

absolute india

VOL. 9, ISSUE 29, MUMBAI | FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2021 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM MUMBAI, BHOPAL AND NEW DELHI

NATION > 02

Punjab Assembly passes resolution rejecting Centre's...



HOLLYWOOD > 06

'Rust' tragedy: Film's gaffer files negligence suit against Alec Baldwin...



SPORTS > 07

Stoinis, Wade heroics lead Australia to final ...



DELTA STAYS AS MAIN 'VARIANT OF CONCERN' IN INDIA: INSACOG

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delta variant of Covid-19 continues to be the main variant of concern (VoC) in India, the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) said on Thursday.

"Delta, including B.1.617.2 (AY) and AY.x sublineages, continues to be the main VoC globally. As per the latest WHO update, Delta has outcompeted other variants in most countries and there is now declining prevalence of other variants among SARS-CoV-2 sequences submitted to publicly available datasets or reported to WHO," said INSACOG in its bulletin.

The total number of samples processed and sequenced so far is 96,312. A total of 92,800 samples have been analysed by INSACOG. A consortium of 28 national laboratories set up in December 2020 to monitor the genomic variations in Sars-CoV-2, the Covid-19 causing virus, the INSACOG functions under the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry.

The first cases of the Delta variant first came to light in India in October last year. The variant is also generally blamed for the explosive rise in Covid-19 cases across the country. Meanwhile, India on Thursday reported 13,091 fresh Covid cases in the last 24 hours. In the same time span, a total of 340 deaths have also been reported, said the Ministry.



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Kids under 5 exempted from testing on int'l arrivals

New Delhi: Children under 5 years of age have been exempted from both pre- and post-arrival Covid testing in the new guidelines for international travellers issued by India's Health Ministry on Thursday. However, if the child found symptomatic for Covid on arrival or during home quarantine period, they shall undergo testing and be treated as per laid down protocol. The latest guidelines for international travel, issued as Covid continues to surge in other countries, will come into effect from November 12.

Molnupiravir: India's affordable weapon against Covid

Hyderabad: With six Indian pharma companies working to manufacture antiviral pill Molnupiravir, healthcare experts say the game-changing drug will give India an effective and affordable weapon against the Covid-19 pandemic. The oral drug, which is likely to get Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) in India in the coming weeks, is expected to help the country fight future waves, if any. Molnupiravir, developed by global pharma major Merck, inhibits replication of multiple RNA viruses including SARS-CoV-2, the causative agent of Covid-19. It is reported to have potential to completely eliminate SARS CoV-2 from the body within 5 days.

Global Covid-19 caseload tops 251.3 mn

Washington: The global coronavirus caseload has topped 251.3 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 5.07 million and vaccinations soared to over 7.34 billion, according to the Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Thursday 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 251,348,332, 5,071,757 and 7,347,735,847, respectively. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 46,784,642 and 758,843, according to the CSSE. In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 34,388,579 cases and Brazil third with 21,909,298 infections.

China carried out constructions in areas it illegally occupied: Centre

Team Absolute | New Delhi China undertook construction activities in the past several years along the border areas, including in areas it illegally occupied over the decades, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday.



Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said that India has taken note of the US Department of Defense report to the US Congress, which inter-alia also makes a reference to the construction activities carried out by the Chinese side along the India-China borders, particularly in the eastern sector. "India has neither accepted such illegal occupation of our territory nor has it accepted the unjustified Chinese claims," the spokesperson said. Bagchi also stressed on the fact that the government has always conveyed its strong protest to such activities through diplomatic channels and will continue to do so in the future.

"Further, as conveyed earlier, the government has also stepped up border infrastructure, including the construction of roads, bridges etc., which has provided much-needed connectivity to the local population along the borders," he said.

The government remains committed to the objective of creating infrastructure along the border areas for the improvement of livelihood of its citizens, including in Arunachal Pradesh, he said.

"The government keeps a constant watch on all the developments having a bearing on India's security, and takes all the necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity," Bagchi said. Last week, the US Department of Defense in its annual report submitted to the US Congress on military and security developments had flagged that China has built a large 100-home civilian village inside the disputed territory between the Tibet Autonomous Region and Arunachal Pradesh.

The report had also stated that these and other infrastructure development efforts along the India-China border have been a source of consternation in the Indian government and the media.

Talking about the claims made in the US report, a senior security official stated that the said village being referred to has been under Chinese control since 1959. The village has been built by China in an area that was occupied by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) after overrunning an Assam Rifles post in 1959 in an operation known as 'Longju' along the frontiers in Arunachal Pradesh.

Varun Gandhi Roasts Actor Kangana Ranaut

Kangana Ranaut said that India attained true freedom in 2014 and what it got in 1947 was "bheekh".

Team Absolute | New Delhi

BJP MP Varun Gandhi on Thursday lashed out at one of his party's most ardent supporters - actor Kangana Ranaut - for her remarks that India got its freedom in 2014 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power and what it got in 1947 after a decades-long struggle by freedom fighters was "bheekh" or handout.

Gandhi, who has lately been voicing discordant notes that have earned him a censure or two by the party, posted a short clip of Ranaut's remarks an event organised by television channel Times Now in which she is heard saying in Hindi, "That was not freedom but bheekh, and the real freedom came in 2014." Ranaut, who was given the Padma Shri award by PM Modi's government this month, was understood to have been referring to the BJP coming to power in 2014.



Slamming her, Varun Gandhi tweeted in Hindi, "Insulting the sacrifice of Mahatma Gandhi sometimes, praising his killer sometimes, and now the disdain for the sacrifices of Mangal Pandey, Rani Laxmibai, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and lakhs of freedom fighters. Should I call this thinking madness or treason?"

Complaint against Salman Khurshid for remarks in his book on Hindutva

Team Absolute | New Delhi

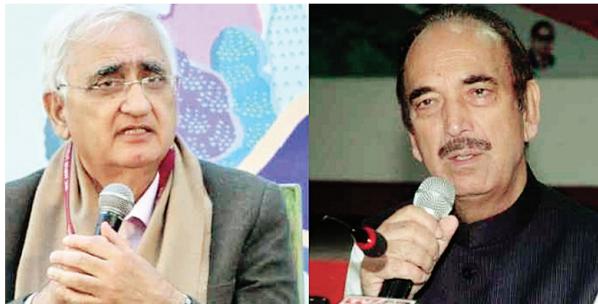
Delhi-based lawyer Vineet Jindal on Thursday filed a complaint with the police against Congress leader Salman Khurshid for the remarks in his book 'Sunrise over Ayodhya' on Hindutva.

In his complaint, Jindal contended that the senior Congress leader and former law minister Salman Khurshid's recently released book "Sunrise over Ayodhya: Nationhood in our times" has compared Hindutva to radical jihadist groups like the ISIS and Boko Haram.

The comment has been made in a chapter called "The Saffron Sky."

On page no.113 of the book, it has stated that "Sanatan Dharma and classical Hinduism known to sages and saints were being pushed aside by a robust version of Hindutva, by all standards a political version similar to the jihadist Islam of groups like ISIS and Boko Haram of recent years."

In his complaint, the lawyer



alleged that it is not only instigating and provoking statement but also stirring enraged emotions among the Hindu religion followers.

Comparing Hindutva to ISIS factually wrong: Azad

New Delhi: After a controversy broke out over remarks made by senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid in his new book 'Sunrise Over Ayodhya: Nationhood in Our Times', the Congress seems to have gone into a damage control mode with former Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad, criticising the comparison drawn in the book between ISIS and Hindutva. Azad said in statement, "We do not agree with Hindutva as political ideology distinct from composite culture of Hinduism, but comparing Hindutva with ISIS and Jihadist Islam is factually wrong and an exaggeration."

10 devotees killed in road mishap in Assam

Silchar: At least ten Chhath Puja devotees, mostly children and women, were killed when an autorickshaw, carrying them, collided with a truck in southern Assam's Karimganj district on Thursday, police said.

Police officials said that nine devotees, including five women and two children, died on the spot, while another who had managed to survive the mishap succumbed to his injuries at the hospital.

The tragedy took place at Boithakhal on the National Highway-8 in the Karimganj district along northern Tripura.

According to police, the victims, belonging to the tea garden workers' families, were returning by an autorickshaw after performing Chhath Puja. The oncoming cement laden truck collided head-on with the autorickshaw.

Will stay put until farm laws repealed: Tikait

Ghaziabad: Bhartiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Thursday said the farmers' protests will continue till the contentious farm laws are not repealed by the Centre.



Only the repealing of the contentious laws would ensure the end of the protests, the influential farmer leader asserted. "The movement will continue across the country until the three black laws are not repealed and a legal guarantee on the minimum support price of crops fixed," Tikait said in a Hindi tweet. "Bill wapsi hi ghar wapsi hai (Withdrawal of the laws will ensure return of farmers to their homes)," he said in the same tweet. The Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) national spokesperson said the movement is for safeguarding "jal, jungle and zameen" (water, forest and land). The BKU is part of farmers collective the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), which is spearheading the campaign, particularly the demonstrations at Delhi's three border points of Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur since November 2020.

Heavy rain continue to lash Chennai

Chennai | Agencies

Intense showers battered Chennai and other northern regions of Tamil Nadu on Thursday while the depression over Bay of Bengal crossed the coast by evening.

As many as 14 people were killed in rain related incidents in the state, standing crops were submerged, trees uprooted and over a 1,000 tenements, mostly huts suffered damage across Tamil Nadu.

The heavy rains and release of surplus from dams, a total of about 13,000 cusecs of water here, transformed several areas in the metropolis and other northern regions of Tamil Nadu into a virtual, large water body as streets swirled with deluge and trash. Power cut was effected in several regions considering safety. The rains also caused damage to roads and causeways.

The flooding witnessed in Chennai for the past four days threw normal life out of gear as closed, inundated subways and traffic diversions gave people a harrowing time.

With the passage of the depression on Thursday evening, there was a let up in rains in most northern Tamil



Nadu regions and people could be seen visiting local markets to buy essentials after confining themselves to their homes for most part of the day.

3,500 HECTARES OF CROP DESTROYED

Chennai: Heavy showers for the past few days in Tamil Nadu have inundated around 55,000 hectares of land, of which, crops in 3,500 hectares have been destroyed. With the huge volume of crops destroyed by heavy rains, the vegetable supply to neighbouring states like Kerala has also been jeopardised. The Tamil Nadu farmers who were looking to recoup losses after the second wave of the Covid pandemic, are now staring at an uncertain future.

Till date in the ongoing monsoon season, 157 head of cattle have died, 1,146 huts and 237 houses have been affected in rain related incidents across the state.

Woman cop saved man trapped under tree

Chennai: A woman officer of the Chennai police, E. Rajeswari rescued a man from underneath a tree that fell upon him at T.P. Chatram area. The woman police officer told media that she received a call from the control room stating that a man had been killed as a tree fell upon him. The man, Udhayakumar, 28, was working at the T.P. Cemetery and his friend informed the control room that he had died after the tree fell upon him. Rajeswari told media that she pulled up the friend of Udhayakumar for not rushing the injured man to the hospital.

Petrol, Diesel should come under GST: Nitin Gadkari

Team Absolute | New Delhi

If petrol, diesel and other petroleum products are brought under the single nationwide GST regime, then taxes will reduce further, and both the Centre and states can generate more revenue, said Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday. He said that Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman will try to bring petrol and diesel under GST if she gets the support of the state governments. "In the GST Council, finance ministers of states are also members. Some states are against bringing petrol and diesel under the GST regime," Gadkari said.

GST council on petrol, diesel inclusion

The GST Council on 17 September had decided to continue keeping petrol and diesel out of the GST purview, as subsuming the current excise duty and VAT (value-added tax) into one national rate will impact revenues.



PUNJAB ASSEMBLY PASSES RESOLUTION REJECTING CENTRE'S ORDER ON BSF

CHANDIGARH | Agencies

The Punjab Assembly on Thursday unanimously passed a resolution rejecting the Centre's order extending the BSF's jurisdiction.

Speaking in the House, Chief Minister Charanjit Channi termed it as unfortunate that the Shiromani Akali Dal "always saw everything through the narrow prism of politics", especially the issues of utmost importance like the devolution of more powers to states, transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, besides the Sri Anandpur Sahib resolution.

He accused the Akalis the "gateway" through which the RSS, "which has always been inimical to the interests of Punjab, managed to make inroads in the state".

"When the RSS and its political wing, the BJP, undermined the federal structure of the country by revoking the Article 370, not only did the Akalis take sides with the BJP but SAD President Sukhbir Badal spoke in favour of the move and even went to the extent of not voting against the undemocratic move," said Channi, holding the



Akalis responsible for imposition of such decisions on Punjab.

Refuting the criticism hurled at him on meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, Channi said that his meetings with both the dignitaries were a courtesy call.

"Perhaps the Akalis have chosen to forget very conveniently that I wrote letters to the Union

Government emphasising the reopening of the Sri Kartarpur Sahib corridor, besides pleading with it repeatedly to roll back the three draconian agricultural farm laws which are striking at the very roots of the farming sector which forms the backbone of our agrarian economy."

The Chief Minister further apprised the House that in his

meetings with the Union government on security issues, he always took the consistent stand that international borders should be sealed so that drugs could not enter Punjab. "I never ever asked them to increase the jurisdiction of the BSF in the state which I am being falsely accused of. I am vehemently in opposition to this move by the government of India."

5 new MLAs take BJP-led alliance's strength to 78 in Assam Assembly

GUWAHATI | Agencies

With five newly-elected MLAs taking oath as legislators on Thursday, the ruling BJP-led alliance's strength rose to 78 in the 126-member Assam Assembly. Of these, the BJP has 62 MLAs, the Asom Gana Parishad nine, while seven members belong to the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL).

The BJP is still two members short from securing absolute majority of 64 in the House.

Assam Assembly Speaker Biswajit Daimary on Thursday administered oath to three BJP MLAs -- Phanidhar Talukdar, Rupjyoti Kurmi and Sushanta Borgohain -- along with two members of the UPPL -- Jiron Basumatary and Jolen Daimary. Elected in the October 30 by-elections, the BJP members took oath in Assamese, while the UPPL MLAs did so in Bodo language. Turncoats Talukdar, Kurmi and Borgohain were elected from Bhabanipur,



Mariani and Thowra Assembly seats, respectively, while UPPL's Basumatary and Daimary won from Gossaigaon and Tamulpur, respectively. Talukdar was earlier elected on an All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) ticket, while Kurmi and Borgohain had won as Congress candidates in the Assembly elections held in March-April this year before jumping ship to the BJP.

The strength of the main opposition Congress has now reduced to 27 from 29, the AIUDF now has 15 members as against 16, the Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF) has three against four, while the CPI-M has one MLA.

Local party Rajior Dal has one member, while one seat is lying vacant after former Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal got elected to the Rajya Sabha.

Woman gang-raped in Nalanda during Chhath Puja

PATNA | Agencies

A 23-year-old woman was gang-raped by four persons in Bihar's Nalanda district, an official said on Thursday.

The victim, along with a male friend, had gone to eat "Prasad of Kharna" of Chhath Puja on Tuesday. An FIR was registered in Tharthari village police station after her medical examination on Thursday morning.

According to the complainant, she was sitting with her friend on Chand-Saamera state highway 78, when four men came and started misbehaving with her. When they objected, the accused overpowered the



couple. "The accused held the boy friend captive at knife-point and took turns to assault her," an official said.

Meanwhile, the victim's mother has accused the boy of conspiring against her daughter. He had taken her on the bike on Tuesday

evening and committed the crime along with his friends, she claimed. She has filed a complaint against three persons for their involvement in the conspiracy and crime.

"We have conducted a medical examination of the victim on

TERRORIST KILLED IN SRINAGAR ENCOUNTER, FIRING ON

Srinagar: A terrorist has been killed in an ongoing encounter between terrorists and security forces in J&K's Srinagar district, officials said on Thursday. "One unidentified terrorist killed. One AK rifle along with ammunition recovered. Search going on," a police official said. The gunfight between terrorists and security forces took place after a joint team of the police and the army cordoned off the area and launched a search operation on the basis of specific information about presence of terrorists. As the security forces zeroed in on the spot where terrorists were hiding, they came under a heavy volume of fire and retaliated, triggering the encounter.

Shia Board seeks arrest of Waseem Rizvi for blasphemy

LUCKNOW | Agencies

The All-India Shia Personal Law Board (AISPLB) has demanded the arrest of Shia Central Waqf Board member, Waseem Rizvi, for blasphemy, disruption of peace, law and order.

The board also sought a ban on Rizvi's speeches, writings and disrespectful activities against the Quran and Prophet Muhammad. It further sought termination of Rizvi's waqf board membership.

The AISPLB spokesman said, "It appears the UP government is supporting Rizvi



by not taking any action against him." They alleged Rizvi's views on Salman Rushdie and Taslima Nasreen, who had insulted

Islam and the Prophet, are disrespectful.

AISPLB president Maulana Syed Saim Mehdi appealed to all members across the

country to hold demonstrations against Rizvi on November 16 in their districts. "Why does the government remain silent when Rizvi disturbs peace in the state and country. The government arrests people on minor law and order issues, but Rizvi has been off the hook even though several FIRs are lodged against him. If the government maintains silence, it will be responsible for whatever happens next," said Maulana Saim. "Rizvi is not supported by Hindus even if he makes it appear so," said board vice president Maulana Zahid Ahmad.

KAFEEL KHAN TERMINATED AFTER 4-YEAR BATTLE

Lucknow: The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has finally terminated the services of Dr Kafeel Khan, a paediatrician with the BRD Medical College in Gorakhpur. The government spokesman confirmed the news of Khan's termination. Kafeel Khan had been suspended along with seven others in August 2017 when over 60 children died due to disruption in the oxygen supply at the BRD hospital. Seven doctors, except Khan, were later reinstated. The state government later booked him for making inflammatory speeches during the anti-CAA protests in the state. Talking to reporter on Thursday, Kafeel Khan said that he was waiting for the formal termination order to be served to him."

Congress to take out 403 yatras in UP

LUCKNOW | Agencies

The Uttar Pradesh Congress unit will take out 'padyatras' in all the 403 Assembly constituencies of the state between November 14 and 24 in an effort to urge people to vote out the BJP in order to control inflation.

In a statement, the party said: "A total of 403 'padyatras' titled 'Mehngai hatao pratigya padyatra' will be taken out from November 14, the birth anniversary of India's first Prime Minister late Jawahar Lal Nehru. Every yatra will pass through at least seven villages or wards and cover a distance of at

least 10 km in every Assembly constituency every day." The party proposes to cover total distance of 32,240 km and hold 24,180 village level and 5,000 roadside public meetings during the period. Party workers would distribute the 'pratigya patra' (pamphlets listing Congress promises) and detail out the prevailing situation on the front of rising inflation.

After every two days, a day's rest will be given to the workers and this would bring down the effective number of days of the 'yatra' to eight days. Senior party leaders will address a roadside public meeting at local markets at the end of the day's 'yatra'.

Over 12 cr people due for 2nd dose of Covid vaccine in India: Mandaviya

Team Absolute | New Delhi

More than 12 crore people are due for their second Covid-19 vaccine shot in India, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday.

Of the total eligible adult population, only 79 per cent has got the first dose, while 38 per cent has received the second dose, he added.

Mandaviya made the observation during a meeting with health ministers of all states and union territories. He asked the ministers to ensure that all the adult population is covered with the first dose under the ongoing "Har Ghar Dastak" mega-vaccination drive, while those who are due for the second dose are also motivated.

The minister reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strategies for strengthening the campaign, including deploying "Prachar Toli" in villages to mobilise and counsel the eligible population



regarding vaccination along with awareness campaigns. This would be followed by "Vaccination Toli" which would ensure that all eligible citizens are vaccinated with the first and second doses. "Let us ensure collectively through collaborative and multi-stakeholder efforts that no eligible citizen is left without the 'Suraksha Kawachh' of Covid-

19 vaccine in the country. Let us reach out to every household across the country and motivate people to take both the doses under Prime Minister's Har Ghar Dastak campaign", Mandaviya said. Mandaviya stressed on the strategies of multiple vaccination teams to ensure 100 per cent coverage in the targeted area in a time-bound manner, development of a ranking mechanism for identifying and facilitating the vaccination teams which administer the maximum number of vaccine doses every 24 hours, utilising local weekly "bazaars" and "haats" for creating awareness and providing vaccination services and collaborating with local religious and community leaders in the meeting.

Multimedia IEC awareness campaigns should be launched to effectively counter anti-vaccine rumours and emulate innovative approaches and practices followed by high coverage districts within the States/UTs for adoption of similar strategies to achieve the target.

Amit Shah to visit UP on Nov 12 to fine tune poll strategies

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ahead of the Uttar Pradesh polls, Union Home Minister and former BJP National President Amit Shah, with his ear to the ground, is preparing a victory guide to replicate 2017's landslide win in the state.

Shah who will visit Uttar Pradesh on Friday, is scheduled to meet around 700 party leaders in Varanasi, the parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and brainstorm election strategies with them. He will also hold a rally in Azamgarh, the parliamentary constituency of opposition Samajwadi Party's (SP) supremo, Akhilesh Yadav.

In November, Amit Shah is scheduled to make two important visits to Uttar Pradesh, one of which is going to start on November 12 and continue for two days.

In this meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya,



election co-in-charge, state in-charge, state president, state organization general secretary, regional presidents, district presidents and in-charges of all 403 assembly seats, will be involved. The BJP's election

preparations, including the membership campaign, as well as its future strategies will also be decided. On the second and last day of the tour, Amit Shah will visit other districts and address various elec-

tion rallies. On November 13, he will inaugurate the All India Official Language Conference in Varanasi and then leave for Azamgarh. Shah will also address a rally after laying the foundation stone of the state university in Akhilesh's bastion.

He is also expected to inaugurate Khel Mahakumbh in Basti district organised by MP Harish Dwivedi and then address a rally there.

After holding several brainstorming sessions and rallies, the Home Minister will return to Delhi from Gorakhpur airport on Monday.

Key election strategist of Uttar Pradesh, as during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections when the BJP along with Apna Dal won 73 out of the 80 Lok Sabha seats in the state, Amit Shah was the National General Secretary. Also, during the Legislative Assembly polls in 2017 and Lok Sabha elections 2019, Amit Shah had proved his mettle as the national president.

Partial lunar eclipse on Nov 19



Team Absolute | New Delhi

A partial eclipse of the moon will occur on November 19 and a small span of the partial phase of the eclipse towards the end would be visible from parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.

"The partial phase of the eclipse will begin at 12.48 p.m. and will end at 4.17 p.m.," the India Meteorological Department

(IMD) said on Thursday.

Apart from these two states in India, the eclipse will be visible from western Africa, western Europe, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

According to IMD sources, the next lunar eclipse will be visible from India on November 8, 2022. It will be a total lunar eclipse.

Lunar eclipse occurs on a

full moon day when the Earth comes in between the Sun and the Moon and when all the three objects are aligned. A total lunar eclipse will occur when the whole Moon comes under the umbral shadow of the Earth and the partial lunar eclipse occurs when only a part of the Moon comes under the umbral shadow of the Earth, a release from the Ministry of Earth Sciences said.



UDDHAV THACKERAY ADMITTED TO RELIANCE HOSPITAL, SURGERY FOR NECK ISSUES LIKELY

▶ MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER UDDHAV THACKERAY WAS ADMITTED TO THE SIR HN RELIANCE FOUNDATION HOSPITAL IN MUMBAI ON WEDNESDAY AND MAY UNDERGO A MINOR SURGERY FOR A NECK PROBLEM, OFFICIALS SAID.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Last Monday, Thackeray surprised people after he appeared in an online event wearing a neck-brace and a day later underwent a thorough medical check-up to diagnose the recurring neck and back issues. Confirming the developments, the CM said in a statement that in the past two years of the war against the virus, he had no time to even lift his neck from work. "I had this neck pain, but ignored it a bit too much... so whatever had to happen has happened. Now the doctors

have advised me to get 'proper treatment' for this pain," Thackeray said. He said he would be admitted to the hospital later this evening for 2-3 days to get the proper treatment, but did not go into details, and officials also remained tight-lipped. Late this evening, after presiding over the state Cabinet meeting, Thackeray was driven down the Sir HNRF Hospital to treat his medical issues.

He urged the people of Maharashtra not to ignore the vaccination drive and although the state has crossed the 10-crore jabs mark, it is imperative for all to get fully vaccinated. "Please go to the nearest centre and get yourself vaccinated immediately to protect your life. Your blessings are with me. I am sure I will get well soon," Thackeray said.

ED CONDUCTS RAIDS IN MAHARASHTRA WAQF PROPERTIES SALE CASE

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday searched multiple premises in Pune and adjoining areas in connection with a money laundering case linked to alleged illegal sale of Waqf properties in Maharashtra, officials said. They said at least seven premises have been covered and the action is being taken under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The ED case of money laundering is based on a Maharashtra Police FIR and charge sheet and the agency is collecting more information through the raids, they said. The Waqf Board comes under the State Minority Affairs Department headed by minister Nawab Malik.

Sources informed that four people had allegedly taken compensation on the Waqf Board properties to the tune of Rs 8 Crores. The four people, sources added, had allegedly demanded the compensation on the basis of the No-Objection Certificate, which later the Waqf Board forged.

Nawab Malik: I am not alone in this fight

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nationalist Congress Party Minister Nawab Malik on Thursday dismissed the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party's charges that he was waging a "solitary battle" without anybody from the Maha Vikas Aghadi government backing him.

"I am not alone... Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, NCP President Sharad Pawar, all ministers, the government and the party are standing solidly behind me," Malik told mediapersons.

This assertion came a day after the state cabinet presided over by Thackeray lauded Malik's six-week long ongoing war in which he has exposed alleged acts of the Narcotics Control Bureau Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede, the BJP leaders and related issues. "I may be fighting alone... But I have the full backing and blessings of all the top leaders that gives me the strength... I have taken up this responsibility to cleanse up certain things and will continue," Malik declared.

In the past nearly six weeks, Malik has made a series of shocking exposures on Wankhede, the "farzi" (fraudulent) rave party raids aboard a cruise ship on October 2, how Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan was allegedly "trapped and kidnapped" for extortion, a syndicate in the NCB led by Wankhede along with BJP activists. It spilled over to the



alleged underworld connection charges hurled at each other by Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis and Malik. Fadnavis raked up an old land transaction from Kurla which he contended was Malik's business links with the underworld. Malik hit back with revelations on Fadnavis' alleged doings that enabled a mafia-linked person to attend an event of the Prime Minister and even click pictures, shielding shady persons involved in crimes like fake currency notes or bringing Bangladeshis to Mumbai or terrorising people in Nagpur by rewarding them with minister-rank posts. Fadnavis shot out a tweet quoting George Bernard Shaw: "I learned long ago, never to wrestle with a pig. You get dirty, and besides, the pig likes it!" Malik retorted saying "it's the culture of the BJP to give animal titles to people" as they have no respect for human beings.

Nawab Malik kin sends Rs 5-cr defamation notice to Fadnavis

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik said on Thursday that his son-in-law Sameer Khan has sent a legal notice claiming defamation to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis, seeking a compensation of Rs 5 crore.



Malik's daughter Nilofer Malik-Khan released a copy of the legal notice, sent through their lawyer Rahmat I. Ansari, via social media earlier in the day. The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) arrested Sameer Khan on January 13 in connection with an alleged drug case. He was released on bail on September 27.

Fadnavis said this month that "now Malik's son-in-law was found with drugs in his possession", adding that if

narcotics are found in the house of a person, "then what will their party be". Challenging Fadnavis' charges, the legal notice says that the chargesheet filed by the NCB does not support even a single allegation levelled by the BJP leader. "The panchnama dated 14-01-2021 clearly says that the house was searched and no contraband suspicious substance was found or under his possession. But from which

source you obtained such false, frivolous and baseless report is better known to you," said the legal notice. Both Malik and his daughter said that they will wait for Fadnavis' response to the notice and thereafter take the appropriate further legal steps. "Fadnavis must tender an unconditional apology and withdraw all his false remarks in this matter, failing which we shall proceed with defamation proceedings as advised by our legal team," Malik said. Earlier, the Nationalist Congress Party Minister had said that NCB Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede had nabbed Sameer Khan in a false case to expose the drug enforcement officer's (Wankhede) fake caste documents which came in his possession over 11 months ago.

Maharashtra govt insensitive towards issues of MSRTC employees: Fadnavis

MSRTC employees have been on strike since October 25 demanding the merger of the corporation with the state government so that they will be treated as government employees.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

BJP leader and former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis urged the Maha Vikas Aghadi government to immediately step in and resolve the ongoing strike called by the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) employees across the state. MSRTC employees have been on strike since October 25 demanding the merger of the corporation with the state government so that they will be treated as government employees

and be able to avail salaries and benefits available to government servants. Of 250 bus depots across Maharashtra, around 247 have shut operations. "The government is extremely insensitive. They have turned a blind eye towards the problems of employees," Fadnavis said. He added, "Several employees have

also died by suicide as their salaries were not paid on time. This does not augur well for a state like Maharashtra. Had the government immediately addressed the matter, such protests would not have taken place." Saying that nobody has reached out to the employees' organisation to discuss their problems, he

advised the Uddhav Thackeray-led government not to treat the staffers as rivals and bring a logical end to the issues.

Thousands of MSRTC employees are protesting at Azad Maidan in Mumbai. BJP's Kirit Somaiya has also expressed solidarity with the staffers. "The BJP will fight for the rights of the employees and ensure that the government responds," he said.

Ryat Kranti Party leader Sadabhau Khot and Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana president Raju Shetti have also declared their support.

MSRTC officials, however, say that the strike is bad for both the government and the employees as the losses to the tune of Rs 100 crore have already been recorded.

On Wednesday, CM Uddhav Thackeray had made an ardent appeal to the employees to withdraw the strike and return to work.

"Get Vaccine, Win TV": Maharashtra District's Offer In Fight Against Covid

Citizens who come to the civic-run vaccination centres to get their jabs from November 12 to 24 will get a chance to win these prizes.

Team Absolute | Chandrapur

In a bid to encourage more and more people to get inoculated against COVID-19, the Chandrapur Municipal Corporation in Maharashtra has announced a vaccination bumper lucky draw, with lucrative prizes ranging from LED TVs, refrigerators to washing machines.

Citizens who come to the civic-run vaccination centres to get their jabs from November 12 to 24 will get

a chance to win these prizes, according to a release issued by the municipal corporation on Wednesday evening.

The decision to offer the incentives to citizens was taken during a review meeting held under the chairmanship of Mayor Rakhi Sanjay Kancharlawar.

After the meeting, civic commissioner Rajesh Mohite and other officials appealed to people to go to their nearest civic-run inoculation centre and get vaccinated.

Those who take the jabs between November 12 and 24, will be eligible to participate in the lucky draw, which offers a refrigerator, washing machine and LED television set as first, second and third prizes, respectively. Besides, 10 citizens will get mixer-grinders as consolation prizes, according to the civic body.

So far, 1,93,581 citizens have got their first dose of vaccine in Chandrapur city, while 99,620 have received both the doses, the release said. The number of vaccinations is still low compared to the total number of eligible persons in the city, it said. The civic body's health department has set up vaccination facilities at 21 centres here and all eligible people should get vaccinated at the earliest, the mayor said.

The civic body in its release also said it has decided that hawkers, essential service providers and shopkeepers will have to show their vaccination certificates, of having taken at least one dose, or else they would not be allowed to enter the city's markets.

The government has directed to achieve the target of cent per cent vaccination in the city. Hence, every

establishment should plan to get its employees inoculated and even other eligible members of the general public should get their jabs before November 30, Mohite said.

It is mandatory for every service provider, including vendors and vegetable sellers, and those who come in frequent contact with the public to get vaccinated, he said.

People should also carry the vaccination certificate with them and produce it whenever required, he added. On Wednesday, three new COVID-19 cases were reported in Chandrapur district, while there was no fatality due to the viral infection, as per the district information office.

So far, 88,823 cases and 1,542 deaths have been reported in the district since the outbreak of the pandemic last year, as per official data.

Maharashtra govt should reduce VAT on petrol and diesel: BJP

Speaking to reporters in Kolhapur, Patil said they have organised an agitation across Maharashtra to press for the demand, as around 11 states in the country, some of them not even governed by the BJP, have slashed the VAT on fuels to provide relief to the common man.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra BJP president Chandrakant Patil on Thursday demanded that the state government reduce the Value Added Tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel, after the Centre recently cut the excise duty on the fuels. Speaking to reporters in Kolhapur, Patil said

they have organised an agitation across Maharashtra to press for the demand, as around 11 states in the country, some of them not even governed by the BJP, have slashed the VAT on fuels to provide relief to the common man. "If those states can provide the relief, why the MVA government is hesitating to do so? The Centre cut the excise duty on petrol by Rs 5 per litre and on diesel by Rs 10. As a cascading effect, the prices got reduced by an additional Re 1 in some states. However, it (VAT) is a gold mine of revenue for the Maharashtra government, hence it has refused to slash the rates, he claimed. To a query on state minister Nawab Malik, who has levelled various allegations against BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis and others, Patil said, Malik has admitted that he had bought land from 1993 Mumbai serial blasts convicts. I demand that the NN Vohra committee's report be made public.

Mumbai police start inquiry into Sameer Wankhede's complaint

▶ SAMEER WANKHEDE HAD LODGED A COMPLAINT WITH THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED CASTES AGAINST MAHARASHTRA MINISTER NAWAB MALIK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai police have started an inquiry into a complaint lodged by Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) zonal director Sameer Wankhede with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.

Sameer Wankhede, caught in a firestorm since last month over the drugs bust case involving actor Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan, had lodged a complaint with the commission against Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik.

The inquiry is being conducted by assistant

commissioner of police (ACP)-level officers who have recorded Sameer Wankhede's statement. A senior police officer confirmed the development and said Mumbai police recorded Sameer Wankhede's statement last week and may record the officer's statement again, if required.

The inquiry is being conducted by ACP Rekha Bhavre of Mumbai's Borivali division. Sameer Wankhede's complaint was lodged with the Goregaon police. But as the ACP post of the Goregaon division was vacant at that time, the ACP of Borivali division was tasked to take up the matter.

Complaints received under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act are investigated by an ACP rank officer, according to legal provisions.

Sameer Wankhede has faced a series of allegations levelled against him by minister Nawab Malik since last month in connection with the drugs bust case. Malik made the allegations via press conferences and Twitter posts. In his complaint to the SC commission, Sameer Wankhede raised objections to words such as "bogus" that Nawab Malik allegedly

used while referring to his family.

Sameer Wankhede had trashed all the allegations, saying Malik targeted his family and went personal in his attacks.

The top NCB officer also visited New Delhi and met the SC commission's chief, submitting documents related to his first marriage and subsequent divorce, in the context of some allegations made by Nawab Malik. Following Sameer Wankhede's complaint, the national commission had issued a notice to the Maharashtra government on October 29, asking it to submit a report within seven days. A police officer, who wished not to be named, said, "We are looking into the complaint. All the allegations... are being looked into. Statements of other witnesses are also being recorded. If we can make out a cognisable offence... a First Information Report (FIR) would be registered and an investigation would commence. A report of the findings of the police enquiry would also be sent to the commission." Earlier, Yasmeen Wankhede, Sameer Wankhede's sister, filed a complaint at Oshiwara police, seeking the registration of an FIR against Malik for

allegedly defaming her. Sameer Wankhede's aunt Gunfabai Gangadhar Bhalerao also filed a case against Malik in Aurangabad under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. Earlier Wankhede's family members and relatives have lodged complaints at Washim and Goregaon police stations in Mumbai. The NCB's special enquiry team (SET), which is carrying out a departmental vigilance probe, has also recorded Sameer Wankhede's statement. The SET was constituted after one of the "panch witnesses" of the drugs bust case, Prabhakar Sail, alleged in an affidavit that he overheard his former employer Kiran Gosavi, also a witness in the case, talking to a person about "settling the matter" for Rs 18 crore and that Sameer Wankhede would need to be paid Rs 8 crore. Mumbai police also formed an SET to look into the allegations made by Sail and have recorded statements of more than 15 individuals. The SET has summoned Shah Rukh Khan's manager Pooja Dadlani and waiting for her to be present before the cops so that her statement could be recorded. She skipped the summons citing health issues.

Accused in narcotics case rappels from third-floor flat to escape police, falls to death

Accused in a 2017 narcotics case in Delhi, David Hari Rai lived in a flat at Malad (west). He tried to escape as a police team knocked on his door.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

An accused in a narcotics case in Delhi died after falling off his third-floor flat at Malad (west) in Mumbai while trying to escape from the police by rappelling down from the window on Tuesday. The deceased, identified as David Hari Rai, used to live with his family at Haridwar Apartment in Evershine Nagar.

A team from the Delhi Police approached the local Bangur Nagar police station on Tuesday to seek their help in catching Rai, who was booked in a narcotics case in 2017. Rai, who was

alone at the flat at the time, got a whiff of the police move as a team consisting of Mumbai and Delhi police went to nab him.

"We took the building watchman with us and knocked on his door but he did not open it. A neighbour said she had not seen him for days. So, we left thinking he was not at home. Some time later the watchman informed us that Rai had fallen off his third-floor flat and we rushed him to Shatabdi hospital where he was declared dead," said the police.

"His wife told us that two years ago he had removed the grill from their flat. When he learnt that a police team had come to catch him, he locked the door. He wore a helmet and used a rope to get down and accidentally fell after the rope broke off. He suffered a head injury and died," said the police.

The Bangur Nagar police have registered a case of accidental death.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Protection from cyclonic storms

In an effort to create a natural defence mechanism against the recurring cyclonic storms like 'Yaas' or 'Amphan', the West Bengal government plans to construct a robust and ecologically sustainable 'bio-shield' along the state's coastline and the Sundarbans islands. The natural barrier artificially engineered will be the first of its kind in the country. The state government formed a 24-member committee of experts. The committee came up with a detailed report to control the devastating cyclone that is not only destroying the embankments and vegetation but also posing a serious threat to human lives. The plan – recently approved as the master guide for any work in that eco-sensitive zone, where erosion is highest. According to the report, the impact of climate change is most severe in the Bengal delta region, where the sea level rise is the highest globally. The global mean sea level has been rising at 3.6mm per year between 2006 and 2015. The sea level off the coast of Bengal is rising at around 4mm per year. The impact of sea level rise in the Sunderbans is further accelerated due to slow subsidence of land, at 2.9mm per year. That effectively makes the sea level rise more than 6.9mm per year. The committee has proposed a "climate-resilient" multi-layer vegetation shield: three-layer shields along the sea-coast, and two along the river-embankments in the Bengal delta, the report says. The committee chose 36 species of mangrove and mangrove associates and blue and green algae and proposed to develop a climate resilient multi-layer vegetation shield: three layers along the seacoast and two layers along the river embankment in Bengal Delta. The irrigation and waterways department has identified 378 stretches of different rivers in the state, that have a total length of 559km, as vulnerable, of which 207 stretches, with a combined length of 324km, have been marked "extremely vulnerable".

Post-Covid fatigue is most prevalent in diabetes patients: Study

People with Type-2 diabetes who also suffered Covid-19 are more likely to experience severe fatigue than those who did not have the infectious disease, according to a new study released on Thursday.

Post-Covid syndrome or Long Covid has emerged as a major roadblock in the recovery of patients infected with SARS-CoV-2. Amidst many symptoms such as myalgia (muscle pain), headache, cough and breathlessness, fatigue is most prevalent and makes a Covid patient severely debilitated.

The first-of-its-kind study, conducted jointly by Fortis C-DOC, AIIMS, C-NET, N-DOC and Diabetes Foundation, is published in the journal Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Reviews.

The results show that diabetes complicates the course of Covid-19 and results in excess morbidity and mortality; presence of diabetes also influences Long Covid via various pathophysiological mechanisms. Besides, diabetes also poses challenges in the recovery of patients.

"Fatigue is a predominant and very debilitating factor, present afterwards in both hospitalised and non-hospitalised Covid patients. Fatigue and associated symptoms decrease quality of life and interfere with normal working capacity," Dr Anoop Misra, Executive Chairman and Director, Diabetes and Endocrinology, Fortis C-DOC, shared in a statement. "In addition,



diabetes poses challenges in the recovery of patients. It is imperative, therefore, for chronic diabetic patients to follow a healthy lifestyle, adhere to treatment guidelines and go for regular health checks," added Misra, who is also a Padma Shri recipient. The team assessed the prevalence of fatigue among 108 Type-2 diabetes patients using the Chalder Fatigue Scale (CFQ-11) and handgrip strength (as a surrogate marker for sarcopenia or muscle mass and power) after Covid-19 infection.

They compared them against patients with diabetes without a history of Covid-19 (52 Type 2 diabetes patients with Covid vs 56 Type 2 diabetes patients without Covid).

While Type-2 diabetes patients who had Covid-19 showed significantly more fatigue compared to those who did not have Covid-19, both groups had comparable handgrip strength. Among diabetes patients, those with increased fatigue level had significantly higher inflammation markers during acute illness, and post Covid-19, had increased postprandial blood glucose levels. They also lost more weight, had reduced physical activity and showed significantly lower handgrip strength as compared to those with lesser fatigue score. Overall, high fatigue seems to result from severe Covid-19, and high blood sugar levels, the researchers said. The findings are particularly relevant in view of increased prevalence of severe diabetes during times of Covid-19. "This study re-emphasises that the management of diabetes should be sustained and more stringent during a pandemic. Blood glucose and blood pressure should be optimal and more aggressive glycemic management is required," Misra said, adding that patients must focus on nutrition and protein and vitamin supplements. Further, exercise and physiotherapy should be started early after Covid-19 as it may benefit not only fatigue but cardiovascular and pulmonary health and mental well-being of the patient, Misra suggested.

'Message in a bottle' for COP26 leaders

VISHAL GULATI

On the penultimate day of COP26, scientists have deployed plastic pollution tracking devices into the ocean around Scotland.

The devices will help scientists understand how plastic bottles move in the ocean and their interaction with climate change impacts, wildlife and weather patterns.

The 'Message in a Bottle' tracking project is being run by -- Arribada Initiative, The University of Exeter, The University of Plymouth and the Zoological Society of London with support from #OneLess and OneOcean.

Designed to mimic a single-use plastic drinks bottle, the devices will respond to currents and winds as real bottles do. Stage one of the project launched on World Ocean Day June 8 during the G7 in Cornwall, and has already seen seven devices travel hundreds of miles over the past five months.

In stage two, the four new tracking devices could pass over deep ocean trenches, across major migratory routes for marine mammals and birds, possibly beaching on distant shores.

A recent study released by ZSL (Zoological Society London) and Bangor University revealed links between the global climate cri-



sis and plastic pollution, including the impact of extreme weather worsening the distribution of microplastics into pristine and remote areas. With all eyes on the UN Climate Change Conference COP26 nearing its completion in Glasgow, the four devices have been named "Heat", "Acidity", "Deoxygenation" and "Pollution" to draw attention to the need to adequately address these ocean crises in tandem and to ensure that a recurring ocean climate dialogue is fundamental to future COPs.

Heather Koldewey of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and University of Exeter, lead

scientist on the project and Director of the #OneLess campaign said, "Through our research we've seen that plastic and climate change are fundamentally and intrinsically linked." "Plastic is made from fossil fuels, generating greenhouse gases at every step of its life cycle and the impact of both plastic pollution and climate change are both prevalent around the world. These crises are truly interconnected." "There is only one ocean and by tracking the flow of plastics we are trying to demonstrate the connectedness and the wide-reaching impact that humans

are having on our planet. There is an urgency to acknowledge that the climate crisis is the ocean crisis." Mirella von Lindenfels, Director of the International Programme on the State of the Ocean (IPSO), said: "The ocean regulates our climate and buffers us from the full force of climate change by absorbing our excess heat and over a third of our CO2 emissions. Any irreversible and significant changes to the ocean could have profound economic and ecological consequences." Over 359 million tonnes of plastic is produced annually and production has been predicted to double in the next 20 years.

With more than 40 per cent of this amount allocated for single-use applications some groups, such as London's #OneLess campaign, have decided to start tackling the plastic pollution problem close to home.

Over the past six years #OneLess has catalysed a change in the way Londoners drink water, from single-use plastic water bottles to refilling and reusing. The launch of the latest group of devices also coincides with COP26's Cities Day. The group hopes that this latest data on the movement of ocean plastic will inspire other cities across the globe to take steps to curb single-use plastic pollution for the sake of our ocean.

international

Nepal in a fix to hold census in disputed territories with India

Kathmandu | Agencies

Nepal on Thursday began the once in a decade census with the collection of personal data and information. But officials in Kathmandu were in a fix whether over conducting the survey in the disputed territories with India like Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura.

The former KP Sharma Oli government last year issued a new map incorporating the disputed territories with India that pushed bilateral ties to an all-time low.

This emerged as a major irritant in the Nepal-India relations, with Delhi calling Kathmandu's decision to publish the new map a cartographic assertion.

Nepal's move was prompted by India's announcement that it was building a road link to Kailash Manasarovar in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China via Lipulekh.

The new map was adopted by Parliament through a constitutional amendment. Officials have been wondering for quite a while about how to conduct a census in the region, not because it is remote but because it is controlled by India.

Now there were calls from several quarters to conduct the census in Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura area but officials are still in a fix. "We are looking forward to using the satellite technology to collect necessary information of the people residing in Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura for the 12th National Population and Household Census," Director General of Central Bureau of



Statistics (CBS), Nabin Lal Shrestha said. "We have made a request with India through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct the census in those three areas," he said, adding that as of now no permission has been granted from the Indian side.

Nepal has been claiming that its boundary to the west-north begins from Limpiyadhura where the river Mahakali originates. In Kalapani, it is currently occupied by the Indian troops and Lipulekh is the tri-juncture between Nepal, India, and China.

The CBS said the government is holding talks with the Indian authorities to carry out the population census of the region. According to the Bureau,

the authority has been considering using satellite means to take the data of households residing in the region.

Shrestha said that the CBS cannot send enumerators to the Kalapani region without talks with India, as it continues to control the area, even though Nepal claims the territory as its own. Also, since there is no direct road link connecting the region with the rest of the country, people can reach the area via India.

Officials say that the bureau has already collected the data on the population in the region based on India's 2011 census, according to which, there are 363 people in Kuti, 78 in Nabi, and 335 in Gunji the three villages in the region.

CBS officials say they will wait for a response from the Foreign Ministry with regard to their request for diplomatic initiatives with India.

Since India has been nonchalant of late with regards to Nepal's diplomatic requests, it is not clear whether Delhi would respond.

When New Delhi published a new map in November 2019 to update its political map after detailing the boundaries of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, it had shown the Kalapani region within Indian borders.

The new map was unveiled after the Indian government on August 5, 2019 rescinded the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, paving the way for the creation of the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. Nepal's attempts to hold diplomatic dialogue to resolve the issue went unanswered by India.

Cuba accuses US of destabilising internal order

Havana: Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez has accused the current US administration of stoking internal destabilisation on the island. The Caribbean nation "has the right to protect itself from the US aggression and safeguard peace, stability and tranquility that the US wants to break", Xinhua news agency quoted the Minister as saying to the diplomatic corps accredited to Cuba. The remarks were made ahead of a nationwide protest over human and civil rights scheduled for November 15, which the Cuban government has accused the United States of being behind, and refused to grant legal permission for. When asked directly at a press briefing on October 26 whether Washington was behind the protest, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price did not unequivocally deny, saying: "We stand with the right of the Cuban people and the right of people everywhere to assemble peacefully, to have their voices heard."

S Korea, Russia to set up military hotlines: Defense Ministry

Seoul | Agencies

South Korea and Russia on Thursday agreed to establish direct bilateral military hotlines to strengthen their communication to prevent accidental clashes at sea and in the air, the Defence Ministry in Seoul said.

Kim Sang-jin, the Ministry's director general for international policy, and Viktor Kalganov, deputy director of Russia's National Defense Control Center, signed the memorandum of understanding (MOU) to set up the hotline between the two countries' Navies and another between their Air Forces, reports Yonhap News Agency.

The two countries have sought to deepen bilateral communication, as Russian military aircraft had entered South Korea's air defence identification zone multiple times in the past without prior notice, raising

concerns about needless military tensions between the two countries.

"Through this MOU, we expect that the two countries can forestall accidental clashes in the air and at sea by strengthening trust and communication between the military authorities of South Korea and Russia," the Ministry said in a press release. "It is also expected to contribute to a reduction of tensions and the establishment of peace in the region," it added.

One of the two hotlines is to be established for communication between South Korea's ROK Fleet Command and Russia's Pacific Fleet, while the other connects the Korean Air Force's First Master Control and Reporting Centre and Russia's 11th Air and Air Defence Forces Army.

ROK stands for South Korea's official name, Republic of Korea.

UK will talk with EU until exhausting all possibilities on NI Protocol

London | Agencies

UK Brexit Minister David Frost said that three weeks' talks with the European Union (EU) have not led to the closure of substantial gaps on the Northern Ireland Protocol but Britain will not give up until exhausting all negotiating possibilities.

During the intense discussions for the last three weeks, the aim has been to assess whether it is possible to close the substantial gaps in UK-EU positions and secure potential negotiated resolution, Frost said in the House of Lords, the upper chamber of the British parliament, reports Xinhua news agency.

He said it has not been possible so far at least in part because the EU proposals do not go far enough to make the protocol sustainable for the future.

He said he wants to protect the integrity of the talks and remain positive.

"I will not give up on this process unless and until it is abundantly clear that nothing more can be done... If we do in due course reach that point, the Article 16 safeguards will be our only option," Frost said.



The Article 16 of the Northern Ireland Protocol provides both the UK and the EU with a unilateral power to take action should the application of the protocol give rise to "serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties that are liable to persist, or to diversion of trade".

The UK and the EU view changing the protocol as a long-term solution to post-Brexit trade disruption in Northern Ireland. Britain outlined its proposals in a government paper in July, which observers interpreted as a renegotiation of the protocol.

In response, the EU published its own package to facilitate the movement of goods from Britain to Northern Ireland, including cutting customs formalities, simplified certification, and an 80 per cent reduction of checks on retail goods for Northern Ireland's consumers.

It said it would guarantee an uninterrupted supply of medicine to the people of Northern Ireland, by changing EU rules.

However, the two sides remain poles apart on the more challenging issue of the oversight role of the European Court of Justice in Northern Ireland.

6.1 MAGNITUDE QUAKE JOLTS INDONESIA

Jakarta: A 6.1-magnitude earthquake jolted Indonesia's province of West Papua on Thursday, but no preliminary report on damages or casualties was issued, the meteorology agency said.

The tremors did not potentially trigger a tsunami, according to the country's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency.

The quake occurred at 12.46 a.m., with the epicentre at 115 km southeast of Kaimana district and the depth at 14 km under the seabed, the agency said.

The jolts of the quake were not felt, according to the agency.

Agus Saiful, an official of the Emergency Unit of the Disaster Management Agency in West Papua province, also said the tremors were not felt in the province. "So far, there are no reports about buildings or houses damaged, or those wounded or killed. The tremors were not felt here," the official told Xinhua by phone.



MP INOCULATES 13.52 LAKH PEOPLE IN ONE DAY UNDER MEGA COVID-19 VACCINATION DRIVE

▶ THE MEGA CAMPAIGN TO ACHIEVE THE TARGET OF 100 PER CENT INOCULATION SAW A MAJOR SUCCESS ON WEDNESDAY AFTER THE HEALTH STAFF ADMINISTERED 13.52 LAKH DOSES OF COVID-19 VACCINE TILL 9 PM, THE OFFICIAL FROM THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT SAID. "THIS IS THE HIGHEST IN THE COUNTRY AS COMPARED TO THE OTHER STATES," THE OFFICIAL CLAIMED.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

At least 13.52 lakh people were administered the COVID-19 vaccine in Madhya Pradesh in one day, which was the highest single-day vaccination in the country, an official claimed on Thursday (November 11, 2021).

The mega campaign to achieve the target of 100 per cent inoculation saw a major success on Wednesday after the health staff administered 13.52 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccine till 9 pm, the official from the public relations department said.

"This is the highest in the country as compared to the other states," the official claimed.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has congratulated everyone for setting the record of maximum number of vaccinations again in the country in the vaccination campaign with the help of people of Madhya Pradesh.

He said that today great success has been achieved in the campaigns being run for 100 percent vaccination in the state. Till 9 pm on Wednesday, November 10, 13 lakh 52 thousand vaccines were administered, which is the highest in the number of Covid vaccinations administered in the country. All arrangements were made for vaccination at 11 thousand 159 vaccination centers in the state today. People started coming to the centers from 9 am to get the vaccine, which continued throughout the day. Vaccination Maha Abhiyan-5 was a success with the participation of the masses.

The government had set up 11,159 vaccination centres as part of its four-day mega campaign, which began on Wednesday, he said, adding that three more such drives will be run on November 17, 24 and December 1. Chouhan has set a target to vaccinate all

eligible persons with both doses of the vaccine by December-end, the official said.

Around 5.49 crore people in the state are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, an official earlier said.

According to the CoWIN portal, a total of 7,38,94,076 vaccine doses have been administered in the state so far, of which 5,01,36,546 were first doses and 2,37,57,530 second jabs. On Wednesday, Madhya Pradesh reported five new cases of coronavirus, raising the state's infection tally to 7,92,924. No new fatality was recorded and the death toll remained unchanged at 10,524, a health department official earlier said.

Notably, under the leadership of Chief Minister Chouhan, a target has been set to administer both the doses of Covid vaccine to 100 percent eligible persons of the state by

the end of December. To achieve the target, Covid Vaccination Maha Abhiyan is being conducted on 10th, 17th and 24th November and 1st December. In this sequence, Covid Vaccination Maha Abhiyan-5 was conducted on Wednesday the 10th of November. A special strategy was made to make the Maha Abhiyan a success.

On the request of Chouhan, public representatives, office bearers of social organizations, crisis management committees, workers of Jan Abhiyan Parishad motivated people to go to vaccination centers to get Corona vaccine. School and college students, NCC and NSS students played an important role in motivating the families for Corona vaccination. In the special strategy of the campaign, active cooperation of other departments along with health department was sought.

BJP, CONG TRADE BARBS ON 'JANJATIYA GAURAV DIVAS' PROGRAMME IN MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

With the Centre's announcement to celebrate 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' to mark the birth anniversary of tribal leader and freedom fighter Birsu Munda with a mega event in Bhopal on November 15, political bickering has begun between the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on this matter.

Preparations for the mega event at Bhopal's historic Jamburi Maidan are in full swing. The entire ground is being decorated, highlighting the cultural, social values and contribution of the tribal communities especially in the state. An estimated budget of Rs 13 crore has been sanctioned for the event for which people from tribal communities from across the state will be transported to its capital, sources told IANS.

"People of tribal communities will be brought to Bhopal. The allocated fund will be spent on transportation, accommodation food, sanitisers, masks etc. The fund has been allocated to each district," said a government official.

It is being alleged that the event is being organised to increase the ruling BJP's vote percentage in the tribal areas in the upcoming assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh in 2023. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to announce nearly a dozen schemes prepared by the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government for tribal communi-

ties. While the state BJP is busy in making the event a grand success, the Congress, which had won 36 assembly seats out of the 47 reserved for Scheduled Tribes in the 2018 elections, has started blaming the Shivraj government for investing a huge amount of money to get votes. A group of senior Congress leaders on Wednesday opposed the government's plan to organise the 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas'.

Citing the fire incident in Kamla Nehru hospital, in which five infants died of suffocation, the Congress leaders said, "At the moment when entire Bhopal is in mourning due to loss of innocent children, the BJP government is busy in a mega event," the leaders said at a press conference.

However, the Congress itself has planned a 'Janjatiya Divas' in Jabalpur on the same date (November 15).

Reacting to the allegations, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan slammed the Congress saying former Chief Minister Kamal Nath-led MP Congress could not digest its defeat in the by-polls and is therefore making wrong statements. "BJP is not worried about its vote bank. But, the kind of statements coming from the Congress is clear indication that they are worried. Congress ruled the state for several years but did nothing for Janjatiya people, and now when we are doing something for them, they are making false allegations about us," Chouhan said.

CM pays obeisance to Sunderlal Patwa

Patwa has given new dimensions to the progress and development of the state: CM
Statue of Patwa will be installed in Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, paid obeisance to former Chief Minister of the state, Late. Sunderlal Patwa on his birth anniversary. Chouhan paid floral tributes by garlanding Patwa's portrait in the auditorium at his residence. Remembering him, Chief Minister Chouhan said that Madhya Pradesh politics cannot be imagined without Sunderlal Patwa. For almost half a decade, he was at the centre of politics in Madhya Pradesh. His organizing ability and his rhetoric were respected by all. He gained everyone's respect by rising above political and party boundaries.

Chouhan said that we cannot forget his contribution in taking the organization to the



people. He has been instrumental in preparing workers like me. Chief Minister said that a statue of Sunderlal Patwa would be installed in Bhopal in his memory.

Chouhan said that Patwa has given new dimensions to the progress and development of Madhya Pradesh. He had conceived the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana.

As Chief Minister, Patwa made invaluable contribution in the development of the state and welfare of the people. He used to rule the hearts of people. Crowds would throng the ground during his public meetings. Chief Minister Chouhan said that on behalf of myself and the people of the state, I pay my respects to Late Patwa.

CM planted Karanj and Gular saplings in Smart City Garden

- Representatives of Sakaratmak Soch Sansthan also participated in plantation
- Community participation in plantation is being encouraged continuously

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Karanj and Gular along with the members of Sakaratmak Soch Sansthan in the Smart City Garden on Thursday. Anita Sharma, Kiran Sharma, Arundhati Sharma and Smt. Rekha Sharma were present. The representative of Sakaratmak Soch Sansthan apprised Chief Minister Chouhan about the works being done by the organisation. Chouhan said that such social institutions are the strength of the society. The works of public welfare, environmental improvement and development get momentum through the activeness



of such social institutions. Chief Minister Chouhan is continuously encouraging community participation in plantation.

The Sakaratmak Soch Sansthan, Govindpura is active in taking care of plantations by planting saplings in Kalpana Nagar and Sonagiri areas of Zone-5. Besides, this organisation is

also involved in social activities like Utensil Bank, Bag Bank and environmental cleanliness work. The first Utensil Bank has been established by the organisation in Bhopal. This organisation provides free utensils on weddings, birthdays and other events. Various activities are being conducted by the organisation with

the aim of reducing the use of plastic, in which work is also being done towards bringing awareness among children for cleanliness and environmental protection. The organisation also arranges nutritious food and education for the poor children.

33 lakh tendu leaf collectors being economically strengthened: Shah

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Forest Minister Kunwar Vijay Shah has said that 33 lakh tendu leaf collectors, mostly belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes, are being financially strengthened by the State Minor Forest Produce Association through tendu patta collection in the state. These classes are being provided remuneration and bonus for tendu leaf collection. Of these, 44 per cent are women.

Shah said that 70 percent of the net income generated from the trade of nationalized minor forest produce in the

state is spent as bonus to the tendu patta collectors, 15 percent for development and training etc. under the supervision of the Forest department and 15 percent in the implementation of basic amenities and welfare schemes on villages.

Shah informed that last year, leaf collectors were given wages of Rs 397 crore for collection of 15.88 lakh standard bags of tendu patta. This year 16.60 lakh standard bags of tendu leaves have been collected. In the collection year 2018, out of the net profit collected and earned from the business of tendu leaves, an amount of Rs 282.47 crore has been paid as bonus.

Shah informed that on the instructions of Chief Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the collection wages have been fixed from Rs. 2 thousand per standard bag to Rs. 2 thousand 500 per standard bag. Arrangements have also been made to make cash payment to the collectors according to the quantity collected by them. In the first phase of Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Yojana, 86 centers have been approved in 13 districts of the state. In this, a center will have 25 thousand 800 collectors at the rate of 300 collectors each. Rs.15 lakh has been sanctioned by TRIFED for training and equipment in each centre.

NCPCR uncovers alleged conversion racket in Christian missionary-run hostel in MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has claimed to have uncovered an alleged conversion racket wherein Hindu girls were being converted in a Christian Missionary Girls Hostel in Madhya Pradesh.

A delegation of NCPCR led by its Chairman Priyanka Kanoong had conducted a surprise inspection at the hostel located in a village under Raisen district in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday.

During the investigation, NCPCR claimed it found that 15-20 Hindu girls from Schedule Tribes (ST) were staying in the

hostel. These girls belong to the Schedule Tribe community who have been brought in Christian Missionary Hostel in the name of providing education. "We were informed that these girls were brought to provide better education but the fact is that there is no school building in its campus. We have also come to know that these girls were brought for some special purposes and they are being trained here," said the Chairman of NCPCR. During the investigation, it also found that many girls have been brought from the Northeast. However, when questioned about the purpose of keeping the Hindu girls in hostel and how they were brought from Northeast, the Missionary Hostel head could give a justified answer, said the NCPCR official.

Special on Tribal Pride Day

In the last 15 years, the upliftment of the tribal community gets new wings in Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

It was a day of great pride for the entire tribal community when the portals of the Chief Minister's residence were opened to them. This took place at the Chief Minister's Adivasi Chaupal. This opportunity was nothing short of a dream come true for them. This would have been their first visit outside of their village Majra tole. For the first time thousands of tribal families from Mandla to Jhabua were visiting Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. This was the time when the vast tribal community realised that Madhya Pradesh - their home - belonged to them. It goes without saying that in the last one and a half decades, the tribal community in Madhya Pradesh has been bestowed with the honour of being the pride of this state. Under the leadership of Chief Minister, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the Madhya Pradesh government has shown its concern for the tribal community, while making persistent efforts to make them a part of the mainstream. Today, as we prepare to celebrate the esteemed Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, it is an appropriate time to talk about the status of the tribal community, whether after independence or after the creation of a new Madhya Pradesh. In its

aim to improve the status of the tribal community, the Shivraj government has increased the budget of the Tribal Affairs department by 948%. While this budget was only ₹746.60 crore in FY 2003-04, it has been increased to Rs 8085 crore in 2020-21.

The Janjatiya Gaurav Divas being celebrated in the memory of Bhagwan Birsu Munda is dedicated to all tribal warriors. Along with the brave martyrs like Bhima Nayak, Tania Mama, Khajya Nayak, Sangram Shah, Shankar Shah, Raghunath Shah, Rani Durgavati, Badal Bhoi, Raja Bhabhut Singh, Raghunath Mandloi Bhilala, Raja Dhillon Shah Gond, Raja Gangadhar Gond, Sardar Vishnu Singh Uikey, Madhya Pradesh also pays tributes to all those warriors who have been lost in the pages of history. We recognize the heroes of the tribal areas quite well, but it is because of the valour and sacrifice of these tribal heroes living in the forests that today we all are enjoying this freedom. It is the sole responsibility of the society to remember such brave hearts and teach the future generations of their devotion to inculcate a sense of patriotism among them. As we celebrate the 75th year of India's freedom struggle, the Madhya Pradesh government is also organizing such events in the lands of the tribal warriors to

ensure that the youth of today understand and know about the many sacrifices made by these warriors.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan's Government has earned its reputation as a sensitive Government. CM Chouhan has focused his attention on the following five sections as a priority: women, children, farmers, tribals and elders. In more than a decade and a half, efforts have been made to not only make these sections happy by formulating a number of schemes but also to connect them with the mainstream of the society. The previous Governments have never put the tribal community on their priority list. After 2005, the Shivraj Singh Government has made tremendous efforts towards the welfare of the tribal community. This community has been gifted with exceptional natural abilities. They hold the valuable gift of art in them and are full of talent, but were kept behind closed doors before the Shivraj Singh government came into power and brought them out for the world to behold.

The Shivraj Singh Government is committed to giving the rights to the tribal community. With respect to this, the Forest Rights Act, 2006 is being implemented effectively. Out of 6 lakh 24 thousand 889 claims received so far, 2 lakh 63 thousand 916 claims have been accepted

and provided with their rights. 33,852 claims were validated by re-examining the families whose claims had been rejected.

These figures and facts indicate that the Government of Madhya Pradesh is committed towards the welfare of the tribal community. It is a community that is harmonious with nature and teaches us that one can lead a life of contentment and happiness even with little. We must recognize that tribal communities do not exploit nature, but protect it. Every moment of their lives is associated with water, forest and land, hence they worship nature as god. The tribal society lives with simplicity, and therefore, is the pride and identity of Madhya Pradesh.

The revolutionary decision of the Madhya Pradesh government is to free the tribal community from moneylenders and it is also a priority for the The Shivraj Singh Government is constantly striving to raise the standard of living of the tribal community in Madhya Pradesh, and to provide them with adequate opportunities to become self-reliant. The efforts made, in the past decade and a half, to connect the tribal community with the mainstream of society have shown a positive impact, especially among the tribal youth.



'RUST' TRAGEDY: FILM'S GAFFER FILES NEGLIGENCE SUIT AGAINST ALEC BALDWIN

The gaffer, or the chief electrician in a film production unit, working on the Alec Baldwin production 'Rust', felt a whoosh of air and heard the loudest shot he had ever heard on set, and then watched helplessly as his friend, the cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, faded away in his arms, according to a lawsuit filed on Tuesday.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Hutchins had died of a gunshot wound when a firearm being used by Baldwin during a shoot accidentally discharged what turned out to be a live bullet. The incident happened on location in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on October 21.

Serge Svetnoy, the gaffer, reports 'Variety', provided a detailed, first-hand account of the shooting in a negligence suit against several defendants, including Baldwin, the film's producers, the armourer and first assistant director. He alleges he suffered injury when the bullet narrowly missed him, as well as "severe emotional distress".

The suit is the first to be filed in connection with the tragedy, in which Baldwin fired a Colt .45 containing a live round while setting up for a shot at the Bonanza Creek Ranch near Santa Fe. Hutchins was airlifted to a hospital, where she died. The film's director, Joel Souza, was also struck in the shoulder, but he was discharged from the hospital after first aid.

Svetnoy had previously expressed his outrage at the "negligence and unprofessionalism" that led to Hutchins' death in a public Facebook post.

In the suit, he said he was close friends with Hutchins, having worked with her on nine projects since 2017. On the day of the incident, he was setting up lighting inside a church building while the director, Baldwin and other crew prepared to shoot the scene.



'SQUID GAME' GARNERS 17 BN YOUTUBE VIEWS, ECLIPSES 'GAME OF THRONES'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Netflix's South Korean sensation 'Squid Game' has eclipsed HBO's juggernaut 'Game of Thrones' on YouTube, attracting a staggering 17 billion views across a spectrum of long- and short-form videos, according to the content analytics firm Vobile.

The viewership comes from numerous types of video content, including official trailers and clips from the series, fan recreations of iconic moments, real-world challenges inspired by the plot, and even narration of user-generated video games based on the property (found on services like Roblox), reports 'Variety'. "In 10 years looking at YouTube, we've never seen anything quite like this," Jared

Naylor, Vobile's vice president for audience development, told 'Variety'. The company identifies and analyses how intellectual property is shared and co-opted in the digital space. Vobile estimates that the 17 billion views have come from 129,000 uploaded videos, including traditional long-form YouTube clips and their recently-launched TikTok competitor YouTube Shorts. Those videos also count 533 million engagements (likes, dislikes and comments). Compared with these phenomenal numbers, 'Game of Thrones', which had a decade to amass its fan army as opposed to the roughly eight weeks 'Squid Game' has been in play, attracted 16.9 billion views from 420,000 uploaded videos, and an estimated 233 million engagements.

'Narcos: Mexico' final season traces origins of drug wars

Mexico city | Agencies

'Narcos: Mexico', one of Netflix's flagship content pieces, has returned with its third and final season and fans of the series couldn't be happier.

The final season, which is laced with mind-numbing violence, raids, gun battles and lots of action, stars Bad Bunny a.k.a. Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio alongside Alberto Guerra, Luis Gerardo Méndez and Luisa Rubino.

The show finds its essence in its theme of a system that refuses to budge as new entrants come in the system and the old ones take a departure. While the players may think they're the running the show, in reality they're just cogs in the wheel of a well-oiled machinery that functions like clockwork.

The season takes off after the arrest of Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo following the charges of DEA agent



Enrique Camarena's murder, levelled against him. There are 10 episodes in the new season, with an average run-time of around 50 to 60 minutes per episode. The show, which was initially intended

to be the fourth season of 'Narcos' was later developed into a companion series to 'Narcos', the crime drama which chronicled Pablo Escobar's journey as Colombia's drug baron.

'Narcos: Mexico' portrays the origins of the modern drug wars in Mexico. While the first two seasons showcased the origin and development of the Guadalajara Cartel, the show's latest sea-

Emily Blunt on 'The Rock': 'He has such extraordinary presence'

Mumbai | Agencies

'Jungle Cruise', starring Emily Blunt and Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, charmed the audience with its impeccable storytelling set against the backdrop of the Amazon rainforest.

The chemistry between the British Golden Globe-winning actress and 'The Rock' was the cynosure of the film. And their companionship, it turns out, extends beyond the screen as well.

Recently, Emily opened up about working with Dwayne. She said: "Dwayne Johnson has such extraordinary presence. There's a wonderful, effortless quality to him, and he plays the role with such ease. He's unafraid of Frank's weird quirks and selfish tendencies and more importantly his vulnerability and his past. All of those layers give him a lot to play with, and I think he's really enjoying it. I know I am."

'Jungle Cruise' will be available for streaming for Disney+ Hotstar subscribers as part of the Disney+ Day celebrations starting on Friday, November 12.

The film has Blunt playing researcher Dr Lily Houghton and Johnson, a steamboat skipper, Frank Wolf. The film traces their journey in the Amazon rainforest as they embark to uncover a mythical 'Tree of Life', which has magical healing properties.

As the secrets of the lost tree unfold, the stakes of Lily and Frank's search rise higher with enemy forces closing in on them, leading to their fate and that of mankind hanging by a fine thread. The film directed by Jaume Collet-Serra is based on the Disneyland ride of the same name and was produced by John Davis and John Fox of Davis Entertainment in association with Johnson's Seven Bucks Productions.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Lady Gaga

CFDA Fashion Awards

Zendaya, Anya Taylor-Joy and Emily Blunt look fashion-forward in bold bright colors on the red carpet



New York | Agencies

Fashion's biggest talents were out in full force for the CFDA Fashion Awards in New York on Wednesday night.

And the stars were ready to rock their most daring styles, with Zendaya, Anya Taylor-Joy, and Emily Blunt all going bold in bright hues.

Dune diva Zendaya wowed in a red Vera Wang ensemble while Anya looked mod in plunging purple Oscar de la Renta and Emily got suited up in a boxy orange Christopher John Rogers jacket worn without a shirt underneath. Zendaya - who was being honored with the evening's Fashion Icon Award - was radiant in a crimson maxi-skirt with a bubble of fabric around her hips.

Showing off her stellar abs, she donned just a simple bandeau on top. The star piled on the jewelry, adding a bracelet, necklace, rings and matching earrings.

She leaned into her natural beauty with glowing, nude makeup and sleek braids.

Anya Taylor-Joy - the first ever Face of The Year winner - surely made an entrance as she stepped onto the red carpet in a sassy plum Oscar de la Renta dress with a plunging neckline and poofed skirt.

Making sure to match, the Queen's





T20 WORLD CUP

STOINIS, WADE HEROICS LEAD AUSTRALIA TO FINAL

Dubai | Agencies

Riding on the outstanding batting performances from Matthew Wade, Marcus Stoinis and David Warner, Australia thrashed Pakistan by five wickets in a thrilling semifinal clash to reach the final of the 2021 ICC Men's T20 World Cup at the Dubai International Stadium, here on Thursday.

Australia will now face New Zealand in the final, scheduled to be played on Sunday. Earlier, Kiwis had registered a brilliant victory over 2016 runners up England in the first semifinal of the tournament on Wednesday.

Fantastic fifties by Mohammad Rizwan (67 off 52) and Fakhar Zaman (55 off 32) powered Pakistan to 176-4. Apart from Rizwan and Zaman, Babar Azam (39 off 34) also made valuable contributions with the bat for Pakistan while Mitchell Starc (2/38) was the most successful bowler for Australia.

Chasing a challenging total, Australia were hit with Shaheen Shah Afridi at his very best in the opening over, with Finch falling for a first-ball duck and Mitchell Marsh surviving a



tight LBW review off the next delivery.

Marsh came to the crease after the early fall of Finch. But the introduction of Shadab after the powerplay ended the partnership as Mitchell Marsh (28 off 22) miscued to Asif Ali in the deep.

Steve Smith, who came to bat next, also fell to Shadab soon after.

Warner (49 off 30) looked to be taking the game away from Pakistan it was Shadab again who brought his team back into the game. The Aussie opener edged a Shadab googly behind and the bowler and Rizwan raced away in celebration and a furious Warner walked off, with the umpire raising his finger.

The equation for Australia was strikingly similar to New Zealand's in the first semi-final, with over 50 runs required off the final four overs. The big hits kept flowing for Australia while a crucial catch wasn't taken in the deep as Hasan Ali put down Wade. And Wade (41 off 17) took full advantage of that drop, hitting Afridi for a superb ramped six, then whipping him into the stands over mid-wicket, and then sealing the win with another ramp as the 19th over went for 22 runs.

Gokulam Kerala lose to Iran club in AFC Women's Club



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Gokulam Kerala FC lost to Iran's Shahrdari Sirjan in their second match of the AFC Women's Club Championship, going down by a solitary goal at the Aqaba Development Corporate Stadium in Aqaba, Jordan.

After the first half had ended in a stalemate on Wednesday evening, Sirjan took the lead through an Afsaneh Alizadeh free-kick after goalkeeper Aditi Chauhan was sent off for a tackle.

It was a tightly-contested affair between the Indian and the Iranian sides, but Gokulam were able to get off to a better start, enjoying more possession in the opening half in the opening exchanges.

With the half-time break soon approaching, Elshaddai Acheampong managed to latch on to a stray ball on the edge of the area and got her shot away, but it was blocked by the Sirjan defence. The Gokulam players did appeal for a suspected handball inside the box but to no avail. The Gokulam custodian

was sent off for the challenge, and Sirjan were awarded a free-kick, which was duly converted by Afsaneh Chatreanor, after a delay that lasted almost 10 minutes while Alizadeh was being treated on the pitch.

With less than a minute of added time left on the clock, the Malabarians had one last go, as Manisha put Soumya Guguloth through on the left, inside the penalty box. The latter pinged in her cross, aimed at Acheampong, but the Sirjan keeper came out to pluck it out of the air, as the referee blew her whistle.

Murray, Shapovalov, Tiafoe reach quarterfinals in Stockholm

Stockholm | Agencies

Former World No 1 Andy Murray, Canada's Denis Shapovalov, the third seed, second seed Felix Auger-Aliassime and eighth-ranked Frances Tiafoe of the United States have made it to the quarterfinals of the Stockholm Open ATP tour event.

Murray claimed his second top-10 scalp in recent times when he stunned top seed Jannik Sinner of Italy in straight sets in a Round of 16 clash on Wednesday night.

Before the victory over World No. 10 Sinner, Murray

had defeated France's Hubert Hurkacz, ranked No. 10 at that time, in Vienna.

In a match packed with lengthy all-court rallies, Murray managed to stave off the only break point he faced to close out Sinner in two hours and 10 minutes.

"It was a very tough match. He hits the ball huge from the back of the court so there were a lot of long rallies and a lot of running. But it's probably my best win this season. I want to keep it going now," Murray was quoted as saying by the ATP. In the quarterfinals, Murray will take on second seed Felix Auger-

Aliassime, after the Canadian dodged the upset bug and closed out Filip Krajinovic in straight sets, 6-3, 6-4.

Auger-Aliassime's compatriot Shapovalov made it to the last eight with a 7-6(1), 6-1 win against Andrea Vavassori of Italy while fourth seed Daniel Evans of Great Britain too advanced by beating Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, 7-6(5), 6-2. Tiafoe overcame Spain's Pedro Martinez 6-4, 6-4 while fellow American Tommy Paul caused an upset by beating his fifth-seeded compatriot Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-4.

Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific Bogey-free Anika Varma closes in on the leader in Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi | Agencies

India's Anika Varma was one of only two players in the field not to drop a shot in the first two rounds of the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific (WAAP).

Varma shot a four-under-par 68, moving to seven-under-par 137 at the Abu Dhabi Golf Club's National course. She was three shots behind the leader, Thailand's Natthakritta Vongtaveelap, who was also shot a bogey-free 68 to keep her two-shot lead intact at the halfway stage.

Japan's Mizuki Hashimoto of Japan added a second straight 68 to move to eight-under-par, where she was joined in a tied-second position by



Australian Kelsey Bennett (67).

Eight Indian girls were in contention here -- two of them nominated by host nation UAE. Five of them

made the cut, which was applied at two-over-par 146. Bengaluru's 15-year-old Avani Prashanth added a second straight 71 to be tied 20th at

two-under-par. One shot behind and in tied 26th place were Purdue University star Sifat Sagoo (72), and Natali Gupta (69), who is Dubai-born and nominated for the tournament by the Emirates Golf Federation (EGF).

Jaipur's Kriti Chowhan made it to the final two rounds in stunning fashion. Four-over after the first round, an early bogey on her first hole of the day (10th of the course), pushed her back to 5-over and way outside the cut line. She then proceeded to play the remaining 17 holes without dropping a shot and making three birdies.

Hyderabad's Sneha Singh (73-75) and Mumbai's Nishna Patel (78-78) missed the cut.

T20 World Cup

New Zealand will enjoy playing in third final in three years

Abu Dhabi | Agencies

Playing in three finals in three years would be a great achievement for any nation, and for a small country like New Zealand, it is a special feeling to reach their third final across different formats in as many years.

New Zealand defeated England by five wickets to storm into the final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup at the Zayed Cricket Stadium here on Wednesday. Though it was their first T20 World Cup final, added to their recent success in the 50 overs game and Test cricket, it makes for a monumental achievement for this golden generation of the Black Caps players.

New Zealand lost to England in the final of the 2019 World Cup (50 overs) on countback while the Kiwis defeated India in the ICC Test World Championships final in England last year.

On Wednesday, a valiant knock from Daryl Mitchell (72 not out off 47 balls), along with an explosive cameo from James Neesham (27 off 11 balls) powered New Zealand to beat England by five wickets in the first semifinal of the T20 World



Cup 2021. New Zealand will play the winner of the second semifinal between Pakistan and Australia, in the final in a couple of days. Mitchell said the New Zealand players were proud of their achievements in the last few years but will move on pretty quickly. He said they will give it everything they have got in the final, whoever between Australia and Pakistan is their opponent.

"Look, we're a bunch of Kiwis. There's only 5 million of us, so we're obviously very proud to be

representing our country. Yeah, obviously we've had some success in the last few years. But we're going to enjoy the win tonight, make sure that obviously we celebrate that, but then we move on pretty quickly," said Mitchell in the post-match press conference.

"We know that we have a final on Sunday, and whoever we're taking on should be good fun. We'll give it everything we've got, but at the end of the day there are certain things you can't control, so we'll see what happens." So, how significant is Wednesday's victory for him? Mitchell said he would have laughed at the person if someone said he was said five, six years ago that he would be playing a World Cup final.

"Yeah, it's obviously a great honour to represent my country at a World Cup. Yeah, if you said this five, six years ago I would have laughed at you, so to be here sitting right now is awesome. Yeah, we're just really enjoying being part of this tournament and having as much fun as we can."

It was a particularly significant achievement for the 30-year-old Mitchell, a late starter in cricket who made his international debut at 27.

Harris to open batting with Warner for Australia in Ashes: Bailey

Melbourne | Agencies

Left-handed Marcus Harris will open the batting with David Warner for Australia in the upcoming Ashes series against England, chairman of selectors George Bailey confirmed on Thursday.

The 29-year-old was one of the front-runners for the role alongside Queensland captain Usman Khawaja, with Will Pucovski likely to miss the first Test as he battles concussion symptoms. Harris also partnered with Warner when the last time Australia played Test cricket.

Bailey heaped praise on Harris, who scored a century for Victoria against New South Wales at the start of the Sheffield Shield season and placed faith in him to nail



down his spot.

"Harry's had limited opportunities in the past 'nd he's been in and out a bit, so we'd love nothing more than for him hopefully to get an opportunity to get an extended run at it," Bailey told radio RSN on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the 34-year old Khawaja could still earn a spot in the middle order for

the first Test, with Bailey saying the No 5 spot "is certainly open" although he added the selectors were close to a decision. The five-Test Ashes is set to begin on December 8 in Brisbane. Australia retained the Ashes with a 2-2 series draw when the two teams last met in 2019 in England.

Jr Hockey World Cup

Vivek Sagar Prasad named captain of 18-member squad

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Vivek Sagar Prasad was on Thursday named as captain of the 18-member Indian team that will defend its title at the FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup to be held at Bhubaneswar from November 24.

The event, slated to end on December 5, will witness 16 teams from across the globe vie for the honours which were last won by India at Lucknow in 2016.

Hockey India on Thursday named the 18-member Indian junior men's hockey team for the event with Vivek



Sagar Prasad as captain and defender Sanjay, who was part of the India U-18 team that won silver at the Youth Olympic Games 2018 in Buenos Aires, as vice-captain. The selection trials ended on Wednesday. The 18-member team

includes Shardanand Tiwari, Prashant Chauhan, Sudeep Chirmako, Rahul Kumar Rajbhar, Maninder Singh, Pawan, Vishnukant Singh, Ankit Pal, Uttam Singh, Sunil Jojo, Manjeet, Rabichandra Singh Moirangthem, Abhishek Lakra, Yashdeep Siwach, Gurmukh Singh, and Arajjeet Singh Hundal. Dinachandra Singh Moirangthem and Bobby Singh Dhama have been chosen as alternate players who will be allowed to play only if there is an injury or someone in the 18-member squad is ruled out of the tournament due to Covid-19, Hockey India said in a release on Thursday.

2022 Winter Olympics

IOC praises China for delivering promises on carbon-neutral Games

Beijing | Agencies

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has praised China for delivering the promises on a carbon-neutral Games by introducing renewable energies to Olympics venues and to attract 300 million winter sports fans.

Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr, the Chairman of the IOC Coordination Commission for Beijing 2022, told a digital press conference recently that he was happy and proud to see that Beijing has dedicated enormous attention to sustainability, delivering the promise of holding a carbon neutral Games.

The IOC held the virtual meeting on Tuesday to introduce the technical preparations for the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022, includ-



ing the venues, the first version of the Playbook, and the ongoing test events, reports Xinhua.

Expressing the gratefulness to Beijing Winter Olympics Organising Committee, Samaranch said, "they

are going to deliver extraordinary games even in the very challenging period of time with corona pandemic." "With less than 90 days to the Games, the IOC and the Beijing 2022 Organising Committee are both in full operational mode," said the 62-year-old chairman, "the facilities in-game areas and services in the venues have been ready, and we are in the middle of the final test events, activities and training weeks." amaranch believed it was very much aligned with the principles of Olympic Agenda 2020+5.

Christophe Dubi, the IOC Olympic Games Executive Director, spoke highly of the preparations of Beijing 2022, which received high marks and positive feedbacks from international federations and athletes in terms of the test events.



AYUSHMANN KHURRANA ELATED WITH CINEMAS OPENING UP

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The release of 'Sooryavanshi' in theatres has reinvigorated the film industry with new energy.

The film recently entered the Rs 100 crore club in just 5 days of its release thereby giving hope to filmmakers, actors, producers, distributors and exhibitors alike.

Actor Ayushmann Khurrana, who also has a theatrical release with 'Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui', is one happy man and the reason is cinemas finally traversing on the path to recovery.

The actor shares, "So many of my life's favourite memories are linked to me watching movies in a theatre. I'm feeling really happy that Hindi

films are now set to release in theatres and make a big comeback. It is my firm belief that people will come back to the big screen to watch the best cinema and to get an experience like never before. Their decision to walk into a theatre won't be based on just event films or genres or star cast. It will be based on content."

Adding to that, the actor feels that the members of the industry have a responsibility to provide memorable experiences to the audience and there can be no better way to do that than cinemas.

He says, "As an industry, we need to give them an experience that they will cherish, that will engage them into having a discussion and most importantly entertain them to the fullest. I'm really confident that we will manage to do that and make movie-watching a community experience again. We are a country that cherishes going to theatres with our families and friends."

SUNNY SINGH WRAPS UP THE MUCH-ANTICIPATED 'ADIPURUSH'



Mumbai: Sunny Singh has had a very productive year so far. The actor pumped iron for his role of Lord Laxman in 'Adipurush' and underwent a total body transformation.

All those gruelling gym sessions and training have paid off for him as the film was recently wrapped after 103 days.

The actor took to social media to share a picture from the film's wrap where he can be seen posing with his co-stars Kriti Sanon, Prabhas and Saif Ali Khan, his father, the film's director Om Raut and other crew members.

The actor also shared a heartfelt note on the completion of the film's schedule. He captioned the picture, "These pictures spell love and mean the world to me! Speak volumes of a bond shared. My dad came to visit us on the set on the last day of our shoot."



Parineeti Chopra feels blessed to be shooting in Kargil

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Parineeti Chopra is currently in Kargil, shooting for her yet-to-be-titled film. This is the first time that the actress has travelled to shoot amid the snow-clad mountains of Ladakh, and she seems to be absolutely in love with the place.

Talking about her experience, Parineeti said, "I feel honoured and ecstatic to be shooting in Kargil. I always wanted to come here because I have grown up hearing stories from my dad because he works with the Indian Army and to be finally here as an actor is such a blessing."

However, it's not all fun and games for the crew on the sets as sub-zero temperatures come with their own set of troubles and many times can thwart the shoot schedule. The actress explains, "The temperature is crazy, we shot in -18 and -12 degrees yesterday and our bottles of water were frozen and the guys with beards on our set had frozen beards."

"It was crazy to see that level of cold. I have never experienced that temperature before in my life but still feels exciting to be here as an actor and shooting in these beautiful gorgeous locations," she concludes.

'Sooryavanshi' enters Rs 100 cr club in less than a week

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Stakes were at an all-time high for the film industry with director Rohit Shetty's 'Sooryavanshi' releasing in theatres during Diwali.

The film has paid off and how! The Akshay Kumar and Katrina Kaif-starrer crossed the Rs 100 crore mark in just 5 days as a part of its India business. Senior film critic and business analyst Taran Adarsh took to Twitter as he gave a detailed break up of the film's 5-day collections. He wrote, "#Sooryavanshi is NOT OUT" Continues to attract substantial footfalls even on weekdays, especially in



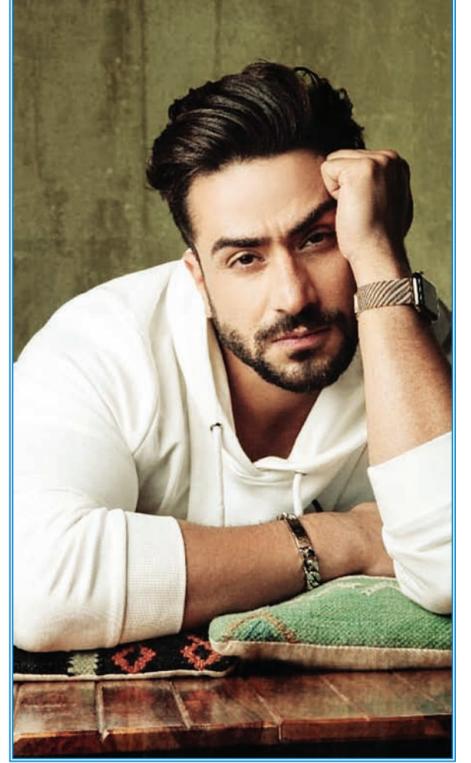
#Maharashtra and #Gujarat' Eyes? 120 cr [+/-] total in "Week 1" Fri 26.29 cr, Sat 23.85 cr, Sun 26.94 cr, Mon 14.51 cr, Tue 11.22 cr. Total: ? 102.81 cr. #India biz."

'Sooryavanshi' is Shetty's ambitious addition to his cop universe. The film had suffered multiple setbacks in the past 18 months owing

to the theatre shutdown and civil restrictions. But, it has managed to rake in impressive numbers, restoring people's belief in the medium of cinemas. Ranveer Singh, who has an extended cameo in the film along with Ajay Devgn, took to his Instagram to share a special video dedicated to the director. He captioned the video, "THE BOSS! @itsrohitshetty #sooryavanshi"

The film is Rohit Shetty's 9th century at the box-office, grabbing the third spot after 'Simmba' and 'Singham Returns', to become the fastest Rs 100 crore grosser.

I HAVE THE PATIENCE OF A SAINT: ALY GONI'



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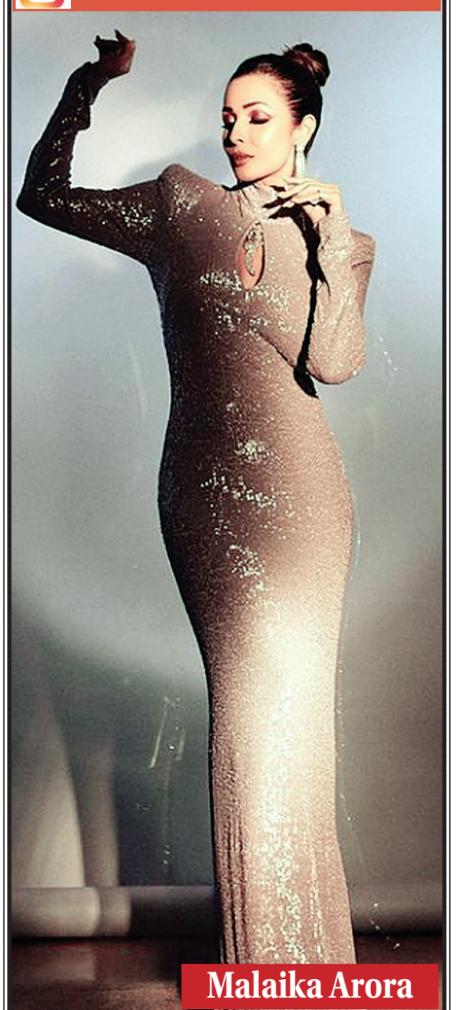
After his stint in the fourteenth season of 'Bigg Boss', Aly Goni has been a part of various music videos like "Tera sui", "2 phone", and "Tu bhi sataya jayega", to name a few. Recently seen in a music video titled "Jodaa" along with Mouni Roy, the actor confessed that he takes time when selecting a project and doesn't mind waiting for a long duration too.

"I am very selective about the work I do. I have been getting a lot of offers but I won't do anything until it has my heart. I first need to feel the character and the story and then I move ahead with it. I have the patience of a saint and I don't mind waiting for a good project, even if it means waiting for

a year or even more. My criteria has always been that I need to connect to the character. I have been getting calls for so many music videos but I don't want to do anything just for the sake of doing it. I give my best to whichever character I pick, be it a show on TV or OTT or a music video, and if it doesn't have my heart then I won't be able to perform it," he said.

His song "Jodaa" has garnered over 25 million views, and the "Yeh Hai Mohabbatein" actor said that he did it because he found the concept very interesting. He added, "When I heard the raw version of the song, I played it on repeat for 3-4 times and fell in love with it. I had never played a king before this. And a queen

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Malaika Arora

I wish Kareena Kapoor Khan watches 'Squad': Malvika Raaj

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Actress Malvika Raaj became famous for playing the younger version of Kareena Kapoor Khan's character 'Poo' in the film 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham'.

A grown-up Malvika is now back in Bollywood with the film 'Squad'. She says she wishes Kareena watches her debut film.

Malvika told reporter: "Since it is my first film as a leading lady, it would be such a joy for me if she watches the film and post about it on social media. I love her, and am a big fan. People still recall me as a young 'Poo' of 'K3G'. So I am wishing and keeping my fingers crossed if I see a post from Kareena on my film!" The film 'Squad' which is shot

in Belarus, revolves around saving a child and the tussle between two forces.

Asked if her popularity as a child actor helped her to get more film offers now, Malvika said, "No, I think I am starting from scratch because that was one side of me as a child actor people have seen. Now I am a grown-up, I look different, I am learning new skills in acting and working on my craft. This is also the first time I have tried my hand in action. So yes, a lot more to explore and this is just the beginning." Produced, directed and written by Nilesh Sahay, 'Squad' also features Rinzing Denzongpa, Pooja Batra, Mohan Kapur, Amit Gaur, Tanisha Dhillon, and Dishita Jain. 'Squad' releases on Friday on ZEE5.