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NATION > 02

Naga peace talks hit roadblock with rebel leaders adamant...



HOLLYWOOD > 06

Beyonce teases new song in 'King Richard' trailer...



SPORTS > 07

Australia, South Africa look for strong start in Super 12 opener...



The Former J&K Governor Satyapal Malik claimed he was told he would get Rs 300 cr if 'Ambani', 'RSS-linked man' deals are cleared

ATTEMPT TO BRIBE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik has claimed that he was told he would get Rs 300-crore bribe if he cleared two files belonging to "Ambani" and an "RSS-affiliated man" during his tenure but he cancelled the deals, and praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for supporting his decision by saying there is no need to compromise on corruption.

Malik, who currently holds the gubernatorial post in Meghalaya, also supported the ongoing farmer agitation against the Centre's farm laws and said he is ready to leave his post and stand with them if their protest continues.

A video of his speech has gone viral. Malik did not elaborate on the two files, but he was apparently referring to a file related to the roll-out of a group health insurance policy for government employees, pensioners and accredited journalists, for which the government had tied up with Reliance General Insurance, part of the Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group.

In October 2018, Malik who was then the governor of J&K, had cancelled the tie-up with Reliance General Insurance Company for providing the group health insurance to employees as there was "some bungling" in it.

Two days later, the governor approved foreclosure of the contract with Reliance General Insurance and



I stand with farmers

He said after his return from Kashmir, he made a statement in favour of the agitating farmers. He said that he being poor is his strength and he can fight any powerful man in the country.

"If the farmer agitation continues, I will leave my post and stand with them without caring for anyone. It is possible when I have done no wrong and do not have any wrong item in my wardrobe. I am satisfied that I have not done anything wrong," he said.

Advising newly recruited officers not to budge under pressure and work honestly for the betterment of society, he asked them to remain alert against their wives who "spoil everything" by demanding more and prompting their husbands to indulge in corrupt practices.

referred the matter to the Anti-Corruption Bureau for examining the entire process to see whether it was

conducted in a transparent and fair manner. Malik also alleged that Kashmir is

“After going to Kashmir, two files came to me (for clearance), one belonging to Ambani and another to an RSS-affiliated man who was a minister in the previous Mehbooba Mufti-led (PDP-BJP coalition) government and claimed to be very close to the prime minister. I was informed by secretaries in both the departments that there is a scandal involved and I accordingly cancelled both the deals. The secretaries told me that 'you will get Rs 150 crore each for clearing the files' but I told them that I have come with five kurta-pajamas and will leave with that only.”

the most corrupt place in the country. "In the whole country, four to five per cent commission is sought, but in Kashmir 15 per cent commission is demanded," he said without explaining, but added that under his leadership, there was no big case of corruption reported in J&K and that he even declined a favour to his relatives in the valley.

NIH admits US funded gain-of-function research in Wuhan lab

- ▶ THE NIH REPORTEDLY GAVE A \$600,000 DONATION TO THE WUHAN INSTITUTE OF VIROLOGY (WIV) IN 2014, THROUGH US-BASED NON-PROFIT ECOHEALTH ALLIANCE TO STUDY BAT CORONAVIRUSES.
- ▶ THE EXPERIMENT WAS CONDUCTED TO TEST IF "SPIKE PROTEINS FROM NATURALLY OCCURRING BAT CORONAVIRUSES CIRCULATING IN CHINA WERE CAPABLE OF BINDING TO THE HUMAN ACE2 RECEPTOR IN A MOUSE MODEL", AT THE WUHAN LAB.
- ▶ THE RESULTS SHOWED THAT MICE INFECTED WITH THE MODIFIED BAT VIRUS "BECAME SICKER" THAN THOSE INFECTED WITH THE UNMODIFIED BAT VIRUS. TABAK SAID IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO KENTUCKY CONGRESSMAN JAMES COMER.

leak theory for Covid-19's origins, is thought to practise gain-of-function research -- the controversial practice of increasing a virus' transmissibility or lethality to study the development of new diseases.

But US President's Covid advisor Anthony Fauci, who is also the head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), has repeatedly asserted that the US funding was not used for gain-of-function research.

According to NIH's Principal Deputy Director Lawrence A. Tabak, the agency funded for a "limited experiment", the Daily Mail reported.

Tabak did not, however, use the term, but essentially confirmed that gain-of-function research took place at the Chinese lab despite consistent denials from Dr Fauci, the report said.

The letter shifted the blame to EcoHealth Alliance, which used NIH money to fund research at the WIV, for not being transparent about the kind of research they were doing.

WASHINGTON | Agencies

The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) has finally accepted that they have given in funding for gain-of-function research on bat coronaviruses at China's Wuhan lab, the media reported. The Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), which is also central to the lab



Fuel prices on a roll, hiked again by 35 paise/litre

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Petrol and diesel prices rallied to their highest ever levels across the country, as fuel rates were



hiked again for the third consecutive day on Friday.

Accordingly, the pump price of petrol in Delhi rose by 35 paise to its highest-ever level of Rs 106.89 a litre while diesel prices also rose by the same margin to Rs 95.62 a litre, according to a price notification of the state-owned fuel retailers.

In the financial capital Mumbai, petrol prices have now risen to Rs 112.79 per litre while diesel to Rs 103.73 a litre, the highest among all metros. The fuel prices remained static on Monday and Tuesday, but had risen for four straight days by 35 paise per litre previously before rising again for three consecutive days on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. There was no change in rates on October 12 and 13. Diesel prices have increased on 22 out of the last 28 days taking up its retail price by Rs 7.10 per litre in Delhi.

With diesel prices rising sharply, the fuel is now available at over Rs 100 a litre in several parts of the country. This dubious distinction was earlier available to petrol that had crossed Rs 100 a litre-mark across the country a few months earlier. Petrol prices have also risen on 19 of the previous 24 days taking up its pump price by Rs 5.70 per litre.

39 MORE WOMEN OFFICERS TO BE GRANTED PERMANENT COMMISSION



New Delhi: There was relief for a group of aggrieved women officers, who filed a contempt petition against the Army chief, as they were denied permanent commission -- allegedly in violation of a Supreme Court order, with the Centre on Friday telling the apex court it has cleared 39 women officers found eligible, after reconsideration, but rejected pleas of 25 others.

Additional Solicitor General Sanjay Jain and senior advocate R. Balasubramanian, representing the Centre, apprised a bench headed by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud that out of 64 officers, 39 officers have been found, upon re-consideration, to be eligible for the grant of permanent commission.

The government informed the bench that a comprehensive exercise was carried out once again to re-determine the entitlement of 71 Women Short Service Commissioned Officers (WSSCOs). It was submitted though they had secured more than 60 per cent marks and fulfilled all the conditions for the grant of permanent commissions, but one officer has applied for release and seven officers were declared medically unfit.

NCB TRYING TO IMPLICATE ME: ARYAN KHAN

In his appeal in the high court against the special court order, Aryan Khan said the Narcotics Control Bureau's "interpretation and misinterpretation" of the WhatsApp chats collected from his mobile phone was "wrong and unjustified".



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Aryan Khan, son of Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, in his plea in the Bombay High Court seeking bail, has said the NCB was "misinterpreting" his WhatsApp chats to implicate him in the case of seizure of banned drugs aboard a cruise ship off the Mumbai coast earlier this month.

The 23-year-old claimed no contraband was recovered from him after the NCB raided the ship and maintained he has no connection with any of the other accused in the case except Arbaaz

Merchant and Aachit Kumar.

So far, the anti-drugs agency has arrested as many as 20 people in connection with the case.

The appeal further said the WhatsApp chats that are being relied upon by the NCB are "ex facie (on the face of it) of a period prior to the incident".

Aryan Khan also questioned the special court's contention, while refusing him bail, that since he is an influential person he may tamper with evidence in the case if released from custody. The high court will hear his bail plea on October 26.

Punjab orders probe into Amarinder's relations with Pak friend Aroosa

Chandigarh | Agencies

The Punjab government on Friday ordered a probe into former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's relations with his Pakistani woman friend Aroosa Alam and her relation with the ISI.

Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Randhawa said the government would probe the ISI links of Aroosa Alam. "Captain Amarinder Singh is now say-

ing that there is a threat from the ISI. We will look into the woman's connection with it. Captain kept raising drones issue coming from Pakistan for last four-five years," Randhawa told the media.

"Captain Amarinder Singh kept raising the issue of drones coming over from Pakistan for the last four-and-a-half years. So Captain sahab first raised this issue and later got the BSF deployed in Punjab. So it seems a big plot which needs to be probed," he said.



Randhawa, who also hold the Home portfolio, added he asked the Punjab Police chief to investigate the allegations.

INCOME OF 97% HOUSEHOLD HAS DECREASED: PRIYANKA GANDHI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi on Friday launched a scathing attack on the Centre over the issue of inflation, saying the income of 97 per cent household has declined.

Taking to Twitter, she said: "When you buy petrol and diesel, remember that Modi government has earned 23 lakh crore through tax."

"When you buy cooking oil and vegetables, remember that during this government's regime, though the incomes of 97 per cent household have decreased, Modi's friends are earning Rs 1,000 crore daily." Tomato continued its high strides since the weekend, while even the tender coconut prices shot up to Rs 65 per piece on Thursday. In West Delhi, eggplant, cau-



liflower, and ladyfinger were being sold at Rs 60 per kg, while the buyers had to shell out Rs 80 for a kg of tomato, taro root, and carrot. After the government intervened and sent buffer stocks to the open markets, onion rates came down to Rs 40 per kg, the same as potatoes.

COVID SEES SIGNIFICANT RESURGENCE IN EUROPE, ASIA

- ▶ According to the latest update by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the highest numbers of new cases were reported from the UK (283,756 new cases; a 14 per cent increase) and Russia (217,322 new cases; a 15 per cent increase)
- ▶ The European Region showed a 7 per cent increase of new weekly cases as well highest weekly incidence in deaths (1.9 per 100 000 population). The UK has recorded more than 50,000 Covid cases for the first time since July 17.
- ▶ Meanwhile, China has started shutting down schools, cancelling hundreds of flights and ramping up mass testings following a new outbreak of Covid.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After a brief lull as the world economies recover from the pandemic, the deadly Covid virus appears to be on the prowl once again in several countries. Since the beginning of this week, many countries including Russia, the UK, China and some in Eastern Europe have witnessed a significant rise in Covid cases.

While Delta has been the dominant variant in the country, AY.4.2 delta sub-lineage (also being called Delta plus) is currently increasing in frequency, according to the latest report from the UK Health Security Agency.

Delta plus "sub-lineage accounted for approximately 6 per cent of all sequences generated, on an increasing trajectory", the report said. The number of Covid-19 fatalities in Russia over the past 24 hours increased by 1,064 -- new record high since the beginning of the pandemic, Tass news agency said on Friday.

In Asia, Singapore has seen a significant rise. It reported 3,439 new cases of Covid-19 on Thursday,



bringing the total tally in the country to 162,026.

A total of 1,613 Covid-19 cases are currently warding in hospitals, with 346 cases of serious illness requiring oxygen supplementation, and 61 in critical condition in the intensive care units.

While the number of cases was largely low (43 on October 21) but as the country reported a spike in new cases for the fifth consecutive day, authorities beefed up Covid protocols.



NAGA PEACE TALKS HIT ROADBLOCK WITH REBEL LEADERS ADAMANT ON FLAG, CONSTITUTION

Amresh Srivastava | New Delhi

The Centre has continued the Naga peace talks with Isak-Muivah faction of National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM) leaders, but negotiations face roadblocks as the Naga leaders are adamant in their main demands for a separate Constitution and flag.

The sources aware of these developments said that the Centre was hopeful that a successful solution of the six decades-long peace talks would arrive at a logical conclusion, but in the recent statements Naga leaders have accused the Centre for offering post-solution options.

Sources quoting the stand of Naga leaders, said that NSCN's stand was loud and clear that it would not follow the forbidden route to the Naga solution that was linked to foregoing the Naga national flag and Constitution, which is the face of the Naga political struggle and identity.

The Naga leaders have also said that the Centre has been using divisive policy and flattery in the name of finding the Naga political solution when the matters heated up.

When the Centre resumed the peace process in September this year and sent the former special director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) A.K. Mishra as the Ministry of



Home Affairs' emissary to the rebel outfit's chief negotiator and general secretary T. Muivah, he assured him (Muivah) that the peace talks would be initiated under the original framework signed in 2015, a source in the Naga rebel group said.

"Here we are talking about the Naga national flag and Yehzabo (Constitution), the two issues that are holding up the Naga solu-

tion under the ongoing Indo-Naga political talks in Delhi.

"The chequered history of the Indo-Naga political issue is clear enough before us, with accords and agreements that were never meant to be implemented in letter and spirit", an important office-bearer of the rebel outfit said while criticising the governments' stand. Accusing the Centre, he further accused the

Centre of persuading the Naga people again to accept whatever is being offered to hurry up the Naga talk. On invitation of the Centre, the senior leaders of the NSCN-IM including T. Muivah arrived in the national capital on October 6 this year to hold another round of talks with the Centre.

Both, the Centre and the Naga leaders had indicated their keenness on resolving this long pending issue by the end of this year in an amicable manner.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma, who is also chairman of North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), and Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio had been actively involved in the resumption of the peace talks and taking it forward to a logical conclusion.

Soon after the transfer of Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi, who was appointed as the Centre's interlocutor for the Naga peace talks on August 29, 2014 to Tamil Nadu, the peace talks resumed on September 20 in Kohima when the Centre representative met the Naga leaders and invited them to visit Delhi for further rounds of peace talks.

The NSCN-IM and the other outfits entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India in 1997 and over 80 rounds of negotiations with the Centre have been held in the past in successive governments.

SIT chief of Lakhimpur Kheri case, 5 other IPS officers transferred

LUCKNOW | Agencies

The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has transferred six IPS officers, including Uppendra Agarwal, who is heading the SIT probing the Lakhimpur Kheri incident.

Agarwal, who was till now attached to the DGP headquarters, has been posted as the DIG Devipatan Range.

However, Director General of Police (DGP) Mukul Goel, said Uppendra Agarwal will continue to head the SIT.

The officers transferred on Friday include three of Inspector General rank and three in Deputy Inspector General rank.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) was set up by the state government to probe the Lakhimpur Kheri violence where eight persons, including four farmers were killed. Others transferred include DIG Devipatan, Rakesh Singh who has been shifted to Prayagraj in the



same capacity while IG Prayagraj K.P. Singh is the new IG Ayodhya range. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Ayodhya range, Sanjeev Gupta has been shifted as IG law and order at the DGP headquarters and Rajesh Modak, who was holding the charge, has been made new IG Basti range. IG Basti range, Anil Kumar Rai, has been shifted in the same capacity to Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC).

Dhanbad judge murder: HC slams CBI probe, summons CBI Director

RANCHI | Agencies

Expressing displeasure over the probe ordered by the CBI into the death of Dhanbad Additional District Judge Uttam Anand, the Jharkhand High Court on Friday ordered the CBI Director to appear before it on the case's next hearing on October 29.

A division bench of Chief Justice Ravi Ranjan and Justice Sujit Narayan Prasad termed the charge sheet filed by the CBI in a special court on October 20 as "incomplete" and "faulty", saying that in the investigation conducted till now, the agency has failed to explain the motive behind the judge's



murder.

It said the CBI has been unable to arrest the accused persons behind the murder and ascertain their motive.

The high court said since the matter is being monitored by it, why was the information not shared with it by the agency before it filed a

charge sheet in the special CBI court at Dhanbad.

"Why did the CBI hide this information from us? This was not expected from the CBI. It is a flawed charge sheet. The matter is being monitored by the High Court and monitoring does not mean merely discharging

your responsibility," it added.

On July 28, District Sessions Judge Uttam Anand was hit by a speeding autorickshaw at Randhir Verma Chowk in Dhanbad while on a morning walk and died on the spot. The judge's wife had filed a case of murder. Later, autorickshaw driver Lakhan Verma and his associate Rahul Verma were arrested by the police and investigation in the matter was handed over to the CBI.

In the charge sheet filed by the CBI, the autorickshaw driver and helper were charged with murder and the central agency was on the hunt for more people involved in the case for which an investigation is on.

FIVE KILLED, 5 INJURED IN HOUSE COLLAPSE IN UP'S JAUNPUR

Jaunpur: Five persons were killed and five others were seriously injured when a two-storey house collapsed in Mohalla Roza Arjan near Badi Masjid area here around midnight on Thursday. District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma and Superintendent of Police, Ajay Kumar Sahni, reached the spot, on getting information and initiated for relief and rescue.

According to reports, the family members were sleeping when the house collapsed. The local people started evacuating of the trapped persons and the injured have been admitted to the hospital. The deceased include Azimullah, Mohammad Kaif, Sanjeeda, Miswah and Mohammad Saif. The condition of five other injured persons is said to be critical.

Candidate can't claim cadre of choice after qualifying civils: SC

The Supreme Court on Friday said a candidate, as a matter of right, cannot claim allocation of cadre of his/her choice, after qualifying the civil services examination.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Citing the Rajiv Yadav case, a bench of Justices Hemant Gupta and V. Ramasubramanian said the allocation of cadre is not a matter of right.

It noted it was held that a selected candidate has a right to be considered for appointment to the IAS but he/she has no such right to be allocated to a cadre of their choice or to their home state. "Allotment of cadre is an incidence of

service. The applicant as a candidate for the All-India Service with eyes wide open has opted to serve anywhere in the country. Once an applicant gets selected to service, the scramble for the home cadre starts," the bench said.

The top court noted that procedure for allocation of cadre is a mechanical process and admits no exception except under certain rules, and the state has no discretion on allocation of a cadre at its whims

and fancies.

It said it is fallacy that consultation has to be held with the state to whom the officer is to be allocated, not with the state with whom officers claim allocation.

The top court passed the order deciding the 14-year legal battle of an IAS officer seeking Kerala cadre, being her home state. The Kerala High Court in 2017, directed the Centre to change A. Shainamol's cadre from Himachal Pradesh to Kerala.

After 9 years in jail, K'taka court acquits father-son duo

DAKSHINA KANNADA | Agencies

The third additional district and sessions court in Dakshina Kannada district has acquitted Vittala Malekudia and his father Lingappa Malekudia who were arrested and charged for having ties with Maoist elements nine years ago. The two were acquitted on Thursday.

Anti-Naxal Force (ANF) had arrested the father and son on March 3, 2012 on charges of having Maoist connections.

During the search of their home, ANF officers had taken a book on freedom fighter Bhagat Singh, a binocular and other 36 items into custody. His write up on boycotting of elections was considered a seditious act. The case was registered at Venur police station. The charge



sheet by the ANF mentioned Vittala Malekudia as the sixth accused, and his father Linganna Malekudia as the seventh accused. Vittala Malekudia was studying his first year in Journalism at Mangaluru University at the time of his arrest. He had attended examinations while in custody. The photos of

Vittala Malekudia writing exams in handcuffs had gone viral. Viittala was coordinating with journalists to highlight the plight of the Malekudia community.

Judge Basappa Balappa Jakati gave the order of their acquittal. Advocate Dinesh Ulepady appeared for the acquitted persons.

Trinamool MP Sushmita Dev, others attacked in Tripura, accuse BJP

AGARTALA | Agencies

Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member Sushmita Dev and 10 other party members were attacked allegedly by the members of ruling BJP on Friday at Amtali in western Tripura.

According to West Tripura district police chief Manik Lal Das, the Trinamool has lodged a complaint with police who are now probing the incident.

"One of the TMC cars was damaged. No physical injury to Dev or her party members has been reported," Das told reporter. The BJP, however, rejected the accusations. "The incident is a part of their internal feud. The Trinamool members who could not make it to the recently constituted Tripura steering committee, are behind it," BJP spokesman Nabendu Bhattacharjee told the media.

In a complaint at the Amtali police station, the Trinamool leaders alleged that their car was damaged when the BJP workers attacked them during an outreach programme. While Dev was injured, mobile and other valuables of the accompanying TMC workers



were looted by the attackers, a party statement said. Condemning the incident, Trinamool's General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee tweeted: "Under @Bjp Biplab's #Duare GundaRaj, attack on political opponents is setting new records! Physically manhandling a sitting female Rajya Sabha MP, @SushmitaDevAITC is beyond

shameful & political terrorism by @BJP4Tripura goons! The time is near. People of Tripura will answer!"

On Thursday, the Trinamool launched a 12-day statewide programme -- "Tripurar Jonno Trinamool (Trinamool for Tripura)" -- to highlight the vision, schemes and messages of party supremo and West

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Announcing the party's first mega event in Tripura, Dev and the state's steering committee convener Subal Bhowmik told the media on Thursday that through the Tripurar Jonno Trinamool programme, party leaders would reach out to the people at the grassroots level across the state.

4 ARRESTED IN UP FOR DUPING 500 PEOPLE FOR GOVT JOBS

LUCKNOW | Agencies

The Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) has busted a gang which duped over 500 people of Rs 6 crore in the name of ensuring jobs for them in government departments.

Four persons have been arrested in this connection on Thursday from the Vibhuti Khand police circle area.

The arrested persons have been identified as Arun Kumar Dubey, Aniruddha Pandey, Khalid Munawar Baig and Anurag Mishra, all residents of Lucknow.

The police have recovered fake job/appointment letters, nine ATM cards, six mobile phones, a Vidhan Sabha entry pass, two four-wheelers and Rs 2,387 in cash from them.

ASP, STF, Vishal Vikram Singh, said: "Arun is director of a company named as Krishi Kumbh Private Limited, while the rest of the miscreants work as 'hunters' in the gang and they used to trap victims.



Arun, who is the leader of the gang, formed companies like Krishi Kumbh, Motherhood Care and other NGOs and through these firms he received huge sums from innocent people to provide jobs in

government departments. "Arun was earlier sent to jail in 2015 for stealing computers and other gadgets while serving as manager at a company in Aliganj. He has done his B.Tech from Gorakhpur and served

in different private telecommunication companies. The gang came on police radar when a case of fraud was registered at Indira Nagar police station and the STF was asked to probe the case.

Decision on Congress-NCP alliance in Goa by October end: NCP MLA

PANAJI | Agencies

Nationalist Congress Party supremo Sharad Pawar is still in talks with the Congress for an alliance for the 2022 Goa Assembly polls, NCP's lone MLA and former Chief Minister Churchill Alemao said on Friday.

Addressing a press conference, two days after meeting Pawar in Mumbai, he said that the party was seeking 10 out of 40 seats as part of its share of the potential alliance with the Congress.

"We have asked for 10 seats. Sharad Pawar is in talks with the Congress," Alemao said, hinting that a decision on the alliance would be



finalised by the end of this month.

"If there is no alliance, the

party may field 26 candidates," he added.



MARTYR KARNVEER NOT ONLY MADE THE STATE BUT ALSO THE COUNTRY PROUD

Martyr's family to be given Samman Nidhi of Rs one crore, His brother Shakti Singh will be given government job. Martyr Karnveer's statue will be installed in Daldal village. CM Chouhan pays homage to Martyr Karnveer Singh at Daldal village in Satna district. Thousands of people bid tearful farewell to Martyr Karnveer Singh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that the Martyr Karnveer Singh of Daldal village has brought laurels not only to the state but also to the country. On his birthday, Karnveer Singh shot down two terrorists while serving Mother India. By laying down his life in this struggle, Karnveer Singh has become immortal.

Chief Minister Chouhan paid homage to Amar Shaheed Karnveer Singh, who sacrificed his life while fighting terrorists. Chouhan met the family members of the martyr and consoled them. Karnveer Singh was cremated with full military and state honours.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that a Samman Nidhi of Rs one crore would be presented to the family of the martyr. His brother Shakti Singh will be



given a government job. The martyr's statue will be installed in Daldal village to make his memories unforgettable. With the consent of his family members, an institution will be named after Karanveer Singh. On behalf of eight and a half crore people of Madhya Pradesh, I bow at the feet of the martyr. His family is now the family of the entire state. Blessed is the land of Daldal village, which gave birth to such a martyr. "I also salute retired Major Ravi Pratap Singh, father of martyr Karanveer Singh and mother

Mithilesh Singh", C.M. Chouhan said. His family is most revered for all of us. His father is so proud of his son's martyrdom that not even a drop of tear fell from his eyes. He says "If I had ten sons, I would have sacrificed all on Mother India." I salute such a patriotic family. Karnveer Singh, a resident of Daldal in Satna district, was serving in the 21 Rajput Regiment of the Indian Army. He was martyred in a clash with terrorists in Shopian in Kashmir. His body was brought to Delhi and Prayagraj in a special aircraft. From Prayagraj, he was brought to his home village by road with full military honours. The last rites of Shaheed Karanveer Singh were performed in the Gram Panchayat premises. Thousands of people bid a tearful farewell to the son of Bharat Mata, Karanvir Singh while raising slogans of "Bharat Mata ki Jai."

BJP to start door-to-door campaign in bypoll areas

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will begin a door-to-door campaign in the poll-bound areas from Friday.

As part of the campaign, BJP leaders and workers will visit each home and urge people to support the party's candidates in the upcoming bypolls.

Bypolls in three Assembly constituencies -- Prithvipur, Raigaon, Jobat and one Lok Sabha seat will be held on October 30 as the Election Commission has already announced.

Senior State BJP leader Bhagwandas Sabnani said, "The ideas experimented in the poll-bound areas have been successful so far, and as only a few days are left for



elections, the party has decided to visit each house in next one week."

During the campaign, BJP workers will visit vaccination centres and facilitate doctors, nurses and other medical staff where 100 per cent vaccination has been achieved.

With only a week left for the bypolls, many senior BJP leaders, including Union Ministers will join the campaign for the party's candi-

dates. Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and Prahlad Patel and National BJP General Secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya along with many other senior party leaders will start campaigning from Friday onwards.

The ruling BJP government in the state has already deputed more than a dozen state Cabinet Ministers and as many as 42 party MLAs for the by-elections.

CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN PLANTS MOLSIRI SAPLING



Bhopal : Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a sapling of Molsiri in the residence premises today. Chief Minister Chouhan is planting saplings every day as per his resolve. Molsiri or Moulshree is a medicinal tree, it has been used in Ayurveda for centuries. Its bright green leaves add charm to the beautiful texture of the tree.

Digvijaya missing from Cong campaign in MP, party says will appear soon

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Amid spirited campaigning for the by-elections to three Assembly constituencies and a Lok Sabha constituency in Madhya Pradesh, the absence of Congress veteran and former Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh from the scene has raised questions.

Will Digvijaya Singh campaign for the Congress or is his absence a part of the party's strategy are issues being widely discussed on social media, and elsewhere.

Death of the sitting MLAs from Jobat, Prithvipur and Raigaon Assembly seats as well as the Khandwa Parliamentary constituency has necessitated the bypolls. Both the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress are sparing no effort for victory and have an active campaign programme slated.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and state BJP President Vishnu Datt



Sharma are in charge of the campaigning for the saffron party, and will hold more than half-a-dozen meetings or poll programmes daily. Former Chief Minister and state Congress President Kamal Nath is actively leading the charge for his party, while former state Congress chief President Arun Yadav is

leading it in Khandwa.

However, the absence of Digvijaya Singh continues to be the primary focus of the media. Whether it is slamming the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led state government or the BJP as an organisation, the silence of Digvijaya Singh has raised several questions ahead of the upcoming bypolls. He had recently visited Prithvipur while Congress candidate Nitendra Rathore had filed his nomination papers but has not returned since.

However, party's state organisation in-charge Chandra Prabhas Shekhar told correspondent that Digvijaya Singh will visit Khandwa in the coming days and address three public rallies.

A Congress leader requesting anonymity said Digvijaya Singh has always criticised the use of religion in politics by the BJP and its Hindutva ideology, and his repeated statements slamming the BJP government are seen as hurting the Congress.

Mukhyamantri Kisan-Kalyan Yojana

Chief Minister will interact with farmers, The amount of the scheme will be transferred to the accounts of farmers, Districts with model code of conduct will not be included

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will trans-

fer the amount of Kisan Samman Nidhi in the accounts of farmers of 44 districts of the state under Mukhyamantri Kisan-Kalyan Yojana on Saturday. In this state level programme to be organised at Minto Hall, Bhopal at 11:30 am, Chief Minister Chouhan will also interact with the farmers by distributing cheques of Samman Nidhi to some farmers as

a symbol. Districts with Model Code of Conduct have not been included in this programme.

The programme of Mukhyamantri Kisan-Kalyan Yojana will be held through video conferencing. Farmers, public representatives and officers of the respective districts will participate virtually. Under the scheme, Rs 1540 crore will be transferred to the accounts of 77 lakh farmers with a single click. This amount being given by the state government is for the financial year 2021-22.

Center of Excellence will be set up for the treatment of sickle cell in Indore

Team Absolute | Indore

A Center of Excellence will be set up in Indore for the treatment of sickle cell anemia disease which occurs in abundance in tribal dominated areas of Madhya Pradesh. Efforts are on to strengthen the investigation and management of sickle cell disease in tribal dominated districts suffering from sickle cell anemia in Indore division. The proposal to start a pilot project from Dhar and Khandwa districts for the management of sickle cell anemia disease has been approved.

Under this pilot project, screening of people suffering from this disease and people living in tribal dominated areas will be started. After that this model will be implemented in the entire state and country.

In the meeting held in the presence of Dr. Pawan Kumar Sharma,



Divisional Commissioner regarding Sickle Cell, it was also agreed to start a Center of Excellence for the treatment of Sickle Cell Anemia at MGM College, Indore. It has been informed that a com-

mittee will be formed under the chairmanship of Divisional Commissioner Dr. Pawan Kumar Sharma for necessary technical support in the Center of Excellence being set up in Indore for screening and treatment of sickle cell anemia in the state.

HLA testing lab will also be set up with Center of Excellence to provide facility of bone marrow transplant to sickle cell anemia and thalassemia patients. Along with this, a hub and spoke model will also be developed to separate the different components of blood.

Dr. Vinita Srivastava, Advisor, Tribal Health Center, Government of India, has told that Khandwa and Dhar districts were inspected by her team last day.

Discussed with people suffering from sickle cell anemia in both the above districts and tried to know about their nutrition and other problems related to health.

Order issued for 8% hike in DA of government employees

Team Absolute | Bhopal

According to the announcement of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the Finance Department has today issued orders to increase the rate of dearness allowance payable to government staff and permanent employees by eight percent from October 2021.

Expressing gratitude to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for taking employee friendly decisions, Finance Minister Jagdish Deora said that the State Government is committed for the welfare of the employees and respects their services and efficiency.

It is noteworthy that from January 2019, the employees were being given dearness allowance at the rate of 12% in the seventh pay scale. According to the announce-

ment of the Chief Minister, now the dearness allowance rate has been increased by 8%. 20 percent DA will be payable as per 7th pay scale, after increasing it by 8 percent. While increasing the dearness allowance, the Finance Department has given clear instructions regarding the payment of dearness allowance and said that no part of dearness allowance will be considered as salary for any purpose. All the departments have been directed to ensure that the expenditure incurred on payment of dearness allowance payable under the new orders does not exceed the sanctioned budget provision of the department concerned for the current year.

Apart from this, it has also been decided that all such government servants who are hypothetically eligible for the annual increment for July 2020 or January 2021, shall be paid the arrears due as a result of the annual increment due from July 2020 to January 1, 2021, in two equal installments. The first installment will be paid in November 2021 and the second installment will be paid in March 2022.

The due amount of arrears will be paid in lump sum to the government servants who have retired or are going to be retired before March 1, 2022. Administrative departments can issue appropriate instructions in relation to employees and permanent workers and those working on contract in all the undertakings, corporations, boards, local bodies, development authorities, commissions, universities and other institutions under the government.

Products manufactured by SHG's will be named Son Chiraiyya brand

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The products manufactured by self help groups formed under Deendayal Antyodaya National Urban Livelihood Mission will be known as Son Chiraiyya brand. Urban Development and Housing Minister Bhupendra Singh said this at the inauguration of the state-level Son Chiraiyya Aajeevika Utsav-2021 at Mahila Haat-Bazaar in Shivaji Nagar. He said that the products of self-help groups would get a new identity in the state and country under brand name Son Chiraiyya. The Aajeevika Utsav will continue till October 31.

Products including decorative items, zardozi items, organic products, jute products, jewellery, gift items, incense sticks, pickles, badi-papad, spices, toys and other products made by women of self-help groups of 24 urban bodies of the state are being displayed and sold in the state level festival.

Programmes like Rangoli, painting, Mehndi, singing etc. will also be organized by the women. Clean and delicious food items prepared by street vendors are available for sale during the festival.

Urban Development Minister Singh said that where Aajeevika Utsav has been organ-



ized today, this place will be reserved for Haat-Bazaar. Here the products manufactured by self-help groups will be made available for sale.

Haat-bazaar will be developed in cities Urban Development and Housing Minister Singh said that Haat-Bazaars will be set up in all cities to provide space for the sale of products manufactured by self help groups. He said that it is our duty to provide market for the products of self-help groups. Singh said that the material manufactured by self-help groups in the state-level festival is of high quality and available at affordable prices. He informed that at present there are 35 thousand self-help groups in the urban bodies of the state, in which 3 lakh 50 thousand women are connected. Singh said that maximum self-help groups would be formed to make women self-dependent.

A healthy society is one in which everyone's development, faith and efforts are involved: Governor Mangubhai Patel

It is the responsibility of the talented persons to contribute to the welfare of the underprivileged sections of the society. Talents were honoured in the Seva Alankaran Samaroh 2021

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that the image of any nation is based on the awareness of its society and its sense of duty. Where the society is aware of its duties, the constitutional system also operates effectively. The strength of the society lies in the unity, trust, mutual cooperation and collective efforts of its members. A healthy society is the one in which involvement of everyone, development of all, trust of everybody and efforts of all are included. This is the basis of inclusive development.

Governor Mangubhai Patel was addressing the Madhya Pradesh Sewa Alankaran Samaroh 2021 at Ravindra Natya Griha, Indore.

Yogendra Mahant, senior journalist Vijay Das along with administrative officers and dignitaries were present.

Talented people were honoured



Various talented people who did excellent works were felicitated at the function. The Vice Chancellor of Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya Renu Jain, Nadi Vaidya of Bhopal

Chandrashekar Tiwari, BSF IG Ashok Yadav and other personalities who contributed in the field of welfare of the society and medicine were also honoured.

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that in order to boost the morale of the talented people doing excellent works, it is a healthy and meaningful initiative to honour them in the Madhya Pradesh Sewa Alankaran Ceremony 2021. By honouring these various talents of the state, an atmosphere of co-operation and unity is created in the society. In the overall development of any state, the members of all talented and capable sections have an important role. It is the responsibility of all these individuals to inspire other people of the society to achieve similar feats with the achievements they have made. It is also the responsibility of all of us to nurture and highlight the hidden talents in the society. He said "you would make better use of your talents for the welfare of the deprived sections of Madhya Pradesh and would contribute significantly in the overall and inclusive development of the state".



EDITOR'S SPECS

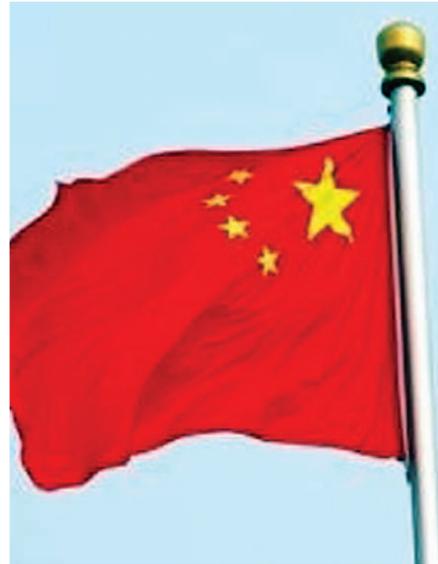
UN India lauds 100 crore vax feat

The United Nations (UN) in India has congratulated the country on achieving the "remarkable milestone" of 100 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines on Thursday and expressed gratitude to the nation's 'Corona Warriors'. "This vaccination landmark reflects India's commitment to 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'," UN India said in a statement here. "I commend India on this momentous success. The United Nations in India is a proud partner of the Government of India in its fight against Covid-19, steadfast in our commitment to the largest vaccine drive in the world. I would also like to express my gratitude to India's Corona Warriors who have made this milestone a possibility. Healthcare workers, sanitation staff, paramedical, auxiliary workers, police personnel and many more have worked tirelessly to keep Indians safe during the pandemic," said United Nations Resident Coordinator in India, Deirdre Boyd. UN agencies have supported India in its difficult yet resilient fight against the pandemic. "Collectively, we delivered over 10,000 oxygen generators, over 70 oxygen plants, over 10 million pieces of PPE kits, 170 metric tonnes of medical resources and supported the preparation for the mass scale rollout of Covid vaccines using innovative digital platforms," a statement said. "The United Nations in India commends the Government of India in its leveraging of digital technology to reach this mark and continues to extend our support in ensuring that vaccines reach everyone, everywhere. We stand resolutely with India and its people in their endeavour to combat the impact of the pandemic and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, making sure that no one is left behind," it added.

IN SOUP OVER LABOUR ABUSES IN AFRICA, BEIJING ATTACKS US FOR FUNDING ANTI-CHINA STORIES

Shankar Kumar

Engaged in a bitter slugfest with the US on economic, technological and strategic fronts, China is taking its fight with the US in the third country, especially Zimbabwe where the alleged expose by the African country's largest daily newspaper 'The Herald' is being used by Beijing to badger the US left, right and centre. In its report published on September 21, The Herald has maintained that the US is funding and training local reporters to write anti-China stories. "The United States is sponsoring a strategy to undermine Chinese investment in Zimbabwe by smearing the Asian giant's companies as engaging in widespread labour malpractices, as well as violation of human, community and environmental rights among other ills," the Zimbabwean daily reported. Considered as the largest read newspaper in the landlocked Southern African nation, The Herald also included Western countries in its sensational report. "The strategy is part of an intricate plan, also involving some European and Nordic countries, to discredit Chinese businesses through disinformation, lies and sensationalism in the independent media and social platform," The Herald report said. Surprisingly, the Zimbabwean daily used a cartoon of CGTN (China Global Television Network) as a lead photograph for its story: 'US plan to discredit Chinese investments unmasked.' While it impacted the credibility of the story, for almost three weeks since the publication of the alleged expose by The Herald, China remained silent on the issue. On October 14, all state-backed news outlets of China from CGTN to Global Times to Xinhua to China Daily and others came out with the Zimbabwean daily's story. A day after Chinese media coverage of the said story, the East Asian country's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian, during a regular press briefing, said: "The US government chose to hire paid posters to spread rumours with the money, which is vile as media outlets put it. For some time, the US has gone to great lengths, including paying for lies, to discredit China and hurt China-Africa relations." There seemed to be a pattern in the Chinese attempt to play up the issue and Beijing apparently did to show the US and the West, whose media outlets have over the years come out with stories of Chinese firms' exploitation of workers and the poor in Zimbabwe, in the bad light. The Guardian, the well-known British daily, had exposed abuses of local workers hired by the Chinese companies for working in mines and construction businesses in Zimbabwe as far as nine years ago. In the story published on January 2, 2012, the British daily came out with a headline 'Workers claim abuse as China adds Zimbabwe to its scramble for Africa.' The British daily presented a heart wrenching story of Zimbabwean workers who were made to slog 14-hour a day for seven days on a paltry sum of \$4 a day and beaten mercilessly, sometime after undressing them with helmets, for a simple mistake during their work at Zimbabwe National Defence College. Funded by China, the Defence College was being built by



the Chinese construction company, Anhui Foreign Economic Construction Company (AFECC). "The shadowy military academy is being built by a Chinese contractor whose managers are accused of meting out physical punishments, miserable conditions and meagre pay," The Guardian said in its report nine-year ago. The trend continued with Western media digging out one after another story of Zimbabwe workers' mistreatment. CNN, the prominent US television channel, had widely covered the shooting of the two Zimbabwean workers by a Chinese firm manager, Zhang Xuen on June 29, 2020. Showing the "systematic and widespread" abuse that locals face in Chinese mining operations, "Zhang Xuen shot an employee five times and wounded another at the mine he ran in Gweru province in central Zimbabwe during a row with workers over outstanding pay," CNN reported last year. Under US sanctions since 2003, Zimbabwe is heavily leaned towards China politically, militarily and economically. China is Zimbabwe's fourth largest trading partner and its largest source of investment with stakes worth billions of US dollar in everything from agriculture to construction. Result is, China wields such a strong clout on Zimbabwe that despite numerous cases of abuses of local labourers by Chinese employers, the Zimbabwe government doesn't take action against them. This year in September, the National Union of Metal and Allied Industries of Zimbabwe, which is affiliated to IndustriALL Global Union, took out a protest rally against Chinese-owned Afrochine Smelting Pvt Ltd in Harare for unfair termination of contracts for 33 workers, non-payment of

wages and beating up of workers by supervisors. As per media reports, the union members also petitioned the Zimbabwe government for an action against the management of Afrochine Smelting Pvt Ltd, yet no action was taken. Afrochine Smelting has also been accused of destroying the world heritage site, Mavuradonha in northern Zimbabwe, which is believed to be a sacred place where local Zimbabweans say their ancestors and spirits reside. For the sake of extracting chrome and other mineral resources, Chinese companies in collusion with local authorities, are said to be involved in Mavuradonha which is a restricted area in the landlocked African nation. The issue of exploitation of Zimbabwean workers by Chinese companies has also been raised by several digital, print and television channels across Africa. AllAfrica.com, a website that aggregates news produced primarily from the African region, on July 8, 2021 reported war of words between Harare-based Chinese diplomats and Zimbabwe's labour unions over allegations that business people from China are abusing their local employees. Under a headline, 'Zimbabwe: China clashes with Zimbabwean unions over systematic abuse', the website report maintained that the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), the largest labour centre representing private sector employees, recently created a story when used social media to expose the "slave-like working conditions" at a Chinese owned tile manufacturing factory on the outskirts of Harare. However, now Chinese perpetrated abuses against local labourers seem to have crossed all limits of tolerance. Anti-China sentiments are growing rancorous with people beginning to realize that they are being oppressed to serve vested interests of Chinese. The US and Western media, think tanks are helping in fanning the growing anti-China sentiments; they are openly criticizing Beijing for being complicit in the exploitation of human rights of workers in Africa. A glimpse of this can be seen in the recent report of the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, a London-based nonprofit organization. The report said Africa has the second highest number of allegations of human rights abuses, with 26.7 percent of the claims recorded against Chinese companies operating abroad from 2013 to 2020. Observers factor such criticism, which sometimes become virulent, for the rise in anti-US or anti-West campaigns by China. They, however, don't hesitate to cast doubt on the impartiality of the local media, including The Herald. They feel that with the current Zimbabwe government in league with China, it is not impossible for the ruling elites to influence editorial lines of Zimbabwe's largest read English newspaper. Whatever may be the truth, the heat generated by the Chinese media and government over the Zimbabwean daily's story on US funding and training of local reporters to write anti-China stories must be properly investigated to differentiate chalk from cheese.

international

China suspends 5 airlines after Covid cases on flights

Beijing | Agencies
The Civil Aviation Administration of China has suspended five Chinese and international airlines after Covid-19 cases were reported on flights, Samaa TV reported on Friday. According to a notice dated October 15, Authority had to take the decision after six cases of coronavirus was confirmed in passengers on Air China flight CA780 (Frankfurt to Changchun) that entered the country on October 1. It said that starting from October 18, the operation of this flight would be suspended. Five cases of coronavirus were confirmed on Shandong Airlines flight SC4088 (Seoul to Qingdao) that entered on October 1.



Eight cases of coronavirus surfaced in passengers on KLM flight KL857 (Amsterdam to Shanghai) that entered on September 29; six cases were confirmed on El Al LY065 (Tel Aviv to Shanghai) that entered on September 29. On October 3, the German Eagle Airlines flight DE8442 (Frankfurt to Xi'an) had five cases. Since October 18, the operation of these three flights was suspended, the report said.

Covid pandemic killed 80K-180K health workers till May 2021: WHO

Geneva | Agencies
The Covid-19 pandemic has killed an estimated 80,000 to 180,000 healthcare workers from January 2020 till May this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) said. The estimates are derived from a new WHO working paper based on the 3.45 million Covid-19 related deaths reported to WHO as at May 2021. "The backbone of every health system is its workforce. Covid-19 is a powerful demonstration of just how much we rely on these men and women, and how vulnerable we all are when the people who protect our health are themselves unprotected," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, at the WHO weekly Covid-19 briefing on Thursday. Available data from 119 countries, in the working paper, suggest that by September 2021, two in five healthcare workers were fully vaccinated on average, with considerable difference across regions and economic groupings. Less than one in 10 have been fully vaccinated in the African and Western Pacific regions while 22 mostly high-income countries reported that above 80 per cent of their healthcare workers are fully vaccinated. A few large high-income countries have not yet reported data to WHO. "We have a moral obligation to protect all health



and care workers, ensure their rights and provide them with decent work in a safe and enabling practice environment. This must include access to vaccines," said Jim Campbell, Director of the WHO Health Workforce Department, in a statement. Besides the death of healthcare workers, the WHO is also concerned that an increasing proportion of the workforce are suffering from burnout, stress, anxiety and fatigue. The global health body has called on leaders and policy makers to ensure equitable access to vaccines so that health and care

workers are prioritised. Tedros noted that more than 10 months since the first vaccines were approved, "the fact that millions of health workers still haven't been vaccinated is an indictment on the countries and companies that control the global supply of vaccines". Further, the WHO stated that the Covid-19 pandemic will drag on until 2022, much longer than it needs to, because several poor countries have not received vaccines against the deadly infectious disease. It would be a "moral catastrophe of historic proportions" if G20 countries cannot act quickly, said Gordon Brown, former British Prime Minister and currently WHO's Ambassador for Global Health Financing. These nations have pledged to donate more than 1.2 billion vaccine doses to COVAX. According to the WHO, so far, only 150 million have been delivered. Moreover, just one in seven of the doses promised by pharmaceutical companies and wealthy countries are actually reaching their destinations in poorer countries, new figures from 'The People's Vaccine -- an alliance of charities, have suggested. The vast majority of Covid vaccines have been given in high-income or upper middle-income countries. Africa accounts for just 2.6 per cent of doses administered globally.

30 ABDUCTED SCHOOL CHILDREN RELEASED IN NIGERIA

Abuja: Thirty school children, who were kidnapped from a secondary school in Nigeria's north-western state of Kebbi more than four months ago, were released by their captors, the government said. In a statement, the Kebbi state government confirmed the release, saying that the students have arrived at the state capital Birnin Kebbi and will undergo medical screening and support before being reunited with their families, reports Xinhua news agency. "Efforts are still continuing to secure the release of the remaining," said the statement, without revealing the number of students that were still held by the kidnapers. "We thank all those who have helped in securing the release," it added.

FIVE CLIMBERS RESCUED FROM NEPAL PEAK, 1 MISSING

Kathmandu: Five climbers -- four foreigners and a guide -- who were stranded on the Mera Peak in Nepal due to bad weather and massive snowfall have been rescued, with one mountaineer still missing, authorities said. In a statement late Thursday, the Nepal Mountaineering Association said: "The climbers were stranded on the mountain while returning after reaching the peak. They were rescued on Tuesday and brought to the capital Kathmandu on a helicopter. They are receiving treatment at Kathmandu-based Grande Hospital," Xinhua news agency reported. The Nepali climber with the expedition team is still missing on the 6,476 metre-high peak which lies close to Mt. Everest, said the association which issues climbing permits for 27 Himalayan mountains ranging from 5,800m to 6,500m. Shanta Bir Lama, president of the association, told Xinhua that the climbers were stranded on Tuesday night as weather conditions worsened and helicopters could not be mobilised for rescue efforts. The search operation is continuing for the missing climber who had gone missing at the height of 5,600 metres, he added. The landslides and floods have claimed 101 lives, while 41 remained missing.



Global Covid-19 caseload tops 242.4 mn

Washington | Agencies
The global coronavirus caseload has topped 241.9 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 4.92 million and vaccinations soared to over 6.73 billion, according to the Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Friday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload, death toll and the total number of vaccine doses administered stood at 242,449,033, 4,928,934 and 6,733,417,557, respectively. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 45,294,293 and 733,064, according to the CSSE. In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 34,127,450 cases. The other worst countries with over 3 million cases are Brazil (21,697,341), the UK (8,681,759), Russia (8,005,376), Turkey (7,772,574), France (7,209,126), Iran (5,833,525), Argentina (5,277,525), Spain (4,995,176), Colombia (4,986,249), Italy



(4,729,678), Indonesia (4,237,834), Germany (4,435,487) and Mexico (3,767,758), the CSSE figures showed. Nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are Brazil (604,679), India (452,811), Mexico (285,347), Russia (223,331), Peru (199,945), Indonesia (143,120), the UK (139,562), Italy (131,724), Colombia (126,959), Iran (124,763), France (118,339) and Argentina (115,796).

Biden says US will defend Taiwan if China attacks

Washington | Agencies
US President Joe Biden said that Washington was committed to coming to Taiwan's defence if it comes under attack from China - a stance that seems in opposition to America's stated policy of "strategic ambiguity", CNN reported. Asked twice during CNN's Town Hall on Thursday whether the US would protect Taiwan if China attacked, Biden said it would. "Yes, we have a commitment to do that," he said. Biden has made similar statements in the past, only to have the White House say longstanding US policy had not changed toward the island. The US provides Taiwan defensive weapons, but has remained intentionally ambiguous on whether it would intervene militarily in the event of a Chinese attack, the report said. Under the "One China" Policy, the US acknowledges China's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan. In recent weeks, Beijing has sent dozens of warplanes near into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), and Chinese President Xi Jinping has said that "reunification" between China and Taiwan was inevitable. A White House official attempted



to clarify Biden's comments on Taiwan after the town hall, saying the President was "not announcing any change in our policy and there is no change in our policy" in his remarks about China and Taiwan, the report added. Biden, citing his relationship with Xi, said he wasn't looking to enter a prolonged conflict. "I have spoken and spent more time with Xi Jinping than any other world leader has. That's why you hear people saying Biden wants to start a new cold war with China. I don't want a cold war with China. I want China to understand that we are not going to step back and change any of our views."



NO DRUG CHATS BETWEEN ARYAN KHAN-ANANYA PANDAY: NCB SOURCES

Despite the brouhaha over Ananya Panday's grilling by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), official sources hinted on Friday that there is apparently no evidence of any 'drug-related exchanges' in her alleged WhatsApp chats with Aryan Khan, the son of Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The sources reluctantly divulged that there are 'no traces or references' of any Marijuana (Ganja) or weed-related chat in the two star-kids' WhatsApp communication being scanned in-depth by the NCB.

More likely, Ananya is being questioned for her version by the NCB for some different leads it has collected in the case, but the officials decline to elaborate.

The latest disclosure comes in the wake of certain unconfirmed media reports claiming the emergence of at least three purported WhatsApp chats between the two star-kids allegedly discussing drugs, etc. which the NCB was probing now.

In a surprise addition to the ongoing investigations into the October 2 rave party raid aboard a cruise ship, the NCB 'visited' the home of Ananya Panday and



slapped her with a summons. Acting promptly on Thursday, accompanied by her father and veteran actor Chunky Panday, Ananya went to the NCB and was ques-



tioned for over 2 hours by half a dozen officials, and has been summoned again this day (October 22). The developments came even as a Special NDPS Court Judge VV.

Patil extended the judicial custody of Khan and 7 others arrested on October 3, till October 30. Khan's bail plea will come up before the Bombay High Court on October 26.

Earlier on Thursday, Shah Rukh Khan had made a high-glare visit to son Aryan in the Arthur Road Central Jail where he spent a few minutes with him, and later an NCB team 'visited' his Bandra bungalow, setting tongues wagging.

This prompted the veteran Bollywood actress and TV hostess Simi Garewal, 75, to come out in indirect support of Aryan, Ananya and others vide a cryptic tweet: "In a population of 1,397,642,731 - they can only find these 6 or 8 young Bollywood stars to target for drugs??" Meanwhile, after nabbing at least 20 people till date in the cruise ship raid case, the NCB has not ruled out making further arrests as the investigations widen and progress.

One falls to death as fire breaks out in 61-storey Mumbai building

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A fire erupted on the 19th floor of a 61-storey residential building in south Mumbai, sending panic waves among the residents and resulting in the death of one person, here on Friday, officials said on Friday.

The blaze broke out in the Avigna Park building in Currey Road around noon, with thick clouds of smoke billowing out, sending the residents scurrying out to safety.

One panicky man was seen coming out of the burning floor, hanging onto a ledge, losing balance and falling to his death below. He was identified as Arun Tiwari, 30, according to the BMC Disaster Control.

At least 15 fire-tenders rushed to the spot and battled the conflagration, attempting to stop the flames from spreading to the higher floors, while Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar went and oversaw the rescue operations.

A majority of the residents managed to evacuate themselves, including several senior citizens and children, though two persons are feared trapped inside.

The cause of the blaze, tentatively believed to be due to a short-circuit, is being probed and the building reportedly has all fire-safety measures in place, said the residents.



NCP MP's naughty 'Happy Birthday' wish for Amit Shah goes viral

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Among the lakhs of wishes that Union Home Minister Amit Shah got on his 57th birthday on Friday, one video-greeting message from medico-cum-actor-turned politician and Nationalist Congress Party MP Dr. Amol R. Kolhe stands out, almost literally.

Posted this morning in Hindi, Dr. Kolhe warmly greeted Shah, and hailed him as "among the few ruling party leaders who count in the country today".

"On this occasion, I wish that your life crosses 100-plus, similar to the rates of petrol-diesel... Your dominance should prevail, just like a graph of the spiralling prices of fuels..." said Dr. Kolhe.

He added: "Akin to the prices of cooking gas which have doubled in a very short



time, you should also achieve 'double success' at the same speed... I pray to Maa Jagdamba to give you courage and capability to save the common masses grappling with exorbitant inflation... A very, very Happy Birthday." Dr. Kolhe's message also shows a chart

of the gas prices and current rates of petrol-diesel which have shot past the century mark per litre, and a photo of a smiling Shah with a picture of a bouquet of flowers in the foreground. Within hours, the NCP leader's post became viral with over 500 likes/retweets/comments.

MAN HELD FOR SEXUALLY ABUSING MINOR GIRL

Mumbai: Police have arrested a man from Kalyan in Maharashtra's Thane district for allegedly sexually abusing a six-year-old girl, an official said on Friday. The 51-year-old accused, identified as Madhav Santra, was arrested following a complaint lodged against him on Thursday, he said. "On Thursday, the victim had stepped out of the house to buy something from a nearby shop when the accused, who lives in the neighbourhood, touched her inappropriately. Scared, the girl immediately went back home, where she told her mother about the incident. Her mother approached the police and lodged the complaint," the official of Kolkewadi police station in Kalyan said. The accused was booked under IPC section 354 (assault or use of criminal force to any woman intending to outrage her modesty) and under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, he added.

Ananya Panday appears before NCB for second day

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Ananya Panday appeared before the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) here on Friday to record statement in connection with her alleged WhatsApp chats with Aryan Khan, son of superstar Shah Rukh Khan, arrested in a drugs case, sources said on Friday.

This is for the second day in a row that Ananya appeared before the central agency. Her actor-father Chunky Panday accompanied her to the NCB office as he had done on Thursday.

The father-daughter duo arrived at the anti-drug agency's office located at Ballard Estate in South Mumbai in a car around 2.20 pm, the sources said.

There was heavy deployment of police personnel at the office and barricades were put up there as large number of media persons gathered outside.

The NCB is probing the cruise ship drugs case, in which Aryan Khan is arrested along with 19 others.



During the investigation the NCB had found some WhatsApp chats between Aryan Khan and Ananya Panday, the sources said.

The NCB officials want to get some more information about the chats, following which she was summoned to the office on Thursday. She was questioned

by the agency officials for around two hours on Thursday, they said.

The NCB had seized Ananya's laptop and mobile phone on Thursday.

Meanwhile, a 24-year-old drug peddler was brought to the NCB office for questioning in the early hours of Friday, they said.

Param Bir Singh, Rashmi Shukla to be summoned in Koregaon Bhima case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Koregaon Bhima Commission of Inquiry on Friday passed an order for issuing summons to IPS officers Param Bir Singh and Rashmi Shukla to appear as witnesses in the ongoing probe regarding the circumstances related to the violence on January 1, 2018. The order was passed by Justice (ret'd) J N Patel, who heads the two-member commission.

Singh and Shukla are required to respond to the summons by November 8. Singh, who is currently untraceable, was the Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) when the Koregaon Bhima violence took place. Shukla was the Pune

Police Commissioner and is currently posted in Hyderabad as the Additional Director General of CRPF (South Zone). Elgaar Parishad, a conclave, was held in the jurisdiction of the Pune city police on December 31, 2017, ahead of the 200th anniversary of the battle of Koregaon Bhima. In August 2018, Singh had addressed a press conference releasing documents seized from the persons held in the Elgaar Parishad case for alleged links with the banned CPI (Maoist).

The Commission's lawyer Aashish Satpute on Friday filed an application that IPS officers Singh and Shukla should be called as witnesses, as it is necessary to bring forward intelligence inputs and all information received by the two officers per-

taining to the violence. The application was allowed and the commission passed an order that the summons be forwarded to the state Home Department for service.

Meanwhile, both Singh and Shukla are currently embroiled in different controversies. Singh was shunted out as Mumbai Police Commissioner after he wrote a letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray in March with several allegations against former Home Minister and NCP leader Anil Deshmukh. He alleged that Deshmukh had asked Assistant Police Inspector Sachin Waze to collect Rs 100 crore every month, including Rs 40-50 crore from around 1,750 bars and restaurants in Mumbai.

Police nabs a man cheating shopkeepers by calling in female voice

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Police have arrested a 44-year-old man from Nalasopara in neighbouring Palghar district for allegedly cheating several shopkeepers by making phone calls in a woman's voice, an official said on Friday.

The officials of the crime branch of Navi Mumbai police arrested the accused, identified as Manish Shashikant Ambekar, and his accomplice Anthony Thayappa Jangli (37), he



said. Addressing a press conference at the N M police commissionerate headquarters, DCP (crime) Suresh Mengde said that Ambekar used to pose as a woman doctor and order medicines from med-

ical shops and golden bangles from jewellers.

The accused used to tell the victims to send someone from their shops saying she wanted to buy medicines or bangles. But when somebody from the shop arrived at the designated spot, the accused would approach that person saying the woman doctor has sent him. He would then hand over fake 2,000 note to that person, the police official said.

After getting the remaining amount, he would flee from the spot, he added.

LAWYER MOVES MUMBAI COURT AGAINST JAVED AKHTAR OVER HIS RSS REMARKS

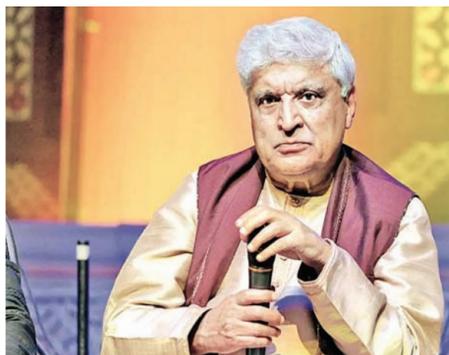
Team Absolute | Mumbai

The complaint against Javed Akhtar was filed before the metropolitan magistrate court in Mulund for the offence under section 499 (defamation), 500 (punishment for defamation).

Akhtar, 76, in a recent interview had drawn parallels between the Taliban and Hindu extremists.

The complainant, Santosh Dubey, a lawyer who claims to be an RSS supporter, alleged that Akhtar, with a view to gain political score, unnecessarily dragged the name of the RSS and defamed the organisation in a "calculated and well planned move".

The statement made by the accused during an interview was "well planned" to defame the RSS as well as to discourage and misguide the people who have joined the



RSS or would like to join the organisation, the complaint said. "The accused is very much aware that there is no similarity in thoughts, ideology, philosophy, mindsets and way of functioning of RSS and Taliban in any manner, but with the ill-intention to malign, damage, injure and

harm the prestige, good-will, image of RSS, the accused has deliberately and intentionally made false defamatory imputation and imaginary statements," it added.

The court will record the statement of the complainant in the next hearing to be held on November 16.

India Inc unscathed for now, but power prospects hinge on coal availability: Report

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Regulated coal supplies to non-power sectors and allowing participation of captive miners amid an increase in production by the key supplier -- Coal India -- may help corporate India avoid what appeared to be a major power crisis in the making until recently, but the threat still looms when power demand picks up from here, rating agency Crisil said in a report.

According to the report, a surge in power demand amid rapidly dwindling coal inventories, higher prices of imported coal, delayed payments to power producers, long dry spells impacting hydro power generation, and maintenance shut-downs at nuclear plants has had a domino effect on the sector in recent months.

Storms in some coal mining belts have impacted the supply further, worsening the situation. Coal stocks are unlikely to improve to the previous level of 15-18 days inventory anytime soon, the report said. Also, availability of rakes and a pick-up in power demand in March-May will be the key monitorables from here.

In the five years through September, growth in India's monthly power demand averaged 4 per cent, though it did exceed 12 per cent in a few months of fiscal 2020. In recent past, power



demand has surged again. Base demand has clocked 13 per cent growth year-to-date. Volatility in base demand has also risen sharply over the past two years. Peak demand growth has been higher at nearly 15 per cent, while volatility has spiked here, too.

Crisil Research estimates overall growth in power demand for the current fiscal at close to 7 per cent. Over the next three months, given the criticality of the current coal crisis, average

demand would be lower than in the past few months, an analysis of five-year data trends shows. While this may offer temporary respite, the real monitorable for power avail ability would be the March-May period when temperatures begin to soar, the report said.

Therefore, a build-up in coal inventories before end-February is crucial.

Highly industrialised states drive power demand growth, face moderate risk. A state-level monthly demand assessment indicates that on average, monthly power demand growth was close to 20 per cent for highly industrialised states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat (which account for close to 30 per cent of overall power demand). This can be attributed to a sharp rebound in the economic activity that has led to a revival among larger power consumers such as industries and commercial complexes compared with last year.

Growth from moderately industrialised states has been close to 15 per cent year-to-date, while states with more residential or agricultural consumers saw growth of less than 10 per cent. Further, pent-up post-pandemic demand has caused power demand to be per cent higher than even pre-pandemic fiscal 2020.



Sobering Effect

Gwyneth Paltrow 'barely had alcohol' since Covid diagnosis

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Gwyneth Paltrow was diagnosed with Covid in 2020, and since then she's hardly had any alcohol at all.

She shared with Chelsea Handler on her 'Dear Chelsea' podcast: "It's been a long year of barely any alcohol, I mean I've had a sip here and there but very rarely. You know me, I love a drink, I love the ritual of it, and I love to sit down and have one and chat. I love the taste of alcohol, like, I love whisky and wine and, whatever, vodka. I'll take it all."

"But I think what happened was, having gotten Covid and having felt like s***, or like having had long Covid stuff for a while, I just didn't feel vibrant."

Paltrow had Covid "early on" and she was subsequently encouraged to change her diet by a medical expert.

She said: "I didn't feel good, and I had really high inflammation levels and the doctor was like, 'Look, you really need to clean up your act. You gotta, at least for three months, no alcohol, no grains, no sugar, nothing processed,' everything like that."

The Oscar-winning actress, who is married to producer Brad Falchuk, is now feeling much healthier and more vibrant.

She said: "I kind of begrudgingly did it, and then I just started to feel so good. And I don't know, I'm not going to do it forever, but I think 2021 has been about me trying to value my health and wellness a little bit more because, especially during Covid, I was just eating whatever, drinking seven nights a week. And it's been really interesting. I sleep so much better with no alcohol, it's wild."



Russell Crowe, Zac Efron join 'The Greatest Beer Run Ever'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood stars

Russell Crowe and Zac Efron are in Thailand for their buddy movie 'The Greatest Beer Run Ever'.

The film is directed by Peter Farrelly whose 2018 film 'Green Book' won three Oscars in 2019, including best picture, reports variety.com. The film is an adaptation of the book 'The Greatest Beer Run Ever: A True Story of Friendship Stronger Than War', written by Joanna Molloy and John 'Chickie' Donohue. It is based on the true story of Donohue, who left New York in 1967 to track down and share a few beers with his childhood buddies in the army while they were fighting in Vietnam. As with Spike Lee's own wartime buddy movie 'Da 5

Blonds', the production is using Thailand as a stand-in for Vietnam.

Skydance Media is producing the film for Apple TV Plus. Brian Currie and Pete Jones co-wrote the script with Farrelly.

Local coordinator Oliver Ackerman of services company Living Films is facilitating the production in Thailand.

Crowe and Efron have been visible on social media since arriving in the Southeast Asian nation, though both have been coy about naming the project.

However, a Skydance spokesman confirmed to Variety over email that "we are in production on 'The Greatest Beer Run Ever' in Thailand with Pete Farrelly at the helm".



BEYONCE TEASES NEW SONG IN 'KING RICHARD' TRAILER

Los Angeles: Popstar Beyonce has shared a glimpse of her new song titled 'Be Alive' featured in the new trailer for 'King Richard', starring Will Smith.

The biopic is based on the rise of tennis superstars Venus and Serena Williams from the perspective of their father, Richard (played by Smith).

The song, which plays throughout the second half of the trailer, is an orchestra-laden anthem, with a powerful vocal by Beyonce.

Beyonce's projects have been relatively few and far between since the release of her blockbuster 2016 album 'Lemonade'.

Even though she's released three albums, none have been full Beyonce solo albums: the 2018 tag-team album with Jay-Z, 'Everything Is Love', as well as two albums related to 'The Lion King' reboot in which she voiced the character Nala and curated the albums, which featured her own songs as well as appearances from Jay-Z, Kendrick Lamar, Childish Gambino and rising African pop singers like Burna Boy and Mr. Eazi.



ADELE'S 'EASY ON ME' IS MOST-ADDED SONG IN US RADIO HISTORY

London | Agencies

English singer-songwriter Adele's 'Easy On Me' has already been recognised for setting first-day records for Spotify streams and YouTube views. After a week of adds and airplay, 'Easy On Me' has broken several records on radio, including becoming the most played song in US radio history during a song's first week on air. It's also the most-added song in the history of Mediabase, with 451 total stations that report to the service immediately putting it on their playlists, reports variety.com. Getting to that number requires airplay on multiple formats, of course and Adele got there by setting yet another record.

'Easy On Me' became the first song to be the most-added at five different formats in a single week. Those formats are Top 40, AC (adult contemporary), Hot AC, AAA (adult album alternative) and R&B. In two of those key formats, Top 40 and Hot AC, 'Easy On Me' pulled off a perfect launch, being added to every reporting station - a feat that is not wholly unprecedented but extremely rare. At Top 40, the song closed 179 out of 179 stations that report to the Mediabase chart, and at Hot AC, it went a flawless 94 for 94. There's one more stat to add to the staggering list.



Los Angeles | Agencies

'The Hangover' star Zach Galifianakis has shared that his two sons have no idea what their father does for a living and think that he is a librarian. The 52-year-old star has a seven-year-old son and a four-year-old son with his wife Quinn Lundberg. He told 'Entertainment Tonight': "My kids think I'm a librarian somewhere. They don't even know. They think I'm an assistant librarian somewhere."

The 'Between Two Ferns' star also joked that his boys "shall never know" of his 2009 hit movie 'The Hangover', reports femalefirst.co.uk. He quipped: "I'll just deny it. I'll say, 'I don't know what you're talking about. I had nothing to do with that movie.'"

The comedian says the subject of his fame remains "tricky". He continued: "You wanna protect their innocence as much as possible. They're just children. People used to come up to me and be like, 'Oh, my kids love 'The Hangover', and I'm like, 'You're a terrible parent'. They need to mature a little bit before they see that."

ZACH GALIFIANAKI'S KIDS THINK HE'S A LIBRARIAN

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Megan Barton Hanson

'Dune': Emotions and novel visuals elevate this cinematic experience

FILM REVIEW

TROY RIBEIRO

Creator: Denis Villeneuve

Cast: Timothee Chalamet, Rebecca Ferguson, Oscar Isaac, Josh Brolin, Stellan Skarsgard, Dave Bautista, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Zendaya, Chang Chen, David Dastmalchian, Sharon Duncan-Brewster, Charlotte Rampling, Jason Momoa, Javier Bardem, Babs Olusankokun, Golda Rosheuvel and Benjamin Clementine.

Duration: 156 minutes. (Running in Theatres)

Ratings: **** (four stars)

Director Denis Villeneuve's epic sci-fi movie 'Dune' is a cinematic experience. Magnificently mounted, it is cinema at its finest -- in scale, craft, execution, and imagination.

It has grand inter-planetary clan wars, brute armies with gigantic spaceships and technologically advanced weapons, an autocrat villain, and a messiah.

The film is an adaptation of Frank Herbert's 1965 book of the same name. Visually stunning, it not only tells a comprehensive inter-galactic 'coming-of-age' story, but also interweaves political intrigue and colonisation, exploitative greed, and conquest for the glittering, addictive substance called 'Spice'.

The 'Spice' extends human life, provides superhuman levels of thought, and makes faster-than-light travel practical. We are informed, "He who controls the 'Spice' controls the universe."

Part One -- as 'Dune' is titled -- is set in the year 10191. It is a complex universe with all the different houses (Atreides, Harkonnen, The Emperor and Fremen), their cultures, societal structures, and histories.

The narrative follows Paul Atreides (Timothee Chalamet) as he and his family, the noble



House Atreides, are thrust into a war for the dangerous desert planet Arrakis, which is also known as Dune. It is the only source of the most valuable 'Spice'.

House Harkonnen, under the leadership of its Baron Vladimir

Harkonnen (Stellan Skarsgard), was in charge of harvesting 'Spice' for some time. They ravaged Arrakis and inflicted cruelty on the planet's original inhabitants, the Fremen.

So, to rectify the wrongdoings, the Emperor abruptly hands over

the stewardship of Arrakis to Paul's father, Duke Leto Atreides (Oscar Isaac). Duke Leto is aware that this opportunity is a trap set by his enemies. So, he takes along with him his reluctant son and heir Paul, his concubine, and Bene Gesserit (a sort of a tribe with its history) Lady Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson), and the entire House Atreides clan.

They travel to the dangerous planet of Arrakis to uphold humanity's fate, hoping to combine forces with the Fremen. Their efforts are upended by sabotage, desert space worms, and a devastating plot to wipe out the entire Atreides bloodline.

The film is astutely crafted. The script written by Villeneuve, Jon Spaihts and Eric Roth has well-etched characters who emphasise the complex relationships in the narrative.

Overall, despite its runtime of 156 minutes, the film does not appear tedious because the narrative is moderately paced, it has emotions galore, and most of all, because the visuals appear fresh.



2021 T20 WORLD CUP

ERASMUS, WIESE POWER NAMIBIA TO SUPER 12

SL thrash Netherlands by 8 wkts, tops in Group A

Sharjah | Agencies

A terrific performance by Gerhard Erasmus (53 off 49) and David Wiese (28 runs and 2 wickets) powered Namibia to the Super-12 stage with a comprehensive eight-wicket win over Ireland in the 11th match of ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 at Sharjah Cricket Stadium, here on Friday.

Namibia became the fourth and final team to qualify for the Super 12 stage from Round 1 of the tournament. They will now become part of Group 2 featuring India, Pakistan, New Zealand, Afghanistan, and Scotland. A clinical bowling performance led by Jan Frylinck 3/21 and David Wiese helped Namibia restrict Ireland to 125/8 in 20 overs. Chasing the target on a challenging Sharjah pitch, Namibia had a slow start. They were 27-1 after 6 overs at the cost of Craig Williams' (15) wicket. However, Zane Green and Erasmus gave some pace to the innings and took Namibia



to 49/1 after ten overs. Thereafter, a terrific catch from O'Brien sent Green back to the dugout for 24(32) as the required rate was beginning to rise to dangerous levels. But, the dismissal of Green brought big-hitting Wiese to the crease, and his 53 runs unbeaten partnership with captain Erasmus took Namibia over the line and helped record the most famous victory

in the country's cricket history. Earlier, batting first, openers Paul Stirling and Kevin O'Brien gave Ireland a flying start. The duo played attacking cricket and took Ireland to 55-0, their highest powerplay score of the tournament so far. Bernard Scholtz finally provided Namibia the much-needed breakthrough by dismissing dangerous Paul

Stirling (38 off 23 balls), who lofted a catch to Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton in the deep in the 8th over. Jan Frylinck then got rid of O'Brien, who was into a risky shot, with Michael van Lingen taking the catch. The loss of openers in quick succession slowed the run rate as Ireland reached 71 after ten overs, with eight wickets in hand.

If the first ten overs belonged to Ireland, Namibia dominated the later part of the innings. The Namibian bowlers bowled with complete control and didn't give any freebies to Irish batters. It was Frylinck and Wiese who did the damage with the ball, taking five wickets between them as Namibia restricted Ireland's innings to 125/8 in 20 overs.

Brief scores :

Ireland 125/8 in 20 overs (Paul Stirling 38, Kevin O'Brien 25; Jan Frylinck 3/21, David Wiese 2/22) lost to Namibia 126-2 in 18.3 overs (Gerhard Erasmus 53, David Wiese 28; Curtis Campher 2/14)

Sharjah | Agencies

A clinical bowling performance by Sri Lanka set up an eight-wicket thrashing of the Netherlands in the final Group A match of the ICC mens T20 World Cup at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium here on Friday.

By demolishing the Netherlands, Sri Lanka have signed off from Round 1 as Group A topper. They will be joined by second-placed Namibia in the Super-12 stage of the tournament.

Chasing a paltry 45, Pethum Nissanka departed for a five-ball duck, miscuing the loft to mid-on off Brandon Glover in the second over. Four overs later, Charitha Asalanka (6) was dismissed similarly by Paul van Meekeren. Kusal Perera slammed six boundaries in his unbeaten knock of 33 to



seal a hat-trick of wins for Sri Lanka with 77 balls to spare.

Earlier, the Netherlands had a disastrous start as Max O'Dowd was run-out by a direct hit from Dasun Shanaka on the fourth ball of the innings. Ben Copper smashed Dushmantha Chameera for back-to-back boundaries. But a carrom ball from off-spinner Maheesh Theekshana went through the gate to hit the stumps. Two balls later, Theekshana struck again,

knocking off Steph M'burgh's middle stump.

Brief scores

Netherlands 44 all out (Colin Ackermann 11, Wanindu Hasaranga 3/9, Lahiru Kumara 3/7) lost to Sri Lanka 45/2 in 7.1 overs (Kusal Perera 33 not out, Brandon Glover 1/12, Paul van Meekeren 1/20) by eight wickets not out, Fayyaz Butt 1/26, Khawar Ali 1/27) by eight wickets.

England-India Test series decider to be played in Edgbaston next year

London | Agencies

The series decider for the Test series between England and India will now be played at Edgbaston from July 1 next year, said the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Friday. India is currently leading the series 2-1 before the fifth Test at Old Trafford was cancelled hours before the start due to concerns over COVID-19 outbreak in the tourists' camp.

"The fifth match of the LV= Insurance Test Series between England Men and India Men has been rescheduled and will now take place in July 2022. The match, which was due to take place last month at Emirates Old Trafford, was called off when India were unable to field a team due to fears of a further increase in the number of Covid-19 cases inside the camp," said an ECB statement. "With India leading the series 2-1, the concluding fifth match will now



take place from July 1, 2022, at Edgbaston, following an agreement between the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)," added the statement. ECB also said that due to the rescheduled Test, the white-ball series between England and India will now start six days later than originally planned.

England have a lot to play for against West Indies

Dubai | Agencies

England would hope to set straight an unwanted record when they meet West Indies in a Super 12 match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup here at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium here on Saturday.

England have never beaten West Indies in five encounters in ICC Men's T20 World Cup and will be trying their best to win the sixth clash between the two teams, which will also help them set off on a winning note in the current edition.

But West Indies, the most successful nation in T20 World Cups having won the title twice -- in 2012 and 2016, are the most unpredictable teams in the fray. The team from the Caribbean islands comprises players that can blast any attack to smithereens on a particular day but



can also collapse in a heap the next. They have assembled in UAE a strong squad of players that are capable of destroying any lineup on their day. In 2017, West Indies played 17

T20I matches, winning eight and losing six, three matches against Pakistan were washed off. They won the series against Sri Lanka and Australia but lost to South Africa.

West Indies have lost both their warmup matches, to Pakistan and Afghanistan. With England without key players like Ben Stokes, Jofra Archer, and Sam Curran, Saturday's clash could go any way -- whichever team holding its nerves will win the match. England lost a T201 series to India but defeated Sri Lanka and Pakistan. They had mixed results in warm-up matches too, lost to India but defeated New Zealand.

Both England and West Indies have players that have played in the Indian Premier League that ended in UAE recently and both sets of players struggled to get big scores. Chris Gayle withdrew from the IPL before the last couple of rounds citing bubble fatigue. West Indies skipper Kieran Pollard too did not have many noteworthy performances as Mumbai Indians failed to make it to the playoffs.

Women's hockey nationals

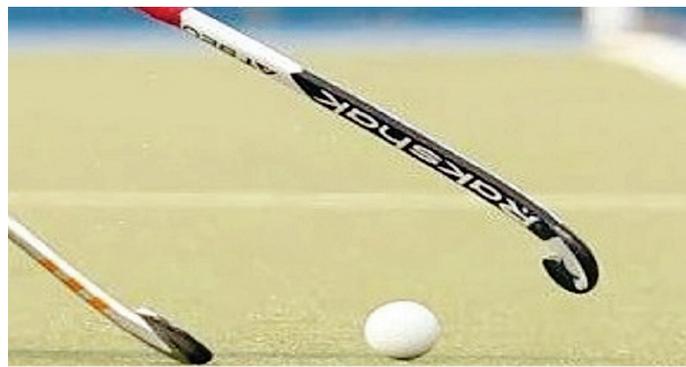
Big wins for Odisha, Punjab, and Haryana on Day 2

Jhansi | Agencies

Top states continued to have a field day with teams from Odisha, Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh registering comfortable victories in their respective matches on the second day of the 11th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship 2021 here on Friday.

In the first match of the day, Odisha registered a comprehensive 18-0 victory over Hockey Himachal in their Pool D match. Dipti Lakra (5', 23', 27', 30', 56', 58') scored six goals while Janhavi Pradhan (8', 34', 38') netted a hat-trick. Namrata Jasmin Bara (35', 60') scored a brace while Khusbu Kujur (2'), Ashim Kanchan Barla (4'), Sushanti Minz (11'), Abinasi Mukti Surin (20'), Rojita Kujur (30'), Rinki Kujur (33') and Sarita Kerketta (43') scored a goal each for the winner.

Later in Pool E, Hockey Punjab defeated Hockey Andhra Pradesh 12-0. Navjot Kaur (9', 38', 48', 60') found the back of the net four times, while Sarabdeep Kaur (11', 39') and



Kirandeep Kaur (21', 47') scored a brace each. Yashika Negi (8'), Priya (23'), captain Reena Rani (34'), and Shweta (48') scored one goal each. In the other Pool E match, Hockey Chandigarh defeated Hockey Arunachal 5-0.

Poonam (18', 36', 52') scored a hat-trick, while Reetu Devi (2', 48') scored a brace for Hockey Chandigarh, Hockey India informed in a release on Friday. In Pool A, Hockey Haryana eased past Le Puducherry Hockey with a com-

prehensive 25-0 victory. Jyoti (15', 25', 31', 38', 55', 58') scored six goals, while Monika Sihag (4', 18', 20', 33', 35') found the back of the net five times. Soni (1', 29', 37', 39') netted four goals. Amandeep Kaur (2', 5', 47') scored a hat-trick, while Kumari Shailja Gautam (6', 7') scored a brace. Ekta Kaushik (8'), Manjeeta (24'), captain Manisha (33'), Anita (41') and Manisha (57') scored one goal each. In Pool B, Hockey Maharashtra defeated Hockey Bihar 7-0. Chaitrali Gawde (6', 53') scored a brace, while Ankita Sapate (2'), Poonam (12'), Renuka Yadav (28') and Akansha Singh (42') scored one goal each. In the last match of the day, Hockey Madhya Pradesh registered a comprehensive 15-0 victory over Hockey Bengal. Prashu Singh Parihar (15', 18', 35', 36') scored four goals, while Upasana Singh (21', 26', 27') scored a hat-trick. Neeraj Rana (8', 58') and Anjali Gautam (29', 38') netted a brace each. Jyoti Pal (3'), Kanchan Nidhi Kerketta (5'), Sakshi Pandey (9'), and Yogita Bora (15') scored a goal each for Hockey Madhya Pradesh.

I am hoping that 5-0 record in T20 World Cup will become 5-1: Younis Khan

Dubai | Agencies

Former Pakistan captain Younis Khan is hopeful of Pakistan turning the tables on India and making the overall scoreline 5-1 in the high-octane clash of the ICC men's T20 World Cup. He added that players who can deliver the goods in the high-pressure encounter become legends of the game. India will begin its campaign in the tournament against Pakistan in Dubai on Sunday.

"From Pakistan point of view, I am hoping that 5-0 record in T20 World Cup will become 5-1. India-Pakistan is a high-pressure match and only those who are able to deliver in such scenarios go on to become legends of the game," said Khan at a conclave organised by ABP



News. Khan, who captained Pakistan to the 2009 men's T20 World Cup trophy, was of the opinion that the presence of MS Dhoni in the dressing room as a mentor is a huge plus for India in the mega event.

Qatar set to host ICC qualifying event as part of road to Australia 2022

Doha | Agencies

The qualifying for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2022 in Australia is set to continue in Doha with five teams set to compete in the T20 World Cup Asia A Qualifier from October 23, 2021 onwards.

Hosts Qatar are joined by Bahrain, Kuwait, Maldives and Saudi Arabia with one place in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Global Qualifier up for grabs.

It's the first time an ICC event is being staged in Qatar, with the matches to be hosted at the Asian Town Cricket Stadium.

Qatar (21) enter the event as the highest ranked side on the ICC Men's T20I Team Rankings, with Kuwait (27), Saudi Arabia (28), Bahrain (43) and Maldives (74) all aiming to qualify for the T20



World Cup for the first time.

In all, there will be 10 matches, with each team playing each other once in the round-robin format. The event will also complete the

Asia regional finals with Nepal, Singapore, UAE, Hong Kong and The Philippines already through to the Global Qualifier.

FIXTURES

23 October - Qatar vs Bahrain; Maldives vs Saudi Arabia
24 October - Bahrain vs Kuwait; Qatar vs Maldives
25 October - Kuwait vs Saudi Arabia
27 October - Bahrain vs Maldives; Qatar vs Saudi Arabia
28 October - Maldives vs Kuwait; Saudi Arabia vs Bahrain
29 October - Kuwait vs Qatar.

T20 World Cup

Australia, South Africa look for strong start in Super 12 opener

Abu Dhabi | Agencies

Australia and South Africa will be looking for a strong start in the Group 1 of Super 12 stage in the ICC men's T20 World Cup at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium on Saturday. Both Australia and South Africa have not won the mens T20 WC trophy.

But on form, South Africa appear to be slightly more favourites than Australia.

Coming into the tournament, Australia had suffered 4-1 series losses to West Indies and Bangladesh on away tours. But with the main players available for the



mega event, expect Aaron Finch's men to be at their best despite hav-

ing mixed results in warm-up matches. In the warm-up matches,

Australia overcame New Zealand in a thriller but were defeated comprehensively by India.

They will be more concerned with the lack of runs from their prolific opening pair of Finch and David Warner. Warner, the left-hander, hasn't been at his menacing best this year. With scores of 0 and 2 for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the second half of IPL 2021 in the UAE, Warner was dropped for the rest of the season. With scores of 0 and 1 in warm-up matches, his poor run of scores continued in UAE.

Australia still continues to place their trust in Warner coming out of his wretched form.



Romantic comedies attract me: Sanya Malhotra

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Sanya Malhotra says she is organically attracted to light-hearted romantic comedies, and that's probably the biggest reason for her to do the film 'Meenakshi Sundareshwar'. Sanya Malhotra along with co-star Abhimanyu Dassani, filmmaker Vivek Soni and entire Netflix and the Dharmatic creative team were at the trailer launch of 'Meenakshi Sundareshwar' in Mumbai. Talking about her reasons for picking up 'Meenakshi Sundareshwar', which is a romantic comedy about a newly-wed couple facing 'LDR' - Long Distance Relationship, Sanya said, "The romantic bit of the script made me choose it. Because as an audience I am also craving to watch romance, nowadays I am organically attracted to light-hearted romantic comedies, so that was the main reason I was attracted to the character and script. For me, it was love at first sight with Meenakshi's character. I also wanted to work with Dharma Productions, it was my dream." Sanya will be seen playing the role of a south Indian girl from Madurai. So when asked about playing the Madurai girl on-screen despite being a Punjabi, she added, "The script is very well written so the material I had as an actor sorted it out for me. I was really confident that I will be able to do it."

The film features new filmmaker Vivek Soni and co-actor Abhimanyu Dassani, who is just one movie old, so we asked Sanya if that added any extra responsibility to her shoulders.

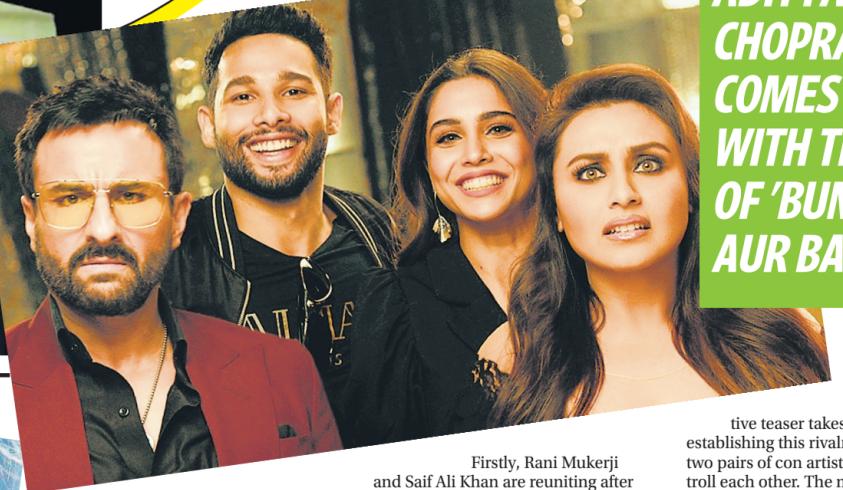
Rajinikanth starrer Annaatthe to reach the North India audience with UFO Moviez

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The final quarter of 2021 is proving to be prosperous for the Indian film industry. As cinema halls reopen their doors, the audience is nothing less than excited to enjoy the big-screen magic once again. With the festival of lights nearing us, one that has always brought the most awaited movies to the masses, we have one of the biggest films coming to the pan-India audience for their enjoyment. South superstar Rajinikanth's upcoming film, Annaatthe has been announced to release during the auspicious days of Diwali this year. And the most delightful part is that the Sun Pictures production is not going to be limited to the Southern market but will also release in theatres across the North India also thanks to none other than UFO Moviez. In the region of North India, UFO will also be releasing the Telugu version of the movie which is titled Peddanna. The much-awaited film by director Siva will see actresses Nayanathara and Keerthy Suresh sharing screen space with Rajni sir. The music of the film by Imman has also created a lot of buzz among the audience. With the release of Annaatthe, the renowned distribution organisation will be lauded by millions of Rajinikanth fans that reside not only in the South but all over India.



ADITYA CHOPRA COMES UP WITH TEASER OF 'BUNTY AUR BABLI 2'



the story.

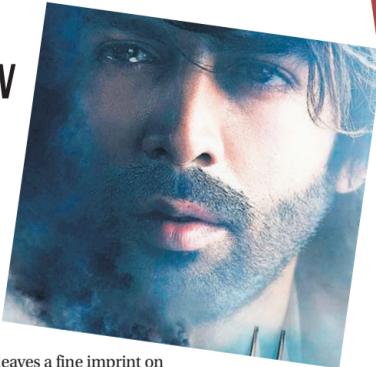
The innovative teaser takes no time in establishing this rivalry as we see the two pairs of con artists mercilessly troll each other. The moment the film's teaser hit the internet, it became a huge sensation. Audiences were in for a sweet nostalgia along with a healthy dose of humour that draws itself from the rivalry between the two rival pairs. The superbly crafted teaser left many wondering as to who came up with this idea.

Firstly, Rani Mukerji and Saif Ali Khan are reuniting after 12 years and secondly, the film will see another set of 'Bunty Aur Babli' in the form of Siddhant Chaturvedi and debutante Sharvari. The rib-tickling comedy brings together two sets of con artists who belong to different generations, against each other. How they try to prove who is the better pair by one-upping the other forms the crux of

KARTIK AARYAN'S 'DHAMAKA' TRAILER CLOCKS OVER 38 MILLION VIEWS ACROSS PLATFORMS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Kartik Aaryan's performances and the box-office numbers of his films have made him the most sought after star of B-town. The actor has so far worked in rom coms, dramas and comedies but that's about to change as he will be soon seen in a powerful role in the upcoming action thriller titled 'Dhamaka'. The trailer of the film was released recently and Kartik left the audience completely shell-shocked with his acting chops in the finely cut trailer. For his role in the film, Kartik has stepped into the shoes of an ex-journalist caught between the quandary of conscience and his career which took a hit following an incident. The actor leaves a fine imprint on the minds of the audience through his act in the opening scenes of the trailer. Ever since its release, the trailer has been making waves on the internet and has garnered rave reviews from critics, audience and industry. It has registered over 38 million views across platforms.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Yash Raj Films' memorable 'Bunty Aur Babli' is returning with its second instalment after a wait of 16 years. The teaser of 'Bunty Aur Babli 2' released Friday and it has sent the audience into a frenzy for two reasons.

Being an athlete played a big role in shaping my personality: Deepika

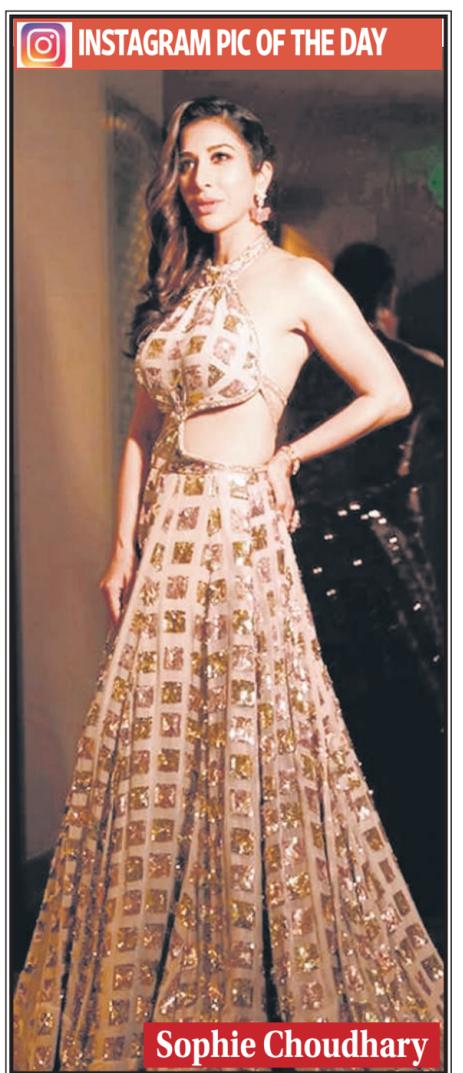
Team Absolute | New Delhi

Deepika Padukone proudly announces to the world her recent association with the 3-stripes family. She exultantly feels that this alliance helps her connect back with the athlete and fitness enthusiast in her.

Adidas joined forces with the global star as her modern and fierce feminist spirit, grit, resilience and active lifestyle choices resonates closely with the brand's core message - 'Impossible is Nothing'. This high-watt partnership between the icon and iconic aims to break down barriers, set new standards, explore limitless possibilities, and empower women all across the globe, both physically and emotionally.

Sports has always been an integral part of Padukone's life, who took to social media to share, "Being an athlete and playing sport has played a tremendous role in shaping my personality and helping me become the person I am today. It has taught me values that no other life experience could have."

With this, Padukone joins the league of exemplary women athletes and personalities from around the globe, who have always made an effort to voice women's hopes, aspirations and passions, backing their free spirit and rebellious streak.



Sophie Choudhary

'Bhavai': Pratik Gandhi shines as Ravan in an attempted eye-opener

FILM REVIEW
TROY RIBEIRO
(Running in theatres)
Creator: Hardik Gajjar
Cast: Pratik Gandhi, Aindrita Ray, Flora Saini, Rajendra Gupta, Rajesh Sharma, Abhimanyu, Ankur Vikal, Ankur Bhatia and Gopal K. Singh.
Duration: 114 minutes.
Ratings: *** (three stars)



Set in the village of Khakhar in Gujarat, 'Bhavai', a popular folk theatre form, provides the backdrop of this tragedy. The film is a layered tale of two star-crossed lovers who meet while performing the Ramlila in the Bhavai style.

It is when the travelling troupe of the Ramlila owned by Bhavar Singh comes to his village that Rajaram Joshi (Pratik Gandhi), son of the village pandit (Rajendra Gupta), realises that this is the opportunity for him to achieve his dream of becoming an actor. And with his perseverance and happenstance, he secures the role of Ravan.

During his stint with the troupe, Rajaram Joshi forms a bond with Rani (Aindrita Ray), who plays Sita in the Ramlila, and given the circumstances, they plan to elope. How the character, 'Ravan' of the Ramlila, defines

Rajaram's life, forms the crux of the narrative.

The film is minutely detailed and perfectly cast. What makes it stand out is Hardik Gajjar's direction. He astutely manages to guide his team to deliver the best, be it in performances, music, or visuals. His writing, too, is commendable. The dialogues are down-to-earth, realistic and embellished with the right amount of local flavour.

The only issue is his script. The first act moves at a leisurely pace with an undertone of religious fervour fanning the narrative. The second and third acts simply seem rushed.

The performances by the characters are captivating. They all live their parts to perfection. Pratik Gandhi slips into Rajaram Joshi's shoes effortlessly. He steals the show with his boy-next-door

looks and stardust in his eyes. His transformation from the ordinary village boy mouthing the Tandav Stotra to becoming Ravan is simply commendable. His sincerity touches the right emotional chords, but the script does not allow him to flourish.

Aindrita Ray is promising as the defiant Rani who embodies the confident Sita on stage with grace. Flora Saini as Urmi, the senior actress in the troupe, is staid.

The last frame of the film -- a quote by Buddha that states, "It is man's own mind, not his enemy or foe, that lures him to evil ways" -- for a moment flummoxes the viewers, but then you realise the quote is generic and is directed towards a society blinded by religion and culture. Overall, the film is a mild attempt to be an eye-opener.