed away late night on October 26 at Sawai Mansingh Hospital in Jaipur.

STANDING COMMITTEE CONSTITUTED FOR PANCHAYAT GENERAL ELECTION

Bhopal: State Election Commission Secretary BS Jamod has informed that the State Election Commission has constituted a standing committee at the district level for transparency and fairness in the general election 2021-22 of three-tier panchayats. The Chairman of the Standing Committee will be the Collector and the District Election Officer. The Superintendent of Police, Chief Executive Officer, Zila Panchayat and those officials associated with the election will be the members whom the District Election Officer may consider necessary. The meeting of the committee constituted at the district level will be held before the notification of the elections (before the publication of the list of polling stations). Apart from this, the Collector and the District Election Officer can organise a meeting of the Standing Committee whenever he wants to discuss any important issue related to the election process.

Over a month long campaign launched for Bhopal Gas Tragedy survivors

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A group of social organisations seeking justice for the victims of Bhopal Gas Tragedy have launched a 37-day campaign across the city on Tuesday.

During the campaign, the members of social organisations will be highlighting the concerns of the affected families to commemorate the 37th anniversary of the disaster. Through the campaign - 'Bhopal Disaster 37 years: 37 questions' they (NGOs) would be highlighting concerns regarding compensation, criminal justice, medical and environmental remediation of polluted lands, said a member of campaign organising team. Rashida Bee, president of Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Karmachari Sangh said, "During the campaign survivors of disaster will be asking one question every day from the government. We would also present data on what the government has done in the last 37 years



for families affected with the gas tragedy." They said that Dow Chemical USA's business in India has grown dramatically and the company has ignored six successive summons issued by the Bhopal district court to appear in the criminal case. "Our questions are how can the Indian government allow a company that does not even obey the laws of the land to do business in the country," said another activist of the group. Rachna Dhingra, another activist questioned the central and the state govern-

ment's competence and integrity to address issues of medical care and rehabilitation of survivors.

"We will be asking questions on issues of ongoing contamination and remediation of the land in and out around the abandoned Union Carbide factory," Dhingra added.

Over 15,000 people died after methyl isocyanate leaked from the pesticide plant of Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) on the outskirts of the city on the inter-vening night of December 2-3, 1984.

2 School Students Attacked by Senior with Knife, 3 Booked

Two Class X students of a prominent school in Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh were attacked with a knife by a senior on Tuesday following a dispute, leaving one of them with serious injuries, police said.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Two class 10 students of a prominent school in Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh were attacked with a knife by a senior on Tuesday following a dispute, leaving one of them with serious injuries, police said. "Two students, studying in Class 10 in St Joseph's Co-ed School, located at 11 No Bus Stop, were attacked with a knife by a

Class XI student of the same school on Tuesday afternoon. One of the students has sustained serious injuries and has been hospitalised. The accused and victims are in the 15-16 age group," Habibganj police station in-charge DS Prajapati said.

"The two were standing near the bus stop when the accused and his two friends came, abused the duo, and attacked them. He attacked one of the students on the shoulder with a knife, and when the other intervened, he too was stabbed in the neck and back," Prajapati informed.

It is not known why the attack took place, he said, adding that the Class XI student and two of his unidentified friends have been booked under IPC section 324 for causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means, though no arrest has been made as yet.



Jodie Comer: Working as Ryan Reynolds' partner was terrifying

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Jodie Comer was thrilled by the opportunity to work with Shawn Levy and Ryan Reynolds. She said that Reynolds is one of the funniest people on earth and that working as his partner was "terrifying". Comer plays Millie, a beautiful, brilliant and somewhat reserved

video game designer and programmer who comes into Guy's life. Millie and Guy are both looking to break out of their nondescript roles in the background.

"Ryan is one of the funniest people on earth, and knowing I would mostly be doing scenes with him, working as his partner, was terrifying," she said.

Comer added: "Also, just the chal-

lenge that it would be for me, the size and scale of the production, and the duality of playing two characters...but it's these kinds of challenges that push me forward."

Comer was also taken with the real-world approach to presenting the action of a video game.

"What I loved about 'Free Guy' was the aspect of it being live-action," Comer said. She added: "It creates

such humanity within the characters and within the gaming world that we would otherwise feel disconnected from. It allows us to relate to those characters and feel what they're feeling."

20th Century Studios' adventure-comedy 'Free Guy' stars Reynolds, Comer, Joe Keery, Lil Rel Howery, Utkarsh Ambudkar and Taika Waititi. It is directed by Shawn Levy.



Kelsey Grammer, Phyllis Logan board plane crash thriller 'No Way Up'

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Frasier' star Kelsey Grammer and Phyllis Logan, best known for portraying the beloved Mrs Hughes in 'Downton Abbey', are set to star in plane crash thriller 'No Way Up'. The project, which will begin shooting in Malta in spring 2022, will be introduced to buyers at next week's virtual American Film Market, reports variety.com.

An official description for 'No Way Up' calls the film a "rollercoaster combination of disaster movie and survival thriller, as characters from very different backgrounds are thrown together when the plane they're travelling on crashes into the Pacific Ocean."

When the airliner comes to rest perilously close to the edge of a ravine with the surviving passengers and crew trapped in an air pocket, a nightmare fight for survival ensues with the air supply running out and dangers creeping in from all sides.

The film will be directed by Claudio Fah from a screenplay by Andy Mayson.

Fah, whose credits include 'Northmen - A Viking Saga', as well as two films in the Sniper franchise for Sony, just wrapped production on season 4 of Swiss crime series 'Wilders'. Will Clarke, Andy Mayson and Mike Runagall will produce for Altitude, who are currently in production on 'Butcher's Crossing', starring Nicolas Cage.

Other producers will be BAFTA award winner Annalise Davis ('Up There') and Molly Conners ('Birdman').

"No Way Up' is a gripping story of survival in the extreme," said Fah.

Fah added: "A rollercoaster ride filled with suspense and thrills, with a group of wonderfully crafted characters who are driving this story, overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles. To bring them to life with a cast of this calibre is a wonderful opportunity."

Runagall, managing director of Altitude Film Sales, added: "As we continue to further our own production ambitions, we're thrilled to bring this arresting and highly commercial project to worldwide buyers."

'Eternals' establishes MCU's first gay superhero, same-sex couple in movie



Los Angeles | Agencies

At the world premiere for Marvel Studios' 'Eternals' on October 18, Haaz Sleiman was more than happy.

The 45-year-old actor, who came out as gay in 2017, could scarcely believe he was on the red carpet for a movie in which his character, Ben, is the husband of one of the title superheroes, Phastos played by Brian Tyree Henry, reports variety.com.

It marks the first time a Marvel Studios film has showcased a same-sex couple and one of the only times any superhero movie has included a title LGBTQ character. In a pop-culture landscape that has been dominated worldwide by superhero storytelling for over a decade, the impact that representation could have for the film's expected global audience was very much on Sleiman's mind.

"Beyond a dream come true, it's lifesaving," the actor told Variety.com.

"I wish I had that when I was a kid to see this. My God. I wish! Can you imagine how many lives this is going to save - kids, young queer folk, who are being bullied, committing suicide, and not seeing themselves being represented? And now they get to see this - it is above and beyond."

The day after the premiere, director Chloe Zhao explained that Phastos's husband and family were already baked into Marvel Studios' conception of the character when she first began discussing making the film with the studio.

She was especially taken with the idea that Phastos - an ageless alien who came to Earth 7,000 years ago to help guide human civilisation through his powers of invention - rediscovers his long lost faith in humanity through finding Ben and starting a family. It helped the filmmaker see a way to walk the line between emotionally grounded storytelling and breaking a long overdue barrier for LGBTQ representation.

"What's important is to show that it is not about a message we are trying to put out," Zhao said.

"I think finding authenticity in moments like that is crucial for me, so it does not feel forced, so you could actually relate to them. That's the most important thing. It is not just about being the first. It is about do you actually feel for them, whether you are gay or straight or whatever."

Zhao gives a great deal of credit to Henry for bringing that "level of authenticity" to the role and helping to fill out who Phastos is well beyond how he was defined in the script. "He would show up, and, like, even the powers he was doing, he came up with all these hand gestures," she said. "That was not me. The way he speaks to his son, that dynamic, the jokes they have between them" a lot of them are improvised.

Henry, who is currently in production on the FX on Hulu limited series "Class of '09," has not participated in almost any interviews for 'Eternals', but he did discuss the profound effect the role had on him in an extended and emotional moment during the press conference for the movie on October 18.

"I remember when I was coming to this project that I, Brian, had kind of lost faith in humanity, just looking at all the things that we have been through and just what the images of Black men were and how we are being portrayed and how the power was taken from us, the lack of power or feeling powerful," Henry said.

"What I really loved the most about Phastos is that through all of that him being eternal, him never being able to die he still chose love. He still decided to have a family, even though he may have to watch them perish. He still tried to find a way to bring heart and love to everything he did, even though his genius was used against him. It just really resonated a lot with how I felt my place in society was."

"How we can be kings and queens, and at the same time, they will take our pedestal and take our superpowers from us like that. So what I love the most about 'Eternals' is that Chloe and (producer) Nate (Moore) just re-instilled that power back in me again." There have been other recent, purportedly groundbreaking LGBTQ moments in major tentpole studio films such as 2016's 'Star Trek Beyond', 2017's live-action 'Beauty and the Beast', 'Birds of Prey'. In her quest for authenticity, Zhao said that she barely gave any direction to Henry and Sleiman for the scene.



I've always had a man crush on Josh Brolin: Jason Momoa

Los Angeles | Agencies

Academy Award nominee Denis Villeneuve next and much awaited magnum opus - 'Dune' is all set to see its big screen release in India. A theatrical adaptation of Frank Herbert's seminal bestseller of the same name, 'Dune' will grace Indian screens on October 22 and from Oct 29 in Maharashtra in English and Hindi by Warner Bros. Pictures.

A mythic and emotionally charged hero's journey, "Dune" tells the story of Paul Atreides, a brilliant and gifted young man born into a great destiny beyond his understanding, who must travel to the most dangerous planet in the universe to ensure the future of his family and his people. As malevolent forces explode into conflict over the planet's exclusive supply of the most precious resource in existence - a commodity capable of unlocking humanity's greatest potential - only those who can conquer their fear will survive. Jason Momoa plays legendary swordmaster and virtuoso warrior Duncan Idaho - The man of action may be House Atreides' deadliest weapon. Working on the film provided Momoa with the opportunity to experience first-hand the formidable talents of some of his favorite actors who were now his co-stars. "I actually have a bunch of man crushes on this movie!" Momoa laughs "I've always had a man crush on Josh Brolin, he's like my brother. We're very similar, except he's a little older and wiser." Releasing pan India on Oct 22 by Warner Bros. Pictures, 'Dune' stars Timothee Chalamet, Rebecca Ferguson, Oscar nominee Josh Brolin, Oscar Isaac, Zendaya, Oscar nominee Charlotte Rampling, Oscar winner Javier Bardem among many others alongside Momoa.

address Phastos' sexuality directly during the 'Eternals' press conference, he did speak to how Marvel first approached him for the role and what it meant to him.

"I remember the first time that they were like, 'We want you to be a superhero, and I was like, 'Cool. How much weight do I have to lose?' Henry said.

"And Chloe was like, 'What are you talking about? We want you exactly as you are.' To be a Black man, to have someone look at you and say, 'We want you exactly the way you are,' is unlike anything that I've ever felt. It just triggered me to be an 11-year-old kid who is watching these superhero movies, and not ever seeing anyone like me reflected."

He added: "And how I would take these posters and put them in my locker, and just hope that one day there will be somebody representing me, in the way you know that I am. And I truly believe that that moment started when I sat down with Chloe. It is unlike any feeling I have ever experienced."

'HYPNOTIC': FAILS TO BE COMPELLING AS A PSYCHO-THRILLER



TROY RIBEIRO

Hypnotic (Streaming on Netflix)

Direction: Matt Angel & Suzanne Coote

Cast: Jason O'Mara, Kate Siegel, Dule Hill, Jaime M. Callica, Lucy Guest, Luc Roderiques.

Duration: 89 minutes

Ratings: **1/2 (two and a half stars)



'Hypnotic' starts strong as a psycho-thriller but soon peters out as a lame survivor's tale, where an evil hypnotherapist uses his expertise of hypnosis on his clients to carry out his vicious plans.

The narrative revolves around Jenn (Kate Siegel), a brilliant software engineer who is currently unemployed and suffers from depression. The cause of her depression is not her unemployment status but the trauma

of losing her child with whom she had hardly spent any time. Her depression leads her to become a recluse, and she constantly blames herself for the turn of events in her life, which leads to her break-up with her fiancé Brian (Jaime M. Callica).

To help her out of her depression, her best friend Gina (Lucy Guest), introduces her to her psychotherapist, the handsome Dr. Collin Meade (Jason O'Mara), who after a few ses-

sions, convinces Jenn to try hypnosis as therapy. He tells her, "Only you can control your subconscious... and, it is an excellent tool for people who have suffered trauma."

After a couple of hypnotherapy sessions, Jenn finds her life improving. In a chance meeting with Dr. Meade, she admits to harbouring a soft corner for Brian. Despite her reluctance, Dr. Meade advises her to invite Brian for dinner, where she inexplicably

attempts to kill him.

While trying to recall the sequence of the events of that evening, she realises that Dr. Meade had a hand in her actions. As she delves into Dr. Meade's history, she soon finds herself caught in a dangerous mind game, and so, she confides in Gina. Together they approach Detective Wade Rollins (Dule Hill). Despite some collateral damages, how they nail the doctor before it is too late forms the crux of the narrative.

Richard D'Ovidio's script is taut and focussed, containing all the tropes of the genre. With Jenn slipping in and out of hypnosis, he astutely manages to create tension in the scenes. But the weakest issue in the script is the antagonist's motive. It does not come out strong to make the narrative compelling.

With her face drawn and resolute Kate Siegel as Jenn, gives an honest, often moving performance. It is because of her that you invest in the character. Jason O'Mara, as the slick Dr. Meade is charming but not impressive. The rest of the supporting cast are just perfunctory to take the narrative forward.

Overall, though the film is paced, like a thriller, it ultimately emerges as a haunting exploration of how grief can weigh on us and the depths to which it can drive us.



Megan Thee Stallion



T20 World Cup

BOWLER, ROY POWER ENGLAND TO 8-WICKET WIN OVER BANGLADESH

Abu Dhabi | Agencies

A stellar performance by bowlers, followed by a quickfire fifty by Jason Roy (61 off 38) powered England to an emphatic 8-wicket win over Bangladesh in a Super 12 match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium, here on Wednesday.

This was England's second successive victory in the Super 12s of the tournament and they moved to the top of the points table in Group 1.

England's bowlers - Tymal Mills (3/27), Liam Livingstone (2/15) and Moeen Ali (2/18) produced their second clinical performance of the tournament and restricted Bangladesh to 124/9 in 20 overs.

Chasing a modest target for victory, opens Jason Roy and Jos Buttler gave England a flying start, scoring 50-1 in the powerplay. However, during the process, England also lost the wicket of Buttler (18) in the 5th over.

Nevertheless, Buttler's wicket didn't affect Roy's flow as he and David Malan kept the scoreboard ticking with occasional boundaries. The duo added 73 for the second wicket, off just 48 balls.



Roy brought up his fifty with a six down the ground off just 33 balls, and then added to his tally of maximums with a cheeky scoop. He got out trying to repeat a similar shot, but with only 13 runs needed then. In the end, Malan (28) and Jonny Bairstow (8) remained not out and helped England chase the target quite comfortably in 14.1 overs.

Earlier, batting first, Bangladesh were off to a terrible start as they lost their top three batters inside the powerplay.

Just like their previous game, Eoin Morgan's decision to throw the new ball to Moeen Ali worked well as he dismissed Liton Das (9) and Mohammad Naim (5) in successive deliveries of the 3rd over.

Chris Woakes then sent the in-form Shakib Al Hasan (4) back courtesy an excellent one-handed catch by Adil Rashid, leaving Bangladesh in deep trouble at 26-3 after 5.2 overs.

From there, Mushfiqur Rahim (29) and skipper Mahmudullah (19) bat-

ted sensibly and revived Bangladesh fortunes, taking them to 60/3 at the halfway point of the innings.

Just when it looked like things were going well for Bangladesh, Liam Livingstone trapped Mushfiqur leg before to break the 37 runs partnership. Horror show continued for Bangladesh as Afif Hossain, who came to bat next, got run out on a misfield in the 13th over.

Soon, skipper Mahmudullah, who looked in good touch, also went back to the pavilion. In order to score, he tried to go big but the leg break bowled by Livingstone turned enough to find the edge.

Thereafter, Bangladesh never got the momentum and kept on losing wickets at regular intervals. In the end, some late fireworks by Nasum Ahmed (19 off 9 balls) steered Bangladesh to a respectable score of 124-9 in 20 overs.

Brief scores:

Bangladesh: 124/9 in 20 Overs (Mushfiqur Rahim 29; Tymal Mills 3/27, Liam Livingstone 2/15) lost to England 126-2 in 14.1 overs (Jason Roy 61, David Malan 28; Nasum Ahmed 1/26)

Trumpelmann, Smit lead Namibia to first-ever Super 12 victory

Abu Dhabi | Agencies

Rubel Trumpelmann's triple strikes in the opening over followed by an unbeaten 32 from JJ Smit led the way for Namibia to defeat Scotland for four wickets in a Group 2 match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium here on Wednesday.

The win also marks Namibia's first-ever win in Super 12 stage of the mega event, going ahead of India and New Zealand while Scotland remain at the bottom of the points table for Group 2. It was a commendable effort from Scotland to take the game to the final over despite not having many runs to defend.

Chasing 110, Namibia had a slow start with 26 runs coming in the first five overs. In the final over of powerplay, they lost Michael van Lingen, who top-edged a pull to cover off Safyaan Sharif. Four overs later, Namibia lost their second wicket as Zane Green holed out to longoff off Chris Greaves.



Two overs later, Michael Leask triggered a classic off-spinner dismissal while going through Gerhardt Erasmus' stumps. In the very next over, Craig Williams was stumped by Mark Watt while coming down the pitch for a flick.

JJ Smit and David Wiese put on a stand of 35 runs off 31 balls to take Namibia closer to the target, keeping the pressure from Scotland's spinners at bay. But Leask took out Wiese with an outside edge flying to short third man in the 18th over to keep Scotland in the hunt. It didn't deter Smit as he drove for a boundary off Wheel in the penultimate over before finishing off the match in style, smashing a six over point to seal a tight win for Namibia with five balls remaining.

Earlier, Namibia had a fantastic start as George Munsey chopped on his stumps off Trumpelmann on the first ball of the innings. Trumpelmann then made back-to-back strikes on the fourth and fifth ball of the innings.

Brief scores

Scotland: 109/8 in 20 overs (Michael Leask 44, Chris Greaves 25, Ruben Trumpelmann 3/17, Jan Frylinck 2/10) lost to Namibia: 115/6 in 19.1 overs (JJ Smit 32 not out, Craig Williams 23, Michael Leask 2/12, Bradley Wheel 1/14) by four wickets.

Aquatic Championship: Srihari, Kushagra, Chahat create national records

Bengaluru | Agencies

Swimmers Srihari Nataraj, Kushagra Rawat and Chahat Arora created national records in their respective events on Day 2 of the 74th Senior National Aquatic Championship 2021 at the Basavanagudi Aquatic Centre, here on Wednesday.

In the 100m freestyle for men, Srihari clocked 49.94 seconds in the final to better his own mark of 50.17 he clocked in the heats earlier in the day. He broke Viradhwal Khade's record of 50.53 clocked in 2012, in Pune.

"I wanted to start really well and do a quick 25m, I clocked 23seconds in the first 50m. And went 26 seconds in the second 50m. I thought I could go much faster than 49.94 but feels good to have gotten the record," stated Srihari after the event.

The silver in this event went to Anand As of SSCB. He clocked 51.68 seconds while Karnataka's Tanish George Mathew took home the bronze medal with a time of 51.85 seconds. Kushagra Rawat of Delhi, on the other hand, was in his best elements as he bettered his own mark of 8:09.47 in the 800m freestyle for men. He clocked 8:08.32 seconds to smash the national record set in 2019 and



win the gold medal ahead of Aneesh S Gowda of Karnataka who timed 8:23.89 seconds and Vedaant Madhavan of Maharashtra won the bronze with a time of 8:28.68 seconds. Punjab's Chahat Arora stole the limelight in the women's category today with her 50m breaststroke dash. She timed a brilliant 33.62 in the heats to break Tamil Nadu's AV Jayaveena's record of 33.81 created in 2018.

Though Chahat couldn't clock a faster time in the final, her effort of 33.86 was enough for her to win the gold ahead of Apeksha Fernandes of Maharashtra who clocked 34.07 seconds. Manavi Varma of Karnataka won bronze with a time of 36.31 seconds.

Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy clinch 1st Junior Men Academy National title

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy claimed a clinical 3-1 victory over Raja Karan Hockey Academy to clinch the 1st Hockey India Junior Men Academy National Championship 2021 title. Whereas Namdhari XI beat Roundglass Punjab Hockey Club Academy 6-4 to finish 3rd place in the inaugural edition of the tournament.

Capitalising on their good run of form, Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy defeated Raja Karan Hockey Academy 3-1 to emerge as the champions of the inaugural edition of the tournament. Sourabh Pashine (19'), Akhtar Ali (20') and Shreyas Dhupe (39') scored a goal each to help Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy clinch the title. On the other hand, Agyapal (58') scored the only goal for Raja Karan Hockey Academy. Reflecting on the performance,



Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy coach Mohd Sameer Dad expressed, "It was a great match, a challenging one, but boys showed great confidence. We defeated teams like Naval Tata Hockey Academy- Jamshedpur and Roundglass Punjab Hockey Club Academy, and that helped us gain

confidence. Also, I would say, momentum was the key throughout the tournament, we focused on playing good hockey, and I think that helped us clinch the title."

Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy, earlier this month, also clinched the 1st Hockey India Sub Junior Men

Academy National Championship 2021 title. Having won two national titles, coach Mohd Sameer Dad said, "It's overwhelming for me as a coach to help Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy clinch two titles, that too in the inaugural edition of the tournament. This will motivate us to train more and more kids and eventually produce more talents for Indian Hockey." Earlier, Namdhari XI edged out Roundglass Punjab Hockey Club Academy 6-4 in a thriller to finish third in the 1st Hockey Junior Men Academy National Championship 2021 title. Captain Rajinder Singh (8', 27', 38') registered a fine hat-trick, Mokhran (45', 57') bagged a brace and Maninder Singh (43') scored a goal for Namdhari XI. Whereas, Gursharanpreet Singh (1'), Arshdeep Singh (30'), Lalpreet Singh (35') and Savraj Singh (36') scored a goal each for Roundglass Punjab Hockey Club Academy.

Women's National Boxing: Dominant RSPB lift team championship trophy with 12 medals

Hisar | Agencies

The Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) have successfully defended their team championship title as the 5th Elite Women's National Boxing Championships came to an end here on Wednesday.

Team RSPB concluded the prestigious event with 12 medals, including five gold, six silver, and one bronze, and remarkably, the RSPB boxers won medals in every single weight category, making it a performance to remember.

The final day of the event, which was hosted by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) in association with the Haryana Boxing Sangh, also witnessed dominating performances from Haryana's Pooja Rani, the two-time Asian champion, who convincingly defeated RSPB's Nupur 5-0 in the 81kg category as well as her staminate Neetu, who pulled off an upset win by unanimous margin over World Championships silver medalist Manju Rani of RSPB in the 48 Kg category. ith participation of more than 320 boxers of 36 states/UTs/boards, BFI has successfully executed the sixth national event, with strict safety protocols, after resumption of the sport



in the country post COVID-19 pandemic. BFI president Ajay Singh was present at the closing ceremony of the tournament.

The 2016 World Championships silver medalist, Sonia Lather led the RSPB's domination as she registered a comfortable 5-0 win over Manisha of All India Police in the 57kg category. Later in the 60kg category, Meena Rani handed the team second gold when she staved off a stiff challenge from Haryana's Jaismine to win the intense match 3-2. Jaismine was given the best challenger award for her impressive show. Anamika (50kg), Shiksha (54kg) and Nandini (+81kg) were the other RSPB pugilists who emerged

champions. Haryana, whose boxers showed skill and application, claimed the second position with nine medals (four gold, four silver, and a bronze) while Delhi finished third with a gold and two bronze medals.

Telangana's Nikhat Zareen also clinched the title in the 52kg category as she defeated Haryana's Minakshi 4-1 in the final. Nikhat was also adjudged the Best Boxer of the Championships award for her brilliant show in the event that would have surely caught the eye of the coaches and the selectors.

Meanwhile, in the 70kg category, reigning youth world champion Arundhati Choudhary of Rajasthan also put up a memorable show to win gold after defeating RSPB's Pooja 5-0. The gold and silver medalists of the championships have earned themselves places in the national coaching camp. The remaining two names for the camp in each category will be selected on the basis of performances in selection trials, which will take place right after the nationals. In the trials, the bronze medalist winners will compete alongside the boxers representing the second team of top-3 teams of the last National Championships-Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB), Haryana and All India Police.

World Boxing: Deepak, Sumit and Narender maintain India's winning run

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Extending India's winning momentum at the AIBA World Boxing Championships, Deepak Bhoria, Sumit and Narender started their campaign with commanding victories on the second day of the competition in Belgrade, Serbia.

Up against one of the strong contenders for the title, Azat Usenaliev of Kyrgyzstan, Deepak produced a flawless show in the 51kg opening round match. Despite some resistance from the Asian champion Usenaliev, the 24-year-old Indian managed to secure victory by unanimous margin. Sumit too was equally



dominant during his 75kg opening-round match against Jamaican boxer O'Neill Damon as he notched up an easy 5-0 win. On the other hand, Narender faced some stiff challenge from his Polish opponent Oskar Safaryan in the +92kg bout. However the Indian recorded a convincing 4-1 win. This came after seasoned boxer Shiva Thapa's 5-0 victory against Kenya's Victor Nyadera in the 63.5kg

round-of-64 match which set the tone for India on Day 2 of the event which has been witnessing strong competition in presence of 650 top boxers from more than 100 countries playing across 13 weight categories. Four Indian boxers will begin their challenge on the third day of the championships on Wednesday. Nishant Dev will be up against Hungary's Laszlo Kozak in the light middleweight category, while Varinder Singh will take on Karen Tonakanyan of Armenia in the 60kg bout. Govind Sahani (48kg) and Lakshya Chahar (86kg) are the other two Indians who will be seen in action tonight.

Harbhajan, Amir twitter war after India's loss to Pakistan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh and Pakistan pace bowler Mohammad Amir have been involved in a war of words on social media ever since Virat Kohli's side suffered a 10-wicket loss at the hands of the Babar Azam-led team on October 24.

In a series of eight tweets between the two, Harbhajan has even reminded Amir about the spot-fixing scandal in England in 2010, which resulted in three Pakistan cricketers -- Amir, Mohammad Asif and Salman Butt -- being banned by the International Cricket Council for five years from domestic and international cricket.

It all started with Amir taking a swipe at Harbhajan, following Pakistan's 10-wicket win, tweeting, "Harbhajan Paa ji ne TV to nai toda apna? (Did Harbhajan break his TV?) To this, Harbhajan replied, "Ab Tum bi bologe @iamamirofficial. yeh 6 ki landing tumhare ghar k tv par to nahi hui thi? Koi nahi hota hai end of the day it's a game of cricket as u rightly said (Now you will also say things? Did this six land on your TV at home?) With the tweet, Harbhajan attached a video of him hitting a last-over six against Pakistan. Amir then taunted Harbhajan with a video of Shahid Afridi slamming the Indian spinner for four consecutive sixes.

Shakib reclaims T20I crown as Babar closes in on top batting spot

Dubai | Agencies

Star Bangladesh player Shakib Al Hasan has reclaimed the top spot on the ICC men's all-rounder rankings off the back of his stellar start to the T20 World Cup. Shakib's T20I all-rounder rating climbed 20 points to 295, taking him ahead of Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi, who slid from 285 points to 275.

It has been a campaign to remember so far for Shakib, who is the tournament's top wicket-taker with 11 at an average of 6.45, and sits third for runs scored with 118 at 29.50. His tally of 11 wickets is already the most by a bowler in a single Men's T20 World Cup tournament.

The Bangladesh all-rounder was not the only big mover on the all-rounder rankings, with Australia's Glenn Maxwell (161 rating points) moving up three spots to third after Australia's first up win against South Africa. He is level with Namibia's JJ Smit (161), who has shot up an incredible 23 spots.

With the bat, England's Dawid Malan (831) remains on top but Pakistan's Babar Azam (820) has cut the gap down to just 11 points after his strong start to the tournament. They are



joined in the top five by South Africa's Aiden Markram (743), Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan (727) and Virat Kohli (725) in that order.

Markram has climbed eight spots after posting scores of 40 and 51* in South Africa's first two matches of the T20 World Cup, while Rizwan has moved up three spots after scores of 79* and 33.

On the bowling front, Bangladesh's Mahedi Hasan (621), Pakistan's Shaheen Afridi (596) and Haris Rauf (563), and Australia's Josh Hazlewood (557) were the big movers.

Hasan has rocketed up 11 spots to enter the top 10 at ninth with 621 points, sandwiched between compatriots Shakib (632) and Mustafizur Rahman (614).

Afridi (596), whose opening spell against India stands among this tournament's most iconic moments so far, also moved up 11 spots and is now knocking on the door of the top 10 at 12th spot.

Rauf (563), Player of the Match in Pakistan's win over New Zealand, was the biggest mover in the top 20, surging 34 spots to 17th, one ahead of Hazlewood (557), who himself improved his ranking by 16 spots.



Vicky Kaushal thanks the fans for giving his film *Sardar Udham* so much love!

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sardar Udham based on the life of one of India's greatest martyrs, Sardar Udham Singh, came out on 16th October. Since it's release the film has gone on to garner much love from fans and critics. The movie was loved so much that it has also been sent to Oscar's as one of India's entries and it doesn't get any bigger than this. The lead of the film, Vicky Kaushal, has now thanked the fans for giving the film so much love.

Vicky took to his social media handle to share a picture

of himself with the famous laddo from the film. Posing in a brown and black striped t-shirt, the actor shared a heartfelt thanking note for his followers as he thanked them for pouring in love and experiencing the film as well as for befriending Sardar Udham.

"It's been 10 days and the way you have accepted the Film and continue to carry it forward has been heartwarming for the Team!!! Cherishing all the love pouring in, Udham Singh style. I guess we both share the same love for laddoos. Thank You so much for not just watching the Film but experiencing it. Thank You for

befriending #SardarUdham

The film was always going to be a huge affair, however, the film's trailer launch itself was a grand event as replica sets were created and tribute was given to India's first line of defence. The film was also premiered for film fraternity and they too liked the film and gave their thumbs up. The film is out for viewing, exclusively on Prime Video.

The film is based on the story of Sardar Udham Singh, a gallant and patriotic man who fought selflessly and courageously against the British subjugation of India. The film focuses on the undeterred mis-

sion of Sardar Udham to avenge the lives of his beloved brethren who were brutally killed in the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 1919.

Directed by Shoojit Sircar, produced by Ronnie Lahiri and Sheel Kumar, the much-awaited film is the story of Sardar Udham Singh, essayed by Vicky Kaushal. The movie also stars Shaun Scott, Stephen Hogan, Banita Sandhu and Kirsty Averton in pivotal roles and Amol Parashar in a special appearance. Prime members in India and across 240 countries and territories worldwide can watch Sardar Udham exclusively.

Nitu Chandra was 'numb' on being offered 'Never Back Down: Revolt'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Nitu Chandra Srivastava is set to appear in the fourth instalment of 'Never Back Down: Revolt'. She has represented India at the World Taekwondo Championships and now she is poised to take things further with her Hollywood debut with the Kellie Madison directorial. The actress recently opened up about her feelings on getting the part in the film. Talking about her response to the offer, Nitu said, "Being offered one of the lead roles in 'Never Back Down: Revolt', which is the fourth part of 'Never Back Down' franchise by Sony Motion Pictures, was an overwhelming feeling. I don't know if I was excited or numb, but I was quiet for a few seconds (she laughs)."

"I was as nervous as excited ahead of the trailer's release. However, many people have now watched it, and I'm glad that praises have started to flow my way with just a glimpse of my exceptional appearance in the trailer," she added. The actress seems to be confident about her international debut and affirms that the audience will be bowled over by her warrior look, "I feel reassured about the role and my performance, and I am sure my fans globally will like the film just as much as they loved the trailer. Can't wait for them to see my performance and enjoy the movie."

Nitu is a woman of many talents, as she's a Blackbelt fourth Dan in Taekwondo and has represented India in three championships. She is playing Jaya, a fighter kidnapped and forced to compete in underground fights, in the upcoming film. 'Never Back Down: Revolt' is an action film directed by Kellie Madison and written by Audrey Arkins. The Sony Motion Pictures Worldwide and Mandalay Pictures production also features James Faulkner, Michael Bisping and Olivia Popica.

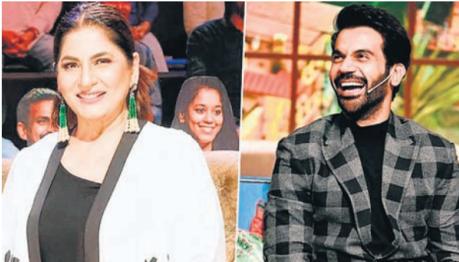
Why Rajkummar is spooked by Archana Puran Singh

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Rajkummar Rao, who has been part of movies like horror comedy 'Stree' and the recent 'Roohi', shared on 'The Kapil Sharma Show' that he is scared of Archana Puran Singh after watching a show featuring her. He told host Kapil Sharma: "I'll share with you an incident that I think, I've never told you before. As a child I would never be scared of anything. You can send me anywhere, even in an old dark mansion. Then a horror show came. In its first episode, Archana maam starred in it. I saw her head was on a plate and she was sitting on top of a grave. I watched it alone. I thought I'll be brave because I am not easily scared."

Afterwards pointing towards Archana Puran Singh, he added: "Kapil sir, since that day, I don't venture into the dark anymore. The way you scared me, I was really scared. The way you twisted your head on that plate, even today those visuals are imprinted on my mind."

Rajkummar Rao and Kriti Sanon will appear on the show as special guests to promote their movie 'Hum Do Humare Do'. 'The Kapil Sharma Show' airs on Sony Entertainment Television.



Ayushmann: I want to entertain people with positive message

Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana, who has a stellar line-up, including Abhishek Kapoor's 'Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui', Anubhav Sinha's 'Anek', Anubhuti Kashyap's 'Doctor G' and 'Action Hero' helmed by debutant Anirudh Iyer, says as an artiste, he wants to be able to entertain people with a positive message.

Ayushmann says: "It is hugely exciting for me to collaborate with some master storytellers who have some disruptive stories to tell and inspire audiences with. I want to tell audiences to expect the unexpected from my next four films."

The actor, who has delivered eight back-to-back theatrical hits in a row, added: "I have been fortunate enough to get some remarkable scripts ever since my debut and be part of incredible visions of powerful filmmakers wanting to make a difference to society. The storytellers of these films have some brilliant concepts that people haven't seen on screen before and that's what makes them really special for me."

The 37-year-old actor considers himself an entertainer who is looking to deliver a positive message to society through his films.

"As an artiste, you only want to entertain and I want to be able to entertain people with a positive message that will hopefully affect some social change," he said.

Karan V Grover roped in for *COLORS*' 'Udaariyaan' to play 'Angad Maan'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Tejo's (Priyanka Choudhary) endearing journey in *COLORS*'

'Udaariyaan' has hooked the audience with this show's ongoing storyline. Her character was previously shown to be betrayed by her husband Fateh (Ankit Gupta) with her sister, Jasmine (Isha Malviya). Tejo has now decided to move on with her life. So to spice up the current equations in the show, actor Karan V Grover will enter as 'Angad Maan.' Angad's entry will bring in an exciting new twist in the current plot's dynamics.

Young and charming, Angad Maan (Karan V. Grover) will be seen crossing paths with Tejo as he is the investor of their sports academy. He is a highly wealthy man; he also happens to be a Harvard graduate, driven to create and support new businesses in India, especially in his home state, Punjab.

Despite being an NRI, he is firmly in touch with his roots and believes in celebrating life, no matter what. He enjoys being a part of the action and brings a lot of class to any room he enters. A dream man for every woman, Angad will be seen delighting everyone around him with his charismatic



aura. As he gears up to portray Angad Maan, Karan V. Grover shares, "Ravi and Sargun are not only dear friends but also very enterprising individuals. So as an actor, if you get an opportunity to collaborate with your friends and create something together, you must not let go of that opportunity. I feel lucky to be a part of their maiden show 'Udaariyaan,' and take this beautiful journey ahead.

When it comes to my role, Angad is a complex yet dynamic and fun character. I think his presence in 'Udaariyaan' will create a new layer in the show's plot that will surely bring in a dichotomy for the audiences to enjoy. I'm grateful to *COLORS* for giving me this wonderful opportunity as this is my first show with them, and it couldn't have been anything better."

KARTIK AND I HAVE BEEN WANTING TO COLLABORATE FOR A LONG TIME: RAM MADHVANI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ram Madhvani's upcoming film 'Dhamaka' has provoked a positive reaction from the audience, courtesy its powerful and high voltage trailer.

The Kartik Aaryan-starrer tells the story of a journalist and his descent into the chasm of uncertainty, deceit and mind games after a phone call from a terrorist changes his life completely. The film's trailer was launched in Mumbai a few days back where the director exclusively spoke with IANS about the film, his process of filmmaking and the use of humour on his sets to drive the collective morale of the crew.

Shedding light on the subject of the film, Ram says, "The film is a human story, it's about a guy who's very ambitious and is inclined to get ahead, nothing wrong with ambition, but in any field, we want to succeed, we want to get ahead. But, while trying to get ahead, what is it that we lose? What is it that we gain? As the song at the end also suggests, this film is about a man who loses his love. It's 'sach ka, pyar ka, life ka dhamaka' (an explosion of truth, love and life)."

He has been wanting to work with Kartik for a long time and 'Dhamaka' gave both of them the opportunity to collaborate and extract the best out of each other. Talking about their collaboration, he says, "We have been wanting to collaborate for the last 2 to 3 years. We've been discussing various subjects. This ('Dhamaka') was a subject that he also had in his heart. So, when he started discussing it with me, I said, yes, let's make this together. A lot of this is Kartik-driven. It is him actually saying, let's do this."

For him, cinema is all about the landscape of the human face. When asked what this landscape looks like in 'Dhamaka', the director explains, "Kartik Aaryan, Amruta Subhash and Mrunal Thakur bring in a certain realism and believability into their characters. Just like the weather of the landscape which is sometimes thundering, scary or calm, these actors bring in that

very feel, essence and emotions into their characters."

Films like 'Neerja', his short film 'This Bloody Line' and 'Dhamaka' may tell you that he likes telling stories set in closed places but, he likes to differ, "I don't want to be known to be a filmmaker who only works in closed spaces. I'm also claustrophobic, so I don't like closed spaces."

He adds that coming from a diverse background, he intends to merge the worlds together to give the audience an immersive experience with his films, "I also come from the theatre; I have done plays in college, I like documentaries and have seen all the cinema in the world. So there is a mixture of all of this. I want to bring a certain realism into my films and I can make it work by using a system that I call the '360 degree system' where it becomes partly theatre, partly cinema."

The filmmaker has engineered a process of filmmaking that could change the way films are made. Explaining the philosophy behind his unique process, he says, "I believe that what is outside the frame comes into the frame. There has to be coffee in the mug, if there is a mic, it has to be working, if there's a bathroom, it has to be working. I don't believe in life in between action and cut. You want to walk to make yourself some coffee? Please walk and make yourself some coffee. That machine is working."

He further explains, "The reality of everything outside of the frame must come into the frame and it will come as energy. I'm here capturing energy. That's the way it should work. Nobody should disturb the sacred space of the actor. That's very important. I'm here to capture that."

The director is known for his impeccable sense of humour, ask him about how he views humour in the context of his work and he says, "Well, I think humour is a weapon. We have seen a lot of cartoons where people use satire, you use different kinds of humour. I use humour to actually just ease some tension."

"I try to see if I can make it a little easier for people (on the sets), because what we do (the collaborative art of making films) is very difficult," he signs off with his pleasant signature smile.

