

absolute india

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CENTRE ADVISES STATES TO FOLLOW FIVE-FOLD STRATEGY AMID OMICRON SCARE

Precautions, Curbs Implemented

The states have been advised to follow the five-fold strategy of Containment, Testing & Surveillance, Clinical Management, Covid Safe Behavior and Vaccination.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre on Thursday advised states and UTs to not let their guard down and maintain their preparedness in fight against Covid pandemic and to follow five-fold strategy in view of the new variant Omicron.

The states have been asked to put in place the local containment measures by the District and local administration when either the test positivity increases beyond 10 per cent or occupancy of oxygenated beds increases beyond 40 per cent.

On Containment, the states have been advised to impose night curfews and ensure strict regulation of large gatherings, especially ahead of the forthcoming festivities. The states need to have kept strict watch on number of Delta and Omicron cases in all districts, and case positivity on a day-on-day and week-on-week basis.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said that any restriction must be enforced for minimum of 14 days. As syndromes of Omicron variant closely mimic common cold with a higher rate of transmissibility and doubling time, syndromic approach for Covid containment can be employed.

The states have also been advised to increase bed capacity, ensure logistics like ambulances and enforce mechanism for seamless shifting of patients.

On the front of Covid Safe Behaviour, states have been asked to ensure advance engagement and information so that there is no misinformation or panic. The states have been asked to ensure 100 per cent coverage of left out first and second dose eligible beneficiaries in an accelerated manner and give special focus to those districts where the first and second dose coverage is less than the national average.



NIGHT CURFEW RETURNS IN MP

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday announced that night curfew will be brought back across the state from 11 pm to 5 am amid fears of a surge in Covid cases as Omicron cases rise across the country. Madhya Pradesh, however, hasn't registered any cases of the highly contagious Omicron variant yet.

MAHA CLAMPS CURBS ON CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Mumbai: Alarm bells sounded as Maharashtra recorded the highest spike of Omicron cases (23), so far, taking the state's tally to 88, the Maharashtra government on Thursday mandated simple celebrations during Christmas by following all Covid protocols and avoiding crowding both inside and outside religious venues.

- Devotees, going to churches for the midnight mass on December 24-25, shall be permitted only upto 50 per cent capacity of all churches with sanitisation, face masks, physical distancing to be mandatory.

- There will be fewer choir singers with adequate distancing and giving separate mikes, while no stalls and shops shall be allowed outside churches to ensure hygiene and cleanliness.

- No large gatherings, processions, rallies, fireworks or other programs that attract large crowds shall be allowed anywhere, and all shall be expected to follow the norms given by the local civic bodies or the district authorities.

YOUNG KIDS 3 TIMES MORE AT RISK OF COVID

London: Children aged 5 to 11 are three times more at risk of Covid infections as compared to the general population of England, according to a new study. The researchers, analysed data from 97,000 volunteers in England to examine national Covid-19 levels between November 23 and December 14. The results showed that infections decreased by 40 per cent or more in 12-17-year-olds and those aged 65 and above, reflecting the impact of the vaccination programme. At the same time, the cases increased in adults aged 18-54, and have remained relatively stable in primary school-aged children. The study showed that the prevalence in children aged 12 to 17 years more than halved from 5.35 per cent to 2.31 per cent. As of December 14, 76.6 per cent children at ages 12 to 17 years had received at least one vaccine dose.

Boosters will be norm 'every 6 months for many years'

Sydney: Wearing a mask and getting booster shots of Covid "every six months" may now become the new norm for many years to come, according to an Australian pharmacist. According to Trent Twomey, National President of the Pharmacy Guild, if modelling shows that it's best for people to get a Covid jab "every six months", then people should do so, Sky News reported. He predicted the need to wear a mask could remain "for a long time". "I think booster shots, just like your annual influenza shot (are) something we just need to accept, it's (Covid-19) not going to be with us for many weeks and months, it's going to be with us for many years," Twomey said, adding to remain "fully vaccinated" people will have to get "a periodic inoculation". Depending on the data that the researchers will get about the future of Covid, boosters could be needed once or twice a year, he said.

TWO KILLED IN LUDHIANA COURT EXPLOSION, 5 INJURED

A man, who is believed to be carrying explosives, was killed and five others were injured in a suspected IED blast in the district court complex in Ludhiana on Thursday. The state has been put on high alert after the blast. It is learnt that the Home Ministry has sought a report from the Punjab government on the incident.

Team Absolute | Chandigarh



At least two people were dead and five received injuries in an explosion in the district court complex of Ludhiana city in Punjab. The court complex is located close to the district Commissioner's office. The explosion took place in the washroom on the second floor at around 12.2 p.m., said the police. Not many people were present at the time of the explosion owing to strike by lawyers. One of the injured has been identified as advocate R.S. Mand. The area has been cordoned off by the police and the court premise was vacated. The intensity of the blast was so huge that it damaged nearby walls and shattered window glasses. Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Channi, who reached the spot to assess the situation along with Home Minister Sukhinder Randhawa and other Cabinet colleagues, told the media that such incidents have seen a rise after the government tightened its nose against the drug traffickers. Channi, also called it a 'conspiracy' by those trying to polarise the voters.

POSTPONE ASSEMBLY POLLS, ALLAHABAD HC TO GOVT

Team Absolute | Prayagraj

The Allahabad High Court has asked the government to consider postponing the upcoming Assembly elections by one or two months in light of the Covid-19 threat in the country. On Thursday, the number of Omicron cases in India crossed the 300 mark. The high court also asked the government to consider banning rallies and political gatherings ahead of the elections scheduled early next year in five states of the country and to take required steps to tackle the rising number of Covid-19 cases in the country. Political parties can campaign via TV and newspapers, the court said. Appealing to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Election Commission of India to postpone the elections, the Allahabad High Court bench said, "Jaan hai toh jahaan hai". These observations were made by Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav during a bail hearing. He noted that his court had 400 petitions listed before it for the day and several lawyers in the courtroom had failed to maintain social distancing and mask protocol during the same.

Air India wins dispute with passenger in English Court of Appeal

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a significant development for the aviation industry a bench of the English Court of Appeal, headed by the Master of the Rolls Sir Geoffrey Vos, has found in favour of Air India Ltd in a contested dispute with a passenger after a District Judge originally found against them. By winning its case, Air India has prevented a serious blow to the international airline industry, which is already suffering from the disruption caused by Covid-19. This is also one of the first cases where the English Courts have been asked to



determine EU law post-Brexit.

The dispute centered on the applicability of EU compensation regulations for a single booking, where only one leg of the booking - the only one within EU/UK jurisdiction - was delayed. In this case, the third leg of the passenger's flight departed from

Heathrow late, resulting in delays in her final arrival at her destination.

The Court of Appeal after a full hearing held in favour of Air India Ltd, stating that previous European Court of Justice case law reaffirmed the 'single-unit' principle for a multiple-leg journey made under the same booking.

DALIT COOK SACKED AFTER UPPER CASTE STUDENTS REFUSE TO EAT FOOD COOKED BY HER

Team Absolute | Dehradun

A Dalit woman who served mid-day meal at a government secondary school in Uttarakhand's Champawat district was allegedly removed from her job after upper caste students refused to eat the meal cooked by her. The incident occurred at a school in Sukhidhang in Champawat district.

A day after her appointment as the 'Bhojanmata' earlier this month, students stopped eating the meal cooked by her because of her caste and began bringing their food from home in tiffin boxes. Reportedly, out

of 66 students in the school 40 had refused to eat the meal prepared by her.

The parents of the students had objected to her appointment as 'Bhojanmata' when an upper caste woman had also been interviewed for the job. However, chief education officer of Champawat R.C. Purohit said her appointment had been canceled as it was found that the norms had not been followed in her appointment.

"Higher authorities had not cleared her appointment. Still she was given the job," he said. A temporary replacement for her has been found, he said.

Priyanka speaks to Rawat, leaders called to Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day after party veteran and Uttarakhand campaign committee chief Harish Rawat targeted the Congress for not giving him a "free hand", General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday spoke to the former Union Minister to pacify him, sources said.

The Congress has not declared Rawat as the chief ministerial candidate which is the prime demand of his supporters. Rawat is scheduled to meet former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Friday. Meanwhile, some leaders



-- Pradeep Tamta, Rajya Sabha MP, and Harish Dhami, an MLA, have come out in Rawat's support. The Uttarakhand Congress is mired with

RAWAT CLARIFIES HIS TWEETS

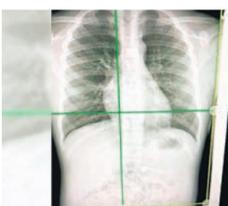
"My tweet is an everyday tweet, but after reading the newspaper today I felt it was something special because BJP and AAP party were affected by it and hence are giving big statements."

groupism with Preetam Singh leading a group while former state unit president Kishore Upadhyay has his own group, apart from the Rawat camp.

Rats chew up x-ray machine in Bihar hospital!

Team Absolute | Patna

After purportedly drinking of lakhs of litres of confiscated liquor, rats of Bihar have been blamed for an expensive diagnostic machine at a hospital in the state's Jahanabad district going kaput. The officials of the referral hospital at Makhdumpur claimed that rats have chewed through an x-ray machine worth Rs 22 lakh.



The incident came to light after opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal MLA Satish Kumar inspected the hospital on Thursday after he was informed that the machine was destroyed by rats.

"We have learnt that a large number of patients are being asked to do x-ray outside the hospital. Being a local MLA, I went there for the inspection of

the hospital. The medical superintendent of referral hospital Makhdumpur said that the x-ray machine is not functional as it was bitten through by rats," he said. Following the incident, the MLA demanded the arrest of the real "rats" or the "corrupt officials" of the hospital. Blaming rats for various things going missing or defunct is not a new thing. In fact, Bihar police and civil administrations of various districts had filed an affidavit before the court in May 2017, saying that lakh of litres of liquor, seized by police and kept at various police stations in Bihar, had been consumed by rats.

With all-time high placements, IIT-Hyderabad bets big on future

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

After completion of the first phase of campus placements, and waiting for the second phase to begin, the mood at Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IIT-H), is definitely upbeat. Despite the uncertainties of a world that is yet to come to terms with the Covid pandemic, the relatively young premier technology institute, garnered its highest place-



ments tally since its inception in 2008. In the first phase of campus placements that were held in the first week of December, IIT-H witnessed 466 offers, including 34 international offers,

made from 104 companies. The recruiters that made a beeline for IIT-H this year include Flipkart, Indeed, Infurnia, JP Morgan, Meesho, Microsoft NTT AT, Newzera, Silicon Labs,

Suzuki Motor Corp, TSMC, and Zomato. Compensation packages making the rounds in the first phase ranged from an average of Rs 23 lakh, to this year's highest annual package of Rs 65 lakh. While around 650 students have registered for placements across departments in 2021-22, a total of 210 companies have registered for participating in the campus placements. In comparison, only 195 companies had registered for the whole of 2020-21.

RS 2.15 CRORE PACKAGE FOR IIT ROORKEE STUDENT

New Delhi: A student of IIT (Roorkee) has bagged Rs 2.15 crore package per annum offer from a multinational firm in the placement drive. Three students of the institute have bagged annual cost offer of Rs 1.30 crore to Rs 1.8 crore from domestic companies. Around 1,243 students have bagged job offers in the placement drive that concluded on December 16. Eleven students of IIT (Roorkee) have bagged job offer of Rs 1 crore per annum. IIT Roorkee said that 281 companies had participated in campus placement drive which took place from December 1 to 16.



ED ATTACHES ASSETS OF BUSINESSMAN WHO DUPED BANK OF RS 112CR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it has provisionally attached movable and immovable assets worth Rs 100 crore belonging to a businessman Rebbha Satyanarayana and his family members in connection with a Rs 112 crore money laundering case.

The accused cheated the IDBI Bank by taking fraudulent fish tank KCC (Kisan Credit Card) loans. "We have attached the agriculture lands, fish ponds, commercial sites, plots and flats in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and bank balance," said an ED official. Earlier, a case against the accused was lodged by the federal probe agency CBI. The ED initiated its inquiry on the basis of the FIR of the CBI. Satyanarayana and others were accused of fraudulently availing KCC fish tank loans in the name of 143 benami borrowers from IDBI Bank, Rajahmundry Branch to the



tune of Rs 112.41 crore. The ED found during the probe that Satyanarayana was the aggregator and end-beneficiary of all the KCC loans sanctioned to the borrowers. "The said KCC Loan amounts were firstly transferred to the Borrowers' Savings Accounts (opened by Rebbha Satyanarayana in their name) and later on, most of the said loan amount was withdrawn in cash and handed over to him which he utilised for various things," said an

ED official. The official said that the accused utilised the funds for the repayment of earlier loans which he took in the name of other entities. He was controlling all the benami entities. The accused also purchased a lot of properties in the names of his relatives.

"Lastly, he invested in his import and export businesses. This business was being run by his relatives and others," said an ED official.

Fresh row erupts over demand to rename Hyderabad

Hyderabad | Agencies

A fresh row has erupted over the demand for renaming Hyderabad as 'Bhagyanagar' after a Central minister said that there should be no objection to the move. Union Minister of State for Railways, Raosaheb Danve, said on Wednesday that there should be no objection to rechristening Hyderabad as Bhagyanagar. He justified the demand after the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) referred Hyderabad as Bhagyanagar while announcing a three-day meeting here in the first week of January 2022. The meeting is planned to review the working of affiliated organisations and preparations for the upcoming Assembly elections scheduled to take place in five states early next year.

"The Samanvay Baithak (coordination meeting) of the chief functionaries of various organisations inspired by the RSS working in different areas of social life will be held from January 5-7 at Bhagyanagar, Telangana," the RSS had tweeted on December 21.

The tweet reignited the debate on the demand to rename Hyderabad. Several BJP leaders defended the demand and pointed out that they have been using Bhagyanagar for a long time. Ruling Telangana Rashtra

Samithi (TRS) leaders alleged that the BJP wants to do divisive politics by demanding the change of name of Hyderabad. "Hyderabad has Ganga Jamuni Tehzeeb, but BJP wants to disturb this by raking up such issues," said TRS leader K. Krishan. He alleged that the BJP is not bothered about development and only talks of changing the name of cities, dress or eating habits to do politics. He recalled that BJP had also raised the demand during the elections to Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) last year. While campaigning for GHMC polls, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had called for changing the name of Hyderabad. "Some people were asking me if Hyderabad can be renamed as Bhagyanagar. I said why not. I told them that we renamed Faizabad as Ayodhya and Allahabad as Prayagraj after the BJP came to power in Uttar Pradesh. Then why can't Hyderabad be renamed as Bhagyanagar," Yogi had asked. The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), a key political force in Hyderabad, is strongly opposed to the demand. AIMIM chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi has said that the entire generation of those who want to rename Hyderabad will end, but even then the city's name will not change.

World's largest fish at Vizag beach, guided back to sea

Visakhapatnam | Agencies

The world's largest fish, a whale shark, was washed ashore on a beach in Visakhapatnam but it was sent back to sea by the authorities with the help of fishermen and animal conservationists, an official said.

An Andhra Pradesh forest department official said a group of local fishermen on December 18 rescued a shark trapped in a shore fishing net at Tantadi beach in Visakhapatnam.

Visakhapatnam District Forest Officer (DFO) Anant Shankar, said the whale shark was guided back to the sea by the forest department officials, fishermen and wildlife conservationists.

It was on the evening of December 18 that some fishermen noticed a large fish being washed ashore on the beach. They immediately alerted the people around



and tried to push it back towards the sea. They sought the help of a wildlife volunteer who was near the location. He then immediately brought it to the attention of forest officials and wildlife conservationists. According to DFO, the whale shark with dotted patterns is the largest fish in the world and it is an endangered species. The official said sending back the 2-tonne fish back to the sea was a Herculean task but he was happy that they finally succeeded in their efforts. The authorities will share the shark's pictures with the Maldives Whale shark

research programme for identification. The official said this would help understand the movements and territories of this species.

Anant Shankar said they advised the fishermen to approach the forest department for rescue and safe release directly in such an eventuality. He said they would take measures to speed up the process of rescue as time will be crucial in such situations. The DFO assured that fishermen will be given compensation in case of any damages to their fishing nets in case the whale sharks get entangled.

TN govt grants one month parole to Rajiv Gandhi assassination convict Nalini

Chennai | Agencies

The Tamil Nadu government on Thursday granted one-month parole to Nalini Sriharan, one of the seven convicts in the assassination case of former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi.

The parole came after repeated requests from her ailing mother Padma.

State Special Public Prosecutor, Hassan Mohammed Jinnah informed the Madras High Court on Thursday that the state government has granted one month ordinary parole to Nalini who was lodged in Vellore Special Prison for Women.

His response came as Padma's petition for parole of her daughter came up before a bench of Justices P.N. Prakash and R. Hemalatha. Recording the submission of the Special Public Prosecutor, the division bench closed the petition of Padma, according to her lawyer, M. Radhakrishnan.

Nalini will be staying at a rented accommodation at Satuvachery in



Vellore under tight police security with her mother Padma, her sister Kalyani and her brother Bakianathan just like she did while she got parole in 2019.

The Tamil Nadu cabinet had in 2018 recommended the release of

Nalini and her fellow convicts but the Governor did not clear the file. She and other convicts in Rajiv Gandhi assassination case have filed a petition in Madras High Court to release them without the consent of the Governor and it is

also pending before the court. Nalini, along with her husband Sriharan, who is a Sri Lankan national, has been under imprisonment three weeks after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi on May 21, 1991, at Sriperumbudur.

SHIV SENA TO CONTEST UP POLLS TO DEFEAT BJP

Lucknow | Agencies

The Shiv Sena has announced that it will contest the upcoming assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh with the intentions to defeat BJP. "The Shiv Sena will field strong candidates against all BJP ministers to ensure their defeat," said the state Sena secretary Vishvajeet Singh.

He said that a decision to this effect had been taken at a meeting of party leaders held here on Thursday and presided over by state president Anil Singh.

The Sena state president said that the BJP, which claims to be a pro-Hindu government, had demolished scores of temples in Ayodhya, Varanasi, Mirzapur and other districts in the name of development.

"The state government has proved to be a failure in health, education and law and order. The government has failed to generate employment and now its leaders and bureaucrats are involved in land scam in



Ayodhya. What kind of Hindutva is this?" Anil Singh asked. He further said that Shiv Sena would elicit the

support of other Hindu outfits for the elections. A meeting with these outfits would be held next week under

the leadership of Hindu Mahasabha chief Chakrapani Maharaj to decide the poll strategy.

Saint Anthony statue vandalised in Karnataka

Chikkaballapur | Agencies

At a time when the BJP is bringing Anti-Conversion bill in the assembly, some unidentified men on Thursday vandalized the statue of Saint Anthony in Chikkaballapur district of Karnataka.

The incident took place in Susepalya village in Chikkaballapur taluk. The miscreants have broken the hand and damaged the statue installed near Rangadhamaiah Lakebund area.

About 80 Christian families live in the area and the incident has caused panic among them about their security. Father Anthony Daniel has lodged a complaint in this regard with Chikkaballapur Rural police station.

The police have rushed to the spot and took the statue into custody. They have also recorded statements of the locals and began investigation to nab the miscreants.

Meanwhile, the opposition has attacked the BJP government saying that its statements and decisions to encourage moral policing in



the state are leading to attacks on minorities and encouraging such incidents.

Modi appeals to farmers to adopt natural farming

Varanasi (UP) | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday once again appealed to farmers to adopt natural farming and also called for strengthening the dairy sector.

The Prime Minister, who was in Varanasi to inaugurate the Banas Dairy Kashi Sankul at Karkhiyaon, said that natural farming required less inputs, gave better output and was more beneficial because it earned higher returns. "This method will make farming 'atmanirbhar'. Those working in startups should also explore possibilities for this," he stated.

Talking about the dairy sector, he said that the cow is our mother and held in high esteem. Those who ridicule this concept should know that India produces milk worth Rs 8.5 lakh crore every



year which is more than the production of wheat or rice.

He said that in villages, cows were a sign of prosperity. "We need to strengthen the dairy sector. The Banas Kashi Sankul will benefit dairy farmers from several adjoining districts. The dairy plant will also have a bio-gas plant that will take care of its power needs. The dairy farmers will now be able to sell cow dung for the bio-gas plant at a good price," he said. The Prime Minister said that milk com-

mittees and collection centres would be set up and certification of purity would also be done. "Now the sweets of Banaras will taste sweeter - whether it is lassi or chhena sweets or 'malaiyo' in winter. The dairy plant will enhance the taste of Banaras," he added. He will also inaugurate and lay the foundation of 22 other projects, he Prime Minister was in Varanasi earlier on December 13 to unveil the Kashi Vishwanath Dham Corridor project.

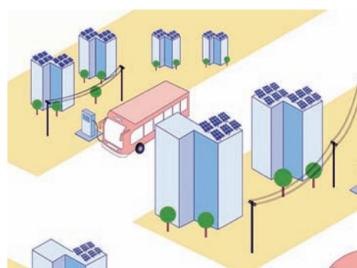
EV charging stations with rooftop solar more economical: Report

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Bengaluru

Aiming to demonstrate the concept of using a clean source of energy (solar) for charging Electric Vehicles (EVs), a new report has shown that electric vehicle charging stations (EVCSs) with solar rooftop photovoltaic (SRTPV) facility are economically more viable than those with grid.

"The mismatch between solar energy generation and consumption (from charging) can be solved by deploying net-metering at charging stations. Among the scenarios considered, an EVCS connected to RTPV under net-metering policy represents the best-case scenario with the least LCOC," the report by the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy's (CSTP's) said.

The report is based on the CSTP's system design for the pilot project at the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (BESCOM) Corporate Office premises consisting of a power conversion unit (PCU), solar rooftop photovoltaic (SRTPV) panels, a lithium-ion battery bank, and an EV charger as the main components.



The project showcases an intelligent bi-directional converter (PCU) that interfaces with SRTPV and battery systems (with DC coupling) to manage the energy flow with EV chargers and the grid. "An intelligent computing unit in the PCU commands the energy flow across these components to maximise the generated solar energy for self-consumption," the study said.

This is necessary in view of the facts that Indian cities top the charts every year for worst air quality in the world. Studies have established

that the transport sector is a major contributor (40-80 per cent) to air pollution in the cities. Hence, decarbonising the transport sector with the deployment of electric vehicles (EVs) is a crucial step in mitigating air pollution.

Government too has been pushing EVs and, of course, as part of its proposed action plan to combat climate change promised to have 450 GW of solar power among other renewables.

The report highlighted the need for prioritisation of solar energy for local consumption before feeding it to the grid and said: "The deployment of a novel charging algorithm where the EV charging load is made to follow the solar energy generation profile. Such a method reduces the need for a costly battery energy storage system (BESS)." A battery storage capacity equal to 40 kWh was considered in the analysis, which stored approximately 16 per cent of the total daily solar energy (on average) generated. The costs of upstream electricity for grid only, PV only, and PV plus BESS are Rs 5, Rs 4.6, and Rs 8.9 per unit, respectively. "Including a BESS increased the cost of PV+storage system electricity by Rs 5.3/kWh."



NO PANCHAYAT POLLS WITHOUT RESERVATION FOR OBC, RESOLUTION PASSED IN ASSEMBLY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

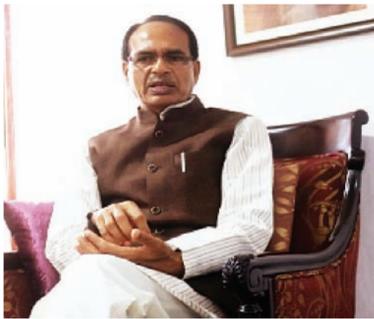
The panchayat elections in Madhya Pradesh will not be conducted without reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs), as per a resolution passed in the state Assembly on Thursday.

During the discussion on the fourth day of the winter session of the Assembly, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan put forth a proposal that the state panchayat elections, scheduled between January 6 and February 16, 2022, will not be conducted without reservation for OBCs seats.

Chouhan made this statement soon after the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Kamal Nath urged the state government to make a clear announcement on panchayat elections, alleging that state election commission has been issuing different notifications creating confusions.

Responding to it, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who is also Leader of the House, said that the government has decided not to conduct panchayat elections in the state without reservation for OBCs. Subsequently, a unanimous resolution was passed from the Assembly on Thursday.

Chouhan also told the Assembly that the Madhya Pradesh government, along with the Centre has filed a review petition in the Supreme Court on Wednesday. "As I had clearly said that the Madhya



Pradesh government is discussing the issue with the Centre. On Wednesday, a review petition has been filed in the Supreme Court. Today, the advocate representing the state government will urge the court to give a date for urgent hearing on this matter," he added.

The apex court on December 17 had stayed polling on all OBC-reserved seats, stating that the ruling follows a similar order by the apex court for the Maharashtra municipal elections. The Court has directed the state election commission to

merge all seats reserved for OBCs and to issue a fresh notification.

"You (Election Commission) cannot disobey court's direction on the pressure of the political parties. Don't try to play with fire. The role of the Election Commission has been responsible. We do not want to see a new system in Madhya Pradesh, follow the same decision passed for Maharashtra. If you not follow the decision, we will be forced to cancel panchayat elections in Madhya Pradesh," the apex court had stated on December 17.

The apex court had passed the order while hearing a plea challenging the Madhya Pradesh High Court order that accepted an application challenging the validity of the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj and Gram Swaraj (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021 related to reservation and delimitation in MP but refused to stay the elections to the panchayat polls.

The ordinance promulgated on November 21 by the state government had annulled the last rotation on reservation, and decided that the elections would be conducted as per the delimitation and rotation exercise carried out in 2014 by the then BJP government. Reserved seats are rotated among SCs, STs and women every five years, and the last time this happened was in 2019, when the Nath-led Congress government was in power for 15 months.

Find each and every person and administer corona vaccine: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that the administration of the second dose of vaccine should pick up. No eligible person should be left out from the second dose of corona vaccine. Chouhan was addressing the review meeting of corona infection control and vaccination at Mantralaya on Thursday.

Chouhan said that the officers in-charge of the districts where the rate of corona vaccination has decreased, should ensure to work on this with special attention. Vaccination is our top priority. Find each and every person and vaccinate. The campaign should continue without break. Do not be negligent in this work.

Chouhan has said that in the first phase, a preventive campaign should be started.



Encourage those who do not wear masks to wear masks. Social distancing and other precautions should also be taken. He said there should be Roko Toko for mask and the citizens should be motivated to get both doses of vaccine. At the same time, it should be ensured that only those who get both the doses go to places like New Year's

festival, gym, cinema hall etc. Chouhan said that the government employees should also be motivated to get the vaccine. Salary should not be given without vaccination. Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang, Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains, Additional Chief Secretary Health Mohammad Suleman etc were present.

MP lost 85 tigers in past four years: Govt

Team Absolute | Bhopal

As many as 85 tigers, including 32 cubs, have died in the past four years due to various reasons in wildlife habitats of Madhya Pradesh, the government has informed the state Assembly.

State forest minister Kunwar Vijay Shah gave this information in a written reply to a question by Congress legislator from Jabalpur (East) Lakhan Ghanghoriya.

The Congress MLA had sought to know how many tigers died in the state in four years from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

The MLA had also sought information about how many big cats had escaped from various reserves, to which Shah said that the movement of the tigers through various forest



corridors is a natural process in search for food, partners, better habitat and new territory. "State government spent Rs 28,306.70 lakh on the conservation, security and monitoring of the big cats during 2018-19, while this amount was Rs 22,049.98 lakh in 2019-20. In 2020-21 and 2021-22, Rs 26,427.86 lakh and Rs 12,882.82 lakh have been spent on this work respectively," Minister told the house. The National Tiger

Conservation Authority (NTCA) reports suggested that a total 202 tigers were reported to have died between 2012 and 2020 in Madhya Pradesh. The data available on the NTCA website said that 38 tigers died in the state between January and December this year so far. Madhya Pradesh had regained the tag of tiger state in the 2018 census for being home to 526 big cats, two more than Karnataka.

BJP, CONG SPAR OVER OBC RESERVATION IN ASSEMBLY

A war of words broke out between the ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress in the State Assembly on Thursday after former chief minister and the Leader of Opposition Kamal Nath accused the state Election Commission of issuing confusing notifications regarding the reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Panchayat elections in the state.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

As the proceedings of the Assembly began, Nath raised the OBC reservation issue and asked the government to clear its stance. "Ever since the Supreme Court's order came, the state election commission has been issuing different notifications at different times which are creating confusion. I would request the government to clear its stand on the OBC reservation issue," Nath said.

In response, state Home Minister Narottam Mishra, who is also Parliamentary Affairs Minister,



said that the government has filed a petition in the Supreme Court and a date for hearing on the matter will be fixed by the court soon. After Mishra's statement, MLAs of the Congress accused the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government of being anti-OBC. This led to a chaos prompting Speaker Girish Gautam to adjourn the Assembly for 15 minutes.

Since the first day of the winter session of the Assembly (December 20), both the ruling (BJP) and the Opposition (Congress) have been accus-

ing each other of being anti-OBC. Earlier on Tuesday, Chouhan had stated that the state government should explore legal options against the Supreme Court's December 17 order that stayed polling on all OBC-reserved seats. The ruling follows a similar order by the apex court for the Maharashtra municipal elections. Chouhan and Nath were arguing over the apex court staying the election on seats reserved for OBC candidates and directed the state election commission to re-notify these as general seats. The top court passed the order while hearing a plea challenging the Madhya Pradesh High Court's order that accepted an application challenging the validity of the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj and Gram Swaraj (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021 related to reservation and delimitation in MP but refused to stay the elections to the Panchayat polls. The ordinance promulgated on November 21 by the state government had annulled the last rotation on reservation, and decided that the elections would be conducted as per the delimitation and rotation exercise carried out in 2014 by the then BJP government. Reserved seats are rotated among SCs, STs and women every five years, and the last time this happened was in 2019, when the Nath-led Congress government was in power for 15 months.

CM releases book titled "1857 Ki Kranti Aur Neemuch"

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Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday released the book "1857 Ki Kranti Aur Neemuch" (Revolution of Eighteen Hundred and Fifty Seven and Neemuch) in the Chief Minister's auditorium in the Vidhan Sabha.

According to Madhya Pradesh Sahitya Academy Director Dr. Vikas Dave, the book written by Dr. Surendra Shaktawat is an important document of regional history. The revolutionaries of Neemuch played a special role in the first freedom struggle of 1857. The first revolution in Madhya Pradesh was initiated by Mohammad Ali Beg on June 3, 1857 from the red soil of Neemuch. Krantiveer Ali Beg took the victory flag from Neemuch and reached Agra via Chittoor, Banera, Nasirabad, Deoli,



where he conquered the British. In the present book, the author has made an attempt to expose the reality of the self-evident English justice through the fire incident of Bhumiyi Khedi, a symbol of the cruelty of the British, the murder of the innocent Patel Tarachand of Nimbahera and the hanging of Tatyra and proved that Neemuch's revolution was not only a military rebellion, but a mass revolution, in which the participation of the local population was also there. The author of the book

Dr. Surendra Shaktawat is the convener of Itihasa Sanklan Samiti, Neemuch and a member of the Neemuch District Archaeological Association. Shri Shaktawat is the principal of Balkavi Bairagi Mahavidyalaya, Kanavati. Dr. Shaktawat has written books like Gram Gatha Pipliya Raoji, Itihasa Ki Nazar Me Neemuch Jile Ke Swatantrata Senani, Malwa Ka Loknatya Mach and other books including Malwa Ki Chitrakala etc written in collaboration with Dr. Shailendra Kumar Sharma.

CM PLANTED SAPTAPARNI AND KADAMBA SAPPLINGS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Saptaparni and Kadamba saplings along with representatives of Dishanjali Education and Welfare Society at Smart Garden today. Along with Chouhan, Ankit Singh, Soumya Goyal, Shri Vikas Saxena and Ajay Kumar Patidar of the society planted saplings.

Chouhan is continuously motivating the general public for tree plantation. Chief Minister Chouhan plants trees every day with social organisations, voluntary organisations and people working in the field of environment protection with the aim of making tree plantation a mass movement to protect from the dangers of global warming. Dishanjali Education and Welfare Society has been working for the last seven years for education, social awareness, tree plantation, economic upliftment and to provide various facilities to the



people of the lower strata of the society. Chouhan called upon the representatives of the organisation to run

an awareness campaign in view of the possibilities of third wave of corona. Chouhan said that it is necessary

to constantly motivate people to adopt the practice of using masks and maintaining social distance along with getting immunized. The organisation helped in keeping the needy children connected with education when schools were closed during the corona period. Due to the efforts of the organisation, many children were successful in getting admission in Navodaya and Excellent schools. Food, water and other necessary materials were provided by the organisation to the needy people during the corona period. So far, the organisation has also succeeded in planting more than two thousand trees organically. Saptaparni plant is an evergreen medicinal tree, which has great importance in Ayurveda. It is used in the manufacture of various medicines. Kadamba is a flowering tree. Its leaves are like mahua leaves and fruits are round like lemon. It is important to increase greenery and from an environmental point of view.

MP Assembly clears Bill that seeks to recover property damages from protesters

If the Governor gives assent to the Bill, Madhya Pradesh will become the third BJP-ruled State in the country after Uttar Pradesh and

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The Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Thursday passed a Bill that provides for recovery of losses from the people and organisations responsible for damaging public and private properties during protests.

The Assembly passed the Madhya Pradesh Damage to Public and Private Property Recovery Bill, 2021 without any debate and amid a walkout staged by the members of the opposition Congress, who complained that their leader Kamal Nath did not get a chance to speak on the resolution related to the OBC reservation that was passed in the House earlier.

If the Governor gives assent to the Bill, Madhya Pradesh will become the third BJP-ruled State in the country after Uttar Pradesh and Haryana to have this kind of law.

MP Legislative Affairs Minister Narottam Mishra presented the Bill in the Assembly, but due to the ruckus by the Opposition members, it was cleared by a voice vote without any debate.

Talking to reporters outside the House after the proceedings, Mishra said, "The Bill has been passed." Apart from that 1971.94 crore supplementary budget for 2021-22 was also passed, he said.



The Bill provides recovery of losses from people and organisations responsible for damaging public and private property during protests.

As per the Bill, during a trial, once the prosecution succeeds in proving that a public property was damaged in direct actions called by an organisation in which the accused also participated, the court can draw a presumption that the accused is guilty of destroying public property too. The onus of proving innocence will be on him or her from this stage of trial onwards. It will be open for the accused to rebut such presumption. Abetment of offence shall carry the same penalty as the main offence, the Bill said.

On December 16, a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had cleared the Bill.

The Bill focuses on those indulging in communal riots, hartals (general strikes), protests and those who take out rallies during which property is damaged, and such accused will be tried before criminal tribunals, Mr. Mishra had said earlier.

Under the UP law, Claim Tribunals set up under the Act are supposed to decide matters in one year, while the M.P. Bill reduces this time to three months, an official said. The Bill also proposes a provision that "specified categories" of leaders of the organisation which gave the call for direct action resulting in damage to public property shall be deemed guilty of abetment.

At the same time, no innocent person, in spite of being a leader of the organisation, shall be made to suffer for the actions of others, the Bill said. The principles of absolute liability shall apply once the nexus with the event that precipitated the damage is established, the Bill stated. The liability will be borne by the actual perpetrators of the crime as well as organisers of the event.

"Exemplary damages" may be awarded to an extent not greater than twice the amount of the damages liable to be paid, the Bill said.

Last year, the UP Government came out with an ordinance titled "Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damages to Public and Private Property Act 2020" which was cleared by its Assembly in March 2021. The ordinance was issued in the midst of protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). In May 2021, the BJP Government in Haryana followed the suit with the enactment of The Haryana Recovery of Damages to Property During Disturbance to Public Order Act, 2021. In January this year, the MP Chief Minister had said that a law was needed to deal with incidents of stone-pelting after violence was reported during processions taken out in western MP to collect funds for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Revenue Minister Tops List Of MP Electricity Bill Defaulters

The list also includes the name of his elder brother Gulab Singh Rajput, Collector's Bungalow, SP Office, CEO of Cantt including doctors, actors, social workers and colonizers.

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Madhya Pradesh Revenue and Transport Minister Govind Singh Rajput has topped the list of electricity bill defaulters issued by the state electricity department.

The list also includes the name of his elder brother Gulab Singh Rajput, Collector's Bungalow, SP Office, CEO of Cantt including doctors, actors, social workers and colonizers.

According to the Electricity Department, Rajput has topped the list, as a sum of Rs 84,388 is outstanding against him.

Gulab Singh has ranked fifth on the list. An outstanding amount of Rs 34,667 has been placed against him.

As per the Electricity Department, Collector's Bungalow has an amount of Rs 11,445, CEO of Cantt has an amount of Rs 24,700, Vakilchand Gupta has to pay Rs 40,209, Office of Superintendent of Police

(SP) has a debt of Rs 23,428, Suryansh Sushil Tiwari has Rs 27,073, and office of SAF 16 Battalion has to pay Rs 18,650 are on the list of defaulters.

The Electricity Department has also informed the defaulters through SMS to pay the bills.

Along with this, a request has been made to deposit the outstanding amount at the earliest. The department is trying to get the outstanding amount as soon as possible. Now the department can cut the connection.

Regarding the electricity bill recovery, SK Sinha, Engineer of the Electricity Department, said that there are 91,000 consumers in the Sagar Nagar division, out of which 67,000 have paid bill.

"Calls are being made to the remaining consumers. SMS and notices are being sent requesting to pay the bill. If the bill is not paid, action will be taken," said Sinha.

Meanwhile, Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh appealed to the consumers to submit their bills immediately.

"I appeal to those consumers who are capable to pay their bills immediately in the public interest and if they do not, then surely the government will do its work. Those who are capable and if they do not pay their bills, then their electricity connections will also be cut. No one is above the law, whether it's me Energy Minister. Laws are the same for everyone," he added.



EDITOR'S SPECS

DELTA VS OMICRON

People infected with the Omicron variant of Covid are 15 per cent less likely to attend hospital, and 40 per cent less likely to be hospitalised for a night or more, compared to Delta, according to a new study. The new report estimates hospitalisation risk for Omicron cases in England. It includes all PCR-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 cases in England between December 1 and 14, where the variant causing infection could be identified from genetic data or via S gene target failure (SGTF). The data set included 56,000 cases of Omicron and 269,000 cases of Delta. The estimates suggest that Omicron cases have, on average, a 15-20 per cent reduced risk of any hospitalisation and an approximately 40-45 per cent reduced risk of a hospitalisation resulting in a stay of one or more nights. The estimates also suggest that individuals who have received at least two doses of either AstraZeneca, Pfizer or Moderna vaccines have substantially reduced risk of hospitalisation compared with primary infections with Delta in unvaccinated individuals, even if protection against infection has been largely lost against the Omicron variant. Further, reinfection is associated with approximately a 50-60 per cent reduction in hospitalisation risk compared with primary infections. However, after adjusting estimates to account for only one in three reinfections being identified, the estimated difference in intrinsic hospitalisation risk (that is, defined for primary infections in unvaccinated people) between Delta and Omicron is reduced (that is, 0-30 per cent reduced risk of any hospitalisation) but the estimated reduction in risk of hospitalisation due to previous infection is increased (around 55-70 per cent reduction). The researchers said it is essential to place the severity of Omicron in the context of reinfection risk in countries, like England and South Africa, where a large proportion of the population may have already been infected.

MEET THE REAL 'HEROES' OF 1983 WHO CHANGED THE FORTUNES OF CRICKET IN INDIA

Chetan Sharma

It has been almost four decades since the 1983 World Cup, but even today the historic final between India and West Indies continues to hold a special place in the hearts of Indian cricket fans.

Kapil Dev's running catch to dismiss Sir Viv Richards is still etched in the memories of the generation that cheered India through the nail-biter of a final at Lord's on June 25, 1983.

The victory was important in many ways. It scripted a new era for Indian cricket. Up against Clive Lloyd's mighty West Indies side and with just 183 runs to defend, Kapil's Devils did the impossible by delivering a memorable performance to lift the prestigious trophy.

Why was beating the West Indies no joke back then?

During '80s, the West Indies were an invincible side and they were title contenders whenever they used to take part in any World Championships. In that period, even the best batters of the world would be wary of facing the deadly West Indies bowlers, who used to play with real aggression.

They won the 1975 and 1979 World Cups and their domination made teams believe that there is one West Indies and then there are the rest of the sides in the world.

The 1983 World Cup was expected to follow similar lines, with the Windies eyeing a hat-trick of titles. But on June 25, the Kapil Dev-led side scripted history and convincingly compelled the rest of the world to believe that teams from Asia can lay their hands on the trophy as well.

After the historic feat, the Indian cricket team have won two more world titles till date - the 2007 World T20 and the 2011 ODI World Cup - but what Kapil Dev's team achieved in England towers over all else.

Now, the much-awaited movie '83' starring Ranveer Singh and others is all set to be released on Friday. To celebrate the occasion, IANS revisits the 1983 World Cup heroes to find out what they are doing now.

Kapil Dev: He was the captain of the Indian team in 1982-87 and led India to the historic World Cup win. He took that brilliant catch running backwards to dismiss the dangerous-looking Sir Viv Richards in that tournament. The Haryana Hurricane kept playing international cricket till 1994, notching up 434 Test wickets in 131 Test matches,



a record broken in 2000 by Courtney Walsh. Later, he served as an India coach. Now he is associated with a TV news channel as a cricket expert and is also a professional golfer. He also has invested in a few restaurants.

Sunil Gavaskar: The '83 World Cup might not have been his best outing, but the expertise of the living legend did help the team in their campaign to bring home the trophy. After retiring in 1987, he has served as the vice-president of the Mumbai Cricket Association, BCCI interim president, and Chairman of the ICC cricket committee. Today, Gavaskar is counted among the world's finest cricket commentators. Gavaskar is also a director at the Professional Management Group (PMG).

Mohinder 'Jimmy' Amarnath: He was the vice-captain of the World Cup-winning team in 1983 and Man of the Match in both the finals and semi-finals. He picked up three wickets for 12 runs and also scored a crucial 26 in the finals. He later presented a weekly cricket coaching programme on television in the early '90s, 'Cricket with Mohinder Amarnath'. Now based out of Goa, Amarnath is a cricket analyst for various news channels.

Krishnamachari Srikkanth: The explosive opener scored the highest (38 runs) in the

low-scoring 1983 World Cup final. And he played some good knocks throughout that World Cup. After he hung up his bat in competitive cricket, he coached India A, served as chief India selector, later was an IPL mentor and was also seen commenting on the TNPL. He also penned newspaper columns during IPL 2018 and is running his own business at present.

Balwinder Sandhu: The Mumbai-born pacer had dismissed opener Gordon Greenidge, who was a player of repute in ODIs. He also scored 11 runs and took two wickets in the summit clash. He coached the Mumbai team in the '90s but was later out of the limelight till the '83' team took him on board to coach the actors.

Madan Lal: He took the crucial wickets of Desmond Haynes, Sir Viv Richards and Larry Gomes in the historic final. Following retirement, he coached the UAE team and even the Indian national team for a while. At present, he is a cricket analyst on TV channels and runs a cricket academy at the Siri Fort Sports Complex, New Delhi.

Syed Kirmani: He bagged the award for the best wicket keeper in the 1983 Cricket World Cup and is considered to be one of the best glove-men to have played for India. He starred in the 1985

Bollywood film, 'Kabhi Ajabhi The'. He also received the 2015 Col C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award.

Yashpal Sharma: He was a middle-order batter and also scored the second highest number of runs in the 1983 World Cup. Post-retirement, he became the chief selector for Team India. In 2014, he was appointed head of Delhi's cricket advisory committee. He passed away earlier this year in July.

Kirti Azad: He was a batter in the 1983 World Cup team and retired from all forms of cricket in 1986. Thereafter, he followed in the footsteps of his father, former Union minister and chief minister of Bihar, Bhagwat Jha Azad, and entered politics. He has served as a Lok Sabha member and recently joined the Trinamool Congress after quitting the Indian National Congress.

Roger Binny: He was an all-rounder who impressed everyone with his bowling performance in the 1983 Cricket World Cup. He also took the highest number of wickets in that tournament. He is at present serving as an office-bearer at the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA).

Ravi Shastri: He was an all-rounder. Later, he became the director of Indian national cricket team in 2014 and later served as its head coach until recently, when Rahul Dravid was given the position.

Dilip Vengsarkar: He was a batter and took over the captaincy from Kapil Dev after the 1987 Cricket World Cup. He runs three cricket academies, two in Mumbai and one in Pune. These academies give cricket training for free to selected players.

Sandeep Patil: He was also a batter in the 1983 World Cup-winning squad. He was subsequently offered a role in the musical romantic drama, 'Kabhi Ajabhi The' (1985), which also featured Syed Kirmani and Sachin Tendulkar in a bit role. He coached Team India and the 'A' team. He also served as the Kenyan team's coach for a while and was the chairman of selectors in the BCCI.

Sunil Valson: He was the only player in the squad who did not play a single match in the 1983 World Cup. In recent times, he has served as team manager of the Delhi Capitals IPL team. P.R. Man Singh: He was the team manager and an integral part of the World Cup victory in 1983. He was the only official to accompany the team to England.

international

ISRAEL'S ACTIONS UNDERMINE TWO-STATE SOLUTION: PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT

Ramallah | Agencies

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told a senior US official that Israel's unilateral actions in the Palestinian territories undermine the world-backed two-state solution, a Palestinian news agency said. Abbas made the remarks during a meeting with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Xinhua reported citing Palestinian news agency Wafa. On Tuesday, Sullivan arrived in Israel to discuss several issues with both Israeli and Palestinian officials, including the revival of the Middle East peace process which has been stalled since 2014. According to Wafa, Abbas urged Sullivan to exert pressure on Israel to stop its actions against the Palestinians, implement the signed agreements and launch a real political process in accordance with the legitimate international resolutions. Abbas, who briefed Sullivan on the latest Israeli actions in the Palestinian territories, called for ending both the Jewish settlement and the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territories including East Jerusalem



since 1967. The Palestinian president also asked Sullivan to urge Israel to respect the historical situation in the Old City of East Jerusalem, stop the expulsion of Palestinian residents from the city, halt tax revenue cuts, and stop stifling the Palestinian economy. Meanwhile, Sullivan told

Abbas that the US is committed to the two-state solution and the importance of all parties working jointly to move forward to achieve peace and stability in the region. On Tuesday, Abbas also met with US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Yael Lambert in the West Bank city of Ramallah. Abbas briefed Lambert over the latest developments in the Palestinian territories, mainly the unilateral Israeli practices against the Palestinians that undermine the two-state solution, Wafa reported. The last direct peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, sponsored by the US, lasted nine months and broke down in 2014 over their deep differences on the issues of borders, security, and settlement. Since then, there have been no diplomatic ties between Israel and Palestinian because of the Palestinian rejection of the Israeli expansion of settlements and Israeli measures against the Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

The Palestinians want to establish an independent state alongside Israel on all the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, including the entire West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

3 bodies retrieved after landslide in northern Myanmar

Yangon | Agencies

Three bodies had been recovered as of Thursday morning after a landslide hit Myanmar's Kachin state on Wednesday, according to a statement of the Fire Services Department.

All three recovered bodies were identified as males, the statement said.

Due to the collapse of tailings from a height of 60 metres, the miners were swept into a lake at a jade mining site in Thar Yar Kone village in Hpakan township at around 4 a.m. local time on Wednesday, Xinhua news agency reported. "According to witnesses at the scene, the landslide left over 80 people missing and the rescue operation is being carried out," U



Kyaw Min, an official of a village administration office, said. The police said on Wednesday that there is no data about the exact number of missing jade scavengers. Many locals make their living by jade scavenging in the

region and most of the landslides are caused by partial collapse of tailing heaps and dams. A major fatal landslide occurred at a jade mining site in Hpakan township in July last year, which left 174 people dead and 54 injured.

BALOCHISTAN ACCUSED MADE TO FACE TRIAL BY FIRE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A video showing two young men walking barefoot on hot embers to prove their innocence has gone viral on social media in Pakistan. The footage is from Sanjawi tehsil, Ziarat district in Balochistan province and the two men appear to have been accused of stealing equipment, Friday Times reported. Authorities in the district have started an investigation into the incident. According to Assistant Commissioner of Sanjawi, Hassan Anwar, this event took place five days ago in Sira Khezi area near Sanjawi, about 60 km from Ziarat. The two parties who organised this extraordinary ritual are described as having reached 'mutual consensus' to resolve their dispute in this manner, the report said. One of the men subjected to the ordeal, Gul Zaman, claims that two weeks earlier, some tractors, batteries and generators were stolen from his employers.

When he informed the owners, they instead accused Gul Zaman and another

employee Mohammad Raza of the theft, while also inflicting violence on them.

The two men were told that the only way to prove their innocence was to walk across hot embers barefoot, the report said. The video shows the two men taking turns to walk across a pit, some 10 to 12 ft long, filled with hot embers. Having succeeded in walking across it, they were apparently acquitted: since those present believed that there were no burns or blisters on their feet. Video footage shows them being embraced and garlanded after their ordeal, the report added. Such a ritualised trial by fire includes an invocation of the Holy Quran and the hot embers are 'asked' not to burn the feet of those who are innocent. If a person undergoing the trial gets blistered feet from the ordeal, they are considered guilty of the crime that they stood accused of. Making their way across the pit 'unharmed' leads to a verdict of innocence, the report said. The man who organised the ritual, a local named Saifuddin, claims that this

event was necessary to avoid violence between the two parties to the dispute. Whereas the owners of the stolen equipment wanted to register a case for theft against the two men, the latter themselves wanted to sue for detention and kidnap. Saifuddin claims that he organised the ordeal after local authorities including the Levies force did not help with resolving the dispute. He also claims to have informed the district administration as well as the Levies that he was about to proceed with the ritual - without objections from these quarters. In Saifuddin's version of events, he was asked by both parties to the dispute to resolve it in a traditional 'tribal' manner. The Levies police have denied involvement, rejecting claims that the rival cases were brought to them or that their permission was sought in organising the ritual. Moreover, the Assistant Commissioner of Sanjawi also took the view that the district administration were not informed of the jirga which decided upon this ordeal for the two men, the report said.

US Spl Coordinator will contribute towards improving situation in Tibet: Dalai Lama

Dharamsala | Agencies

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama has written to Uzra Zeya to congratulate her on being appointed the US' Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. He expressed the hope that she will be able to contribute significantly towards improving the situation of the Tibetan people.

"As I have had the opportunity to express to successive American leaders," he wrote in the letter, "a continued and consistent American support has been a source of great encouragement to Tibetans in our peaceful struggle for freedom and dignity. Although I have handed over political authority to an elected Tibetan leadership, I remain concerned about the survival of the Tibetan identity, our distinctive culture and heritage and the protection of Tibet's fragile natural environment. I am pleased to see that in your first remarks, you



mentioned that these will be your priorities. "As you are aware, there has been widespread international interest in and support for the peaceful struggle of the Tibetan people, whose rich culture of non-violence and compassion has so much potential to contribute to the world. I remain confident that in the long term, the power of truth will prevail. "I look forward to meeting you and exchanging



views on issues that can benefit from your support and initiatives. I am sure you will be in close contact with our elected Tibetan leadership." His Holiness stated that he is encouraged to see that in addition to co-ordinating Tibetan issues, concern for democracy is also part of Zeya's portfolio and that the US recently held a democracy summit. He concluded, "I firmly believe the United

States can play a leadership role in promoting awareness of the fundamental values of democracy, freedom, and human rights." The Biden administration has designated Under Secretary Uzra Zeya to serve concurrently as the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues. The Indian-American currently serves as Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human

rights -- a position that has traditionally doubled as the special coordinator. The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 mandates the appointment of the special coordinator.

According to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, "I have designated Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Uzra Zeya to serve concurrently as the United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, an important role she will take on effective immediately." She will also continue to serve as Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, a position for which she was sworn in on July 14, 2021. "Zeya will coordinate the US government policies, programmes, and projects concerning Tibetan issues, consistent with the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, as amended by the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, said Blinken in a statement.



RUMBLING IN MVA OVER PENDING MUSLIM QUOTA IN MAHARASHTRA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Discontent brews afresh in the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, this time over the pending issue of 5 per cent reservations for Muslims in education and government jobs.

Ex-minister and Congress Working President Arif Naseem Khan has shot off a memorandum to the top party bosses reminding them of the 2019 understanding among the MVA allies in their Common Minimum Programme (CMP).

Khan has urged in his letter to Congress Legislative Party leader and Minister Balasaheb Thorat to "actively pursue plans for giving reservations" to the Muslims and also adequate funds for their development activities.

"It's over two years since the MVA government of Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress took office. Forget implementing the promise in the CMP, the matter has not even



been discussed once by the state cabinet," said an irked Khan.

He recalled how the previous Congress-NCP regime had given 5 per cent reservations to Muslims which also secured the legal nod, but after the Bharatiya Janata Party-led

alliance government came to power in October 2014, they failed to implement the quota.

"As the then Minister of Minorities, I had implemented many schemes for the Muslim society, including many executed through

Maulana Azad Minority Financial Development Corporation (MAMFDC)," Khan said.

Sending the copies of the letter to others like state President Nana Patole, former CMs Ashok Chavan and Prithviraj Chavan, other ministers and legislators, Khan has referred to Congress President Sonia Gandhi who had stressed on the MVA government running on the basis of the CMP to which the three allies had agreed.

The Congress leader from Chandivali has urged Thorat, Patole and other leaders to immediately take up this issue with the other two allies and ensure justice is given to the Muslims, besides providing sufficient funds through the MAMFDC for welfare activities of the minority community. However, there has been no formal reaction from either Sena or NCP so far to Khan's demands which came as the Winter Session of Maharashtra Legislature got underway on December 22.

'Don't want another lockdown': deputy CM's warning amid Omicron surge

Maharashtra has the most number of Omicron cases (65) followed by Delhi with 64 cases and Telangana with 24 cases

attention towards the issue, Pawar reportedly said: "We represent millions of people. The Centre has asked states to impose night curfew and strictly regulate large gatherings. Except for certain people, no one wears a mask. The whole of Maharashtra is watching what is going on here."

density etc., and keeping in mind the higher transmissibility of Omicron, states/UTs can undertake containment measures and impose restrictions even before these thresholds are reached," said the Union health ministry.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

With Maharashtra detecting the highest number of Omicron coronavirus variant cases in India, state Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday requested members of the Assembly to wear face masks during the winter session of the state legislature.

"We need to take things seriously. We do not want a lockdown again. We request everyone in the house also to please wear a mask. I request opposition leaders to speak responsibly on this issue," Pawar said.

Laying down a five-fold strategy for tackling the Omicron threat, the ministry also advised states to impose night curfews and ensure strict regulation of large gatherings, especially ahead of the forthcoming festivities. Earlier this week, the Centre had asked states to impose night curfew and strictly regulate large gatherings amid a surge in cases of Omicron.

The central government on Wednesday reiterated that local-level containment measures should be put in place in areas where either the test positivity goes beyond 10% or occupancy of oxygenated beds is over 40%.

"However, based on the local situation and population characteristics such as

Drawing the Speaker's

Probe Anil Deshmukh's role in PE report leak, Court tells CBI

A Delhi court directed the CBI to probe the role of former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh over the CBI Preliminary Enquiry report leak in a bribery case.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Delhi court has directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the role of former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh over the CBI documents leak in the Maharashtra bribery case. "The CBI seems to have left the engine/ horse pulling the cart, thereby only arraigning those travelling in a cart, as without the pull of

the officer disclosed sensitive investigation documents pertaining to Preliminary Enquiry (PE) against Deshmukh to the lawyer, and received money and an iPhone as bribe. Both Abhishek Tiwari and Anand Daga were arrested after the leak came to the fore. The PE report purportedly mentioned that no cognizable offence had been made out against Deshmukh on the corruption allegations levelled by former Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh. The CBI alleged that the leaked documents had been circulated on social media as part of a larger conspiracy to subvert the investigation. While taking cognizance of the charge sheet against Tiwari and Daga, the court noted that the CBI had not investigated the matter against Deshmukh himself.

engine or horse the ride of cart or conspiracy would not have been possible. Despite the mountain of apparent evidence, the CBI seems to have forsaken the man pulling the strings or the mastermind or head while charge sheeting only the hands, for reasons best known," the court said.

"Therefore, the CBI/ investigating agency is directed to discreetly and thoroughly further investigate the role of Anil Deshmukh (Ex Home Minister Maharashtra) in the present matter or RC with the utmost alacrity, in a time-bound manner and file a status report in this regard within four weeks," it added. The CBI charge sheet against its own officer Abhishek Tiwari and Deshmukh's lawyer Anand Daga and others showed that

Bengaluru man nabbed for threatening Maha Minister Aditya Thackeray

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Bengaluru-based man has been arrested for allegedly threatening Maharashtra Tourism Minister Aditya Thackeray, son of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, police said on Thursday.

The accused has been identified as Jaisingh Rajput, 34 and a self-proclaimed fan of the late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, who was found dead in his Bandra home on June 14, 2020.

Moving swiftly, a Mumbai Police Cyber Cell team picked up Rajput from Bengaluru on December 18 and then brought here on a transit remand. He has been sent to police custody for 3 days.

According to police, he had called Thackeray Jr. at least thrice but when the minister did not respond, on December 8, he sent him an abusive and threatening WhatsApp message.

Doling out abuses in the message, Rajput blamed him for the "murder" of the late actor, saying - "You killed Sushant Singh



Rajput", and made the death threats to Minister Thackeray.

Taking serious cognizance as the issue fig-

ured in the Maharashtra legislature on Thursday, Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil said that a state-level Special Investigation Team will be formed to probe the matter.

When the matter came up in the assembly, Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik also got up and said that he had also received several such threats in the past and suspected the involvement of the same group that had murdered rationalists like Dr. Narendra Dabholkar and Govind Pansare.

"The way in which Aditya Thackeray has been threatened, we suspect whether it is linked with the same organisations that killed Dabholkar and Pansare. We have already demanded an investigation into this," Malik said.

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis supported the demand and sought a probe into such incidents of threats to ministers of the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi.

Meanwhile, Rajput has been booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and IT Act, and further investigations are underway.

Maharashtra Schools to be closed? Varsha Gaikwad on rising Omicron cases and shutting schools again

Varsha Gaikwad has hinted that Maharashtra Schools might be shut again if Omicron cases continue to rise. Responding to the rising cases in the state, she said that the decision would be taken and the situation is being monitored.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Schools are likely to be closed again. Answering to the rising concerns over Omicron cases in Maharashtra, state Education Minister for School, Varsha Gaikwad has said that it is a possibility. Speaking to reporters, Gaikwad shared that the Government might take a call of shutting the schools again if the cases continue to rise. Of the total case load of 213 Omicron cases in the country, Maharashtra has reported 54, second only to the national capital, Delhi which has 57. Responding to the same, Gaikwad told ANI, "If Omicron cases continue to rise, we may take a call to shut the schools again. We are monitoring the situation." The worrying rise of Omicron



cases, both in India and countries abroad has sent the governments back to the war room. With the grim prediction of third wave hitting a peak of 14 lakh cases, should the variant gain pace, has raised alarm bells everywhere.

The news, however, is worrying as the schools have only recently reopened in the state. For Mumbai, it was from December 16 that the primary class students were allowed. For many parts of Maharashtra, it has been the same. However, with the students still unvaccinated, the first thing to go under lockdown would again be the schools. At present, however, there is no actual announcement. The date sheet for the Maharashtra SSC, HSC Board Exams 2022 has also been released. With schools again facing the uncertainty, all eyes are now on Omicron variant spread in India. Containing it, remains the biggest priority of the state and central government at this juncture.

MAHARASHTRA SUPPORTS DEATH PENALTY TO SISTERS WHO KIDNAPPED 14 CHILDREN, KILLED 5

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government told the Bombay High Court on Wednesday that it supported the death sentence awarded to Renuka Shinde and Seema Gavit - the sisters convicted for kidnapping of 14 children and murdering five of them between 1990 and 1996 - despite the delay.

A Sessions Court had awarded capital punishment in 2001 for the heinous crime which had sent shockwaves across Maharashtra.

Public prosecutor Aruna Pai made the statement on behalf of the government before a bench of Justices Nitin Jamdar and SV Kotwal which had asked the state to put forth its stand while reserving its order on the review petition last Saturday.

"Considering the seriousness of the crime, we support the death sentence in spite of the delay. If the court is commutating it (to a life sentence), it should be till the end of their natural life," Pai said.

Shinde and Gavit were tried for kidnapping 14 children and murdering five of them in Kolhapur. They were convicted in 2001. In 2004, the High Court confirmed their death sentence and in 2006, the Supreme Court upheld it, too.

The High Court had earlier remarked that there had been an "inordinate delay" of over eight years in deciding the mercy petitions. The High Court will pass the order on the petition in due course.

Omicron fastest 'spreader' known to man: Maha Task Force member

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Omicron, the latest Coronavirus variant, is probably the fastest-spreading infectious disease known to man, medical expert and Maharashtra government's Covid Task Force member, Shashank Joshi, said here on Thursday.

It has an approximately R5 rapid generation time. While for Measles it is 15 days, for Omicron it is less than 5, with a doubling time of 1.5-3 days, Joshi, a diabetologist and endocrinologist, said in a tweet. "In 60 days after 1 case: Measles: 50,600, Omicron: 244,000,000," he added, but termed it as a "mild disease with lower mortality".

Mumbai scientist and stem-cell expert Pradeep Mahajan said that "Omicron is like a blessing that has emanated naturally to protect humanity", not only from



Covid-19 and its other deadly variants, but even deadlier ones likely to come in the future. "The faster Omicron is spreading, the less virulent killer it is, if we study the latest global health data. So there's absolutely no need for us to panic," said Mahajan, who was this week appointed as academic faculty at the prestigious Indiana University, USA, as an

acknowledgement of his research in this field.

"Considering all aspects, we can safely say that Omicron will itself prove to be a nature's vaccine, a shield that will take us to a stage where Covid-19 and its variants could be reduced to something like a flu," Mahajan, Chairman of StemRX Biosciences Solutions Pvt Ltd, told reporter.

Mumbai tops supply increase in data centre capacity in Asia-Pacific

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai has recorded highest supply increase in data centre capacity with 24 per cent in the Asia-Pacific region, adding 200 megawatt (MW) in the third quarter this year, a new report showed on Thursday, as data consumption explodes in the country via OTT, IoT devices and social media. Total IT capacity in Mumbai jumped from 812 MW in Q2 to 1,006 MW in Q3, according to International Property Consultants Knight Frank.

"Mumbai is among the top established data centre hubs in the APAC region. As digital transformation accelerates amid the 4th industrial revolution, demand for digital infrastructure such as data centres is certain to grow," said Shishir Bajjal, Chairman and Managing Director at Knight Frank India. The "collocation" supply in Mumbai has increased significantly in the first three quarters of this year,

and for the first time the city's total IT capacity has crossed the gigawatt mark (alongside Shanghai and Tokyo in Asia Pacific) in Q3 2021, said the report, published in partnership with data centre research and analytics platform, DC Byte. The report said that the quarterly take-up of IT power in Mumbai has increased from 2.78 MW in Q2 2021 to 6.42 MW in Q3, the highest quarterly take-up on record. The Indian data centre market currently houses an estimated 445 MW of critical IT capacity in the seven cities of Mumbai, NCR, Bengaluru, Pune, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata. "India being one of the most populated countries in the world, rising mobile penetration is leading to massive increase in data consumption along with large and growing base of global users for digital mediums such as social media applications, IoT devices and OTT, as well as gaming platforms," the report noted.

SHIV SENA UNION TO FM: BLOCK LIC IPO TILL IDBI BANK IMBROGLIO RECTIFIED

Pune | Agencies

Making a plea for ordinary policy holders, the Shiv Sena's Bhartiya Kamgar Sena (BKS) on Thursday called upon Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman "not to move ahead with the LIC IPO" till the IDBI Bank Ltd's recently exposed issues are completely rectified.

In a letter to Sitharaman, the BKS General Secretary Dr Raghunath Kuchik accorded a Minister of State rank has drawn her attention to the "IDBI blunder" about one of its alleged wilful defaulters, a diamantaire group, Sanghavi Exports International Pvt Ltd.

He said that in a span of 72 hours, the IDBI Bank Ltd came out with 3 different amounts of alleged wilful default of loans by the diamantaire group which has created confusion for the Reserve Bank of India, the IDBI Bank's account holders and also the LIC whose IPO is soon to come. "Please ask the concerned



authorities and RBI officials to do a proper investigation in the interest of the common man, crores of account holders and LIC policy holders, Central government and LIC involvement (as) upcoming IPO on board are at stake," pointed out Kuchik, who is Chairman, Maharashtra Minimum Wages Board. "We certainly do not wish to have a repetition of the Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi case (that) happened with the Punjab National Bank a couple of years

back," the BKS leader cautioned Sitharaman. He cited how the IDBI Bank Ltd had given out three figures of outstanding loan dues from the diamantaire group which was first highlighted by IANS (Dec 20).

"Once again, I request you to look into the matter on priority and instruct the authorities not to move ahead with the LIC IPO unless this IDBI Bank issue is completely rectified as per the RBI policy," Dr Kuchik said. The BKS

missive came hours after the powerful All India Bank Officers Association (AIBOA) General Secretary S Nagarajan wrote to the RBI Governor how bank officers are "seriously disturbed" over the recent revelations, as the Centre and LIC own 97 per cent of the IDBI Bank Ltd.

"The contradictory stand by IDBI Bank Ltd before various authorities is certainly intriguing and requires reporting of factual position to the public at large who

are directly or indirectly involved in the share market operations," urged Nagarajan.

Mumbai-based AIBOA leader Vishwas Utagi on Thursday said that the IDBI Bank's latest annual report (FY 2020-2021) has stated that out of its total NPA of Rs 36,212 crore, a big chunk of Rs 13,392 crore is concentrated in only top 4 accounts.

"Who are these top 4 willful defaulters, from which sector and since when? Considering the ongoing crisis of confidence, will the Madam Finance Minister, RBI Governor and LIC Chairman order the IDBI Bank to come clean and enlighten the general public on them," Utagi demanded. Nevertheless, IDBI Bank Ltd sources insist that the goof-up in the public notice (Dec 19) was a genuine error, though a contrary impression of a 'scam' was created in the public after the regulatory filing (Dec 20) followed by a fresh public notice (Dec 21), but claim that remedial measures are being initiated.



JENNIFER LAWRENCE PLANS TO TAKE ACTING 'BREAK' AFTER GIVING BIRTH

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Jennifer Lawrence is going to be a first-time mom soon and seemingly wants to spend more time with her family once she has her baby. The actress portraying Kate Dibiasky in 'Don't Look Up' is reportedly planning to take a "break" from acting after giving birth, reports [aceshowbiz.com](#). A source close to Lawrence revealed to [HollywoodLife.com](#) that the 31-year-old Oscar-winning actress has a year-long hiatus planned from the big screen after her baby is born. "As for Jen's career, she has really enjoyed having this break and focusing on herself and her pregnancy," the source told the outlet.

"She has worked hard for several years, and it has been very rewarding for her," the so-called inside source continued.

The informant further shared: "She is going to get back to acting but not for a year after the baby is born."

Despite the fact that the Academy Award winner is preparing to take a sabbatical, she is already planning her next big project.

"She has been reading a lot of scripts and wants to take a role next that shows her versatility as an actress. She knows that she can do it all and plans on maintaining a healthy balance between work and being a mother and wife," the insider shared.

Lawrence is expecting her first child with her husband Cooke Maroney. Ahead of her first child's arrival, 'The Hunger Games' star has vowed to protect her child's privacy and not to let her public life affect her growing family.



Kate Winslet 'couldn't stop crying' during reunion with Leo DiCaprio

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Mare of Easttown' actress Kate Winslet has said she "couldn't stop crying" when she recently reunited with her 'Titanic' co-star and "really close friend" Leonardo DiCaprio after three years apart.

She said: "I couldn't stop crying. I've known him for half of my life. It's not as if I've found myself in New York or he's been in London and there's been a chance to have dinner or grab a coffee and have a catch-up. We haven't been able to leave our countries."

"Like so many friendships globally, we've missed each other because of Covid. He's my friend, my really close friend. We're bonded for life."

Earlier this year, the 46-year-old actress played titular detective ser-

geant Mare Sheehan in crime drama 'Mare of Easttown', and the star isn't sure if the show will return for a second series, reports [femalefirst.co.uk](#).

If she were to reprise her role, Kate believes some of the second season's content should be inspired by some of the recent "atrocities" in the police in the UK and in US.

She added to The Guardian newspaper: "I don't know if I'm going to be playing Mare again. But if we were to do a second season, then for sure these atrocities which have existed in the police force here and in America will find their way into the stories we tell."

"You can't pretend these things haven't happened. It's horrible, isn't it? This moment in time. It's horrific. You can hear me, I can't quite find the words because we all feel so betrayed and powerless."

"We have to turn this moment into something meaningful. We have to use our voices on behalf of people who don't have one. That matters to me now in ways that hadn't even crossed my mind in my 20s."

In October, Winslet said she had had "conversations" about a potential second season of 'Mare of Easttown'.

MICHAEL KEATON TO PLAY BATMAN IN 'BATGIRL' STARRING LESLIE GRACE

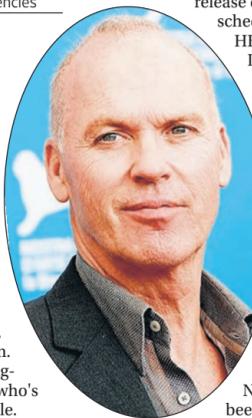
Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Michael Keaton is all set to play Batman in the upcoming Leslie Grace-starrer 'Batgirl'.

The actor is expected to reprise his role as Bruce Wayne also known as Batman, the character he originated in Tim Burton's 1989 film, reports [variety.com](#).

He will star alongside Leslie Grace, who's playing the lead role.

Though plot details have been kept under wraps, the film centers on the heroine whose real identity is Barbara Gordon, the daughter of Gotham police commissioner Jim Gordon. As previously announced, J.K. Simmons is returning to portray Jim Gordon after first playing the character in Zack Snyder's 'Justice League'. Brendan Fraser is playing the villainous Firefly, a sociopath with a passion for pyrotechnics. "Batgirl" doesn't have an exact



release date, though the film is scheduled to debut on HBO Max in 2022.

In the same year, Keaton will be seen as the Caped Crusader in the upcoming Warner Bros. adventure 'The Flash'.

The film, also featuring Ben Affleck as Batman and starring Ezra Miller as the title hero, is slated to land in theaters on November 4, 2022. It's been 30 years since Keaton first donned the Batsuit, and in that time, he says he has been intrigued by the prospect of revisiting his iconic role.

"Just because I was curious didn't mean I wanted to do it," he clarified on the latest episode of Variety's Award Circuit podcast.

"So it took a long time, frankly... I'm not just gonna say I'll do it. It has to be good. And there has to be a reason." 'Batgirl' is currently in production in London.



ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER PAUSES 'CINDERELLA' UNTIL FEB DUE TOOMICRON FEARS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Super-producer and composer Andrew Lloyd Webber has halted performances of hit West End musical 'Cinderella' until February 2022 as the Omicron variant of Covid surges across the UK. "I am absolutely devastated that 'Cinderella' has to temporarily close. My life has been devoted to musical theater. Once again, this wretched virus has put paid to the joy of entertaining audiences, something that I hold so dear," Webber tweeted on Tuesday.

"Sadly this is the right thing to do, not just for the safety of our cast, musicians and backstage crew, but for the quality of the show we give our audiences who travel long distances and make significant investments to come and see us. Rest assured, 'Cinderella' will re-open as soon as this wave is licked and we know we can give our audiences the fantastic time they deserve."

Performances of the show, written by 'Promising Young Woman' Oscar winner Emerald Fennell, are currently suspended until February 9.

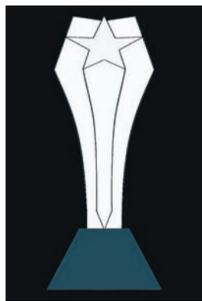
'Cinderella' is the latest in a spate of cancellations caused by the latest wave of the virus. Performances of the well-reviewed 'Cabaret', starring Eddie Redmayne and Jessie Buckley that were cancelled last week remain suspended but hope to resume from December 7.

Critic's Choice Awards ceremony postponed over Omicron concerns

Los Angeles | Agencies

The Critics Choice Association has announced that it has postponed its in-person awards gala amid rising concerns regarding Covid and the Omicron variant.

The winners were set to be revealed by hosts Taye Diggs and Nicole Byer on Sunday, January 9. The ceremony will still broadcast live in person on The CW and TBS at some point, but it will no longer happen on that date as originally planned, reports [variety.com](#). "After thoughtful consideration and candid conversations with our partners at The CW and TBS, we have collectively come to the conclusion that the prudent and responsible decision at this point is to postpone the 27th Annual Critics Choice Awards, originally slated for January 9, 2022," the organisation said in a statement. "We are in regular communication with LA County Public Health officials, and we are currently working diligently to find a new date during the upcoming awards season in which to host our annual gala in-person with everyone's safety and health remaining our top priority. We will be sharing additional details with our friends and colleagues throughout the entertainment industry as soon as we can." The decision is an about-face from earlier this week, when the Critics Choice Association said it would proceed as an in-person ceremony on January 9 at the Fairmont Century Plaza hotel with strict Covid protocols in place as cases continue to surge in the nation. "The Critics Choice Association is working with LA County Public Health Officials and a premiere Covid Compliance service, and at this time, we are currently still planning to host an in-person 27th Annual Critics Choice Awards, following the strictest and safest protocols, including mandatory proof of vaccination, negative PCR tests 48 hours in advance, proper social distancing and masking requirements," the org said in a statement on Monday. "We will continue to carefully monitor the situation as events progress."



'THE MATRIX RESURRECTIONS': ASTUTELY MOUNTED YET PECULIAR



TROY RIBEIRO

(Showing in theatres)

Director: Lana Wachowski

Cast: Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Jonathan Groff, Jessica Henwick, Neil Patrick Harris, Jada Pinkett Smith, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Christina Ricci, Lambert Wilson.

Duration: 148 minutes

Ratings: *** (three stars)

There has been an aura of obsession and nostalgia with the Matrix franchise ever since the first film in 1999. Thence we have had two other Matrix films in quick succession, which were released in 2003.

'The Matrix Resurrections' is the fourth film of its franchise and is the sequel to its last release, 'The Matrix Revolutions', which hit theatres nearly 18 years ago.

This film caters to its fan base, and thus, those who are not initiated into the Matrix universe would find themselves in an alien world, not knowing what is happening on screen.

With events taking place nearly two decades after 'Revolutions', and unlike its trilogy, this film feels more of a love story within its action drama.

The plot is complex, convoluted,



and at times amateurish, with an over-explanation of events from the past.

As for the action sequences, the film boasts of chaotic car chases, gunfights, and gravity-defying stunts, but all of them offer nothing extraordinary in terms of experiences, the choreography itself seems languid and sluggish.

As for the performances, the chemistry between Reeves and Moss is palpable. Priyanka Chopra is confidence personified and striking in a small part.

Overall, the film despite being astutely and impressively staged seems to be a bit chaotic and peculiar.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Zara McDermott



18 Indian referees selected in FIFA's International list for 2022

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As many as 18 Indian referees have been selected in the FIFA Refereeing International list for 2022, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) announced on Thursday.

As per AIFF, the extensive list includes officials who are qualified to be referees and assistant referees.

Notably, members of the list are eligible to officiate at the international level. The selection for the annual list is made through the nominations sent by FIFA member countries and the officials are required to clear a fitness test and medical examination.

Out of the selected 18 Indians, four are women (two referees and two assistant referees), and 14 are men (six referees and eight assistant referees).

LIST OF SELECTED INDIAN OFFICIALS

- Men referees:** Tejas Nagvenkar, Srikrishna Coimbatore Ramaswamy, Rowan Arumughan, Crystal John, Pranjal Banerjee, Venkatesh Ramachandran.
- Men assistant referees:** Sumanta Dutta, Antony Abraham, Tony Joseph Louis, Vairamuthu Parasuraman, Samar Pal, Kennedy Sapam, Arun Sasidharan Pillai, Asit Kumar Sarkar.
- Women referees:** Ranjita Devi Tekcham, Kanika Barman.
- Women assistant referees:** Uvena Fernandes, Ri-ihlang Dhar.



INDIA MEN PLACED THIRD IN YEAR-END HOCKEY RANKINGS; WOMEN IN NINTH SPOT

The top ten is completed by England (6th - 1990.62), Argentina (7th - 1826.11), New Zealand (8th - 1598.24), Spain (9th - 1532.33) and Malaysia (10th - 1427.18).

Lausanne | Agencies

Historic bronze medal for the men's team and fourth place for the women's team at the Tokyo Olympics has ensured India ended 2021 with their best-ever positions in four decades in the year-end FIH rankings.

India are ranked third in men's rankings and ninth in women's section in the year-end rankings revealed on Thursday. Besides the Tokyo Olympics, where they won an Olympic medal after a gap of four decades, the Indian men's hockey team also bagged a bronze medal in the 2021 Asian Champions Trophy in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Wednesday.

Australia men and the Netherlands women topped the year-end rankings. Belgium had overtaken Australia after winning the Olympic gold medal but a draw and defeat to the Netherlands in the FIH Pro League was enough to see the Red



Lions lose the top spot to Australia, the team they beat in the final in Tokyo. Australia close the year with 2642.25 points, just ten ahead of FIH Hockey Pro League and Olympic champions Belgium, who have 2632.12. India sit third with 2296.04, with the Netherlands (2234.33) and Germany (2038.71) in fourth and fifth positions respectively, the FIH said in a release on Thursday. Asian Champions Trophy winner Korea remain 16th with runners up Japan still in 17th position. Fourth placed finishers

Pakistan continue to hold onto 18th place, while Bangladesh have dropped two places to 40, said a FIH release on Thursday. Alyson Annan's Netherlands women's team enjoyed another sensational year, powering to the FIH Hockey Pro League and European championship titles before landing their fourth Olympic gold medal in Tokyo, defeating Argentina in the competition final.

The Oranje end 2021 with 3015.35 points, over 600 ranking points ahead of second placed England with 2375.78. Olympic silver medallists Argentina will begin 2022 third in the FIH World Rankings, just 14 points behind England with 2361.28 points. Australia (2334.04) finish the year in fourth place in women's rankings, with Germany (2126.15) and Spain (1959.62) fifth and sixth respectively. Belgium (7th place - 1939.88), New Zealand (8th place - 1821.11), India (9th place - 1810.32) and China (10th place - 1677.96) complete the top ten.

La Liga: Real beat Athletic 2-1 to end the year on a high

Bilbao (Spain) | Agencies

Karim Benzema scored two goals as Real Madrid ended the year 2021 with a superb away win over Athletic Bilbao, closing out the year with a 15-match unbeaten run. Real flew out of the blocks San Mamés and that resulted in three swift goals inside the first 10 minutes -- two for the visitors and one for the hosts. Toni Kroos fired off a warning shot in the opening minute but it was the next move of the match that yielded the first goal. The German's one-touch lay-off was perfect for Benzema, who effortlessly whipped the ball into the far corner from the edge of the box. The league leaders knew one was not enough and wasted no time in doubling their lead. Ernesto Valverde won the ball back in the centre of the field and laid the ball for Eden Hazard. The ball flicked off a defender and fell to Benzema, the Frenchman making no mistake as he swept it past goalkeeper Julen Agirretxe to complete his double in the seventh minute. That spurred the hosts into life and their first shot on goal ended up in the



back of the net. Oihan Sancet scored a beautiful goal, his long-range effort flying in off the post leaving Thibaut Courtois with no chance. The game suddenly opened up and Carlo Ancelotti's side had the chance to increase their lead in an end-to-end spell on the half-hour mark. Hazard cut in from the right, making his way into the penalty area, and pulled the ball back for Benzema before De Marcos nicked it from him just when it looked like a goal was on the cards. Real looked to maintain possession, keep control and dictate the tempo of the match, while Athletic continued to play their trademark high pressing football throughout the second half.

This is a quality Indian team that is here: Allan Donald

Johannesburg | Agencies

Former South Africa pacer Allan Donald praised the Indian team, saying that they are a quality side. While expecting a close contest between India and South Africa, Donald also recalled Test captain Virat Kohli's comments in terms of performing overseas, believing it worked in transforming his team into a formidable side. "Kohli's comments a few years ago were that you'll never be classed as a great side if you don't win away from home and that has been something he really worked towards. You saw them win in Australia and also reach the WTC (World Test Championship) Final," said Donald on Cricket South Africa's official website. "There is no doubt this is one of the marquee series in the world game and we can look forward to an incredible battle over the summer. This is a quality Indian team that is here. I'm looking forward to it," added



Donald, who played 72 Tests and took 330 wickets for South Africa. The 55-year-old former pacer, who was a central figure in the 1992/93 series and also played against the Indians on home soil in 1996/97, pointed out that the performance of South Africa's young and slightly inexperienced batting line-up will be critical in deciding the outcome of the series.

JR NATIONAL HOCKEY CHANDIGARH, U.P, ODISHA, HARYANA IN SEMIS

Kovilpatti (Tamil Nadu) | Agencies

Hockey Chandigarh stunned neighbours Hockey Punjab 3-2 to set up a semi-final clash with Hockey Association of Odisha in the 11th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship 2021 here on Thursday. Hockey Odisha defeated Hockey Bihar 4-1 to reach the semis.

In the other semi-final, Hockey Haryana, who thrashed hosts Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu 7-3, will take on Uttar Pradesh Hockey, who outplayed Delhi Hockey 9-0 as the quarter-finals were completed in the premier domestic tournament for junior boys on Thursday. In the first quarter-final, Hockey Chandigarh edged out Hockey Punjab 3-2 in a closely-contested encounter. After Sumit (8') gave Hockey Chandigarh an early lead, Simranjot Singh (22') levelled the score for Hockey Punjab in the second quarter. As both teams went back and forth in the third quarter, Rohit (44') put Hockey



Chandigarh in front again, only to be pegged back by Rajinder Singh's equaliser in the 45th minute. Rohit (51') then doubled his tally to give Hockey Chandigarh a decisive 3-2 lead, which they saw out to book their place in the semi-finals.

In the second quarter-final, Hockey Haryana earned a clinical 7-3 victory over the home side, Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu. Hockey Haryana's

surge towards a semi-final berth was led by a hat-trick by Deepak (4', 27', 46'), a brace from Amandeep (4', 32') and one-goal each from Pankaj (19') and Rohit (59'). For the Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu, Aravind Kumar S (5'), Sathish B (49'), and Aravind (55') got on the score sheet. Uttar Pradesh Hockey notched a decisive 9-0 victory against previously unbeaten Delhi Hockey to book their place in the last-four stage. Sharda Nand Tiwari (3', 12', 22', 27', 51') led the charge with five goals to his name, followed by Manish Sahani (16', 29'), captain Vishnukant Singh (43'), and Mohammad Harris (54'). Later, the Hockey Association of Odisha ran out 4-1 winners over Hockey Bihar thanks to a late burst of goals. After an intense first half where the score remained goalless, Amandeep Lakra (38') gave Hockey Association of Odisha the lead, before Suhant Toppo (44') doubled their advantage. Monu Kumar (50') pulled one goal back for Hockey Bihar, but Sudeep Chirmako (51', 60') dashed their hopes thanks to two late goals.

USA STUN IRELAND IN T20I, FIRST WIN AGAINST TEST-PLAYING NATION

Lauderhill (USA) | Agencies

Former Mumbai and India Under-19 player Saurabh Netravalkar, pacer Ali Khan and left-arm spinner Nisarg Patel claimed two wickets apiece as the United States of America defeated Ireland by 26 runs in the first T20I of their three-match series here. This is the United States' first win against a Test-playing nation.

The USA rode on half-centuries by Gajanan Singh (65) and Sushant Modani (5) to post 188/6 on electing to bat first at the 3e Central Broward Regional Park Stadium Turf Ground, Lauderdale on Wednesday. The bowlers then got into the act as Netravalkar, Ali Khan and Patel picked two wickets each



Brief scores
USA 188/6 in 20 overs (Gajanan Singh 65, Sushant Modani 50; Barry McCarthy 4/30) bt Ireland 162/6 in 20 overs (Lorcan Tucker 57 not out, Paul Stirling 31; Saurabh Netravalkar 2/36, Ali Khan 2/30, Nisarg Patel 2/27) by 26 runs.

for 26, 30, and 27 runs respectively as Ireland were restricted to 162/6 in 20 overs.

Electing to bat first after winning the toss, USA's innings got off to a stuttering start when Monank (2) was caught behind off the second ball of the innings.

Ireland's chase hit an early roadblock as captain Andy Balbirnie fell for four to Ali Khan (2/30), but Paul Stirling put them on course with a quickfire 31 off 15 before perishing in the fifth over to Saurabh Netravalkar (2/26).

Despite an unbeaten 57 from Lorcan Tucker, the USA managed to keep Ireland's batters under control from there, with each of Khan, Netravalkar, and Nisarg Patel (2/27) taking two wickets apiece.

Premier League postpones Liverpool vs Leeds, Wolves vs Watford games

London | Agencies

Following the rise in cases of COVID-19 in the teams, the Premier League has decided to postpone the Liverpool vs Leeds United and Wolverhampton Wanderers vs Watford games scheduled for Boxing Day. "Following postponement requests from Leeds United and Watford as a result of COVID-19, the Premier League Board met this morning and regrettably agreed to call off the two affected clubs' Boxing Day fixtures," the Premier League said in a



statement on Thursday. "The Board today was able to make its decisions in advance of Boxing Day to give clarity to clubs and their supporters. We apologise for the inconvenience and disruption caused to those fans' festive plans," it added. The Premier League concluded

that Leeds will not be able to fulfill their fixture this weekend due to the number of players with COVID-19, injuries and illness. The club's training ground has also been closed after consultation with the UK Health Security Agency and the Premier League. Watford, who have already had two games called off this month, continue to have an insufficient number of players to field a team, the League said. The number of Premier League games called off due to the pandemic is now up to 12 in the last two weeks.

Women's football team turns to mental health sessions to sharpen decision-making skills

Kochi | Agencies

Gearing up to play in their biggest tournament so far, the India women's football team is focusing on mental training ahead of the AFC Women's Asian Cup, which will be held in India early in 2022.

Mental training is expected to improve their decision-making abilities on the pitch and also help them tackle the fatigue of bubble-life as they have now stayed for the better part of the year away from their families.

From technical to tactical training, and strength and conditioning, the team management is taking measures to ensure that the team is prepared to face the best in



Asia. Mental training, one aspect that goes mostly unnoticed, is now part of their build-up for the mega event. "Footballers are people who like open spaces, and it does affect if you can't take a break from it all and maybe go out for a walk, or go for a coffee. Giving your mind that rest

is important," India women team head coach Thomas Dennerby was quoted as saying in a report by All-India Football Federation (AIFF) on its official website. When the players eat, sleep, and think football all day, training the mind also becomes important, the report said.

SERIE A: DUMFRIES'S WINNER HELPS INTER PREVAIL OVER TORINO

Rome | Agencies

Defending champions Inter Milan finished their 2021 campaign with a Serie A victory, as Denzel Dumfries' strike sealed a 1-0 win over Torino.

Inter had secured their position as the Winter Champion since Wednesday's game, and they went into San Siro without the suspended Nicolò Barella. Arturo Vidal got his first domestic start this season.

The Nerazzurri had a more aggressive start and broke the deadlock in the 30th minute when Edin Dzeko squared Marcelo Brozovic's dummy and allowed an unmarked Dumfries to drill home, reports Xinhua.

The home side still had the scoring opportunity but Alexis Sanchez saw his attempt graze the post. With the win, Inter entered the winter break with 46 points, four points clear of AC Milan, who won away at Empoli 4-2.

Elsewhere, Napoli were stunned by Spezia 1-0, Juan Jesus scoring an own-goal in the first half, while the Partenopei saw their two goals after the



break ruled out. Also on Wednesday, Roma were held by Sampdoria 1-1, Lazio beat Venezia 3-1

away, Bologna hammered Sassuolo 3-0, Hellas Verona shared the spoils with Fiorentina at 1-1.

Deepika's glam 'this is 83' pictures makes hubby Ranveer go 'uff'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh never shy away from publicly professing their love for each other, especially if it gets them fan eyeballs for an upcoming film featuring one (or both) of them.

The special screening in Mumbai of Kabir Khan's cricket drama '83', where Bollywood's showstoppers celebrated the film with the 1983 World Cup-winning team, gave the power couple an opportunity for yet another

PDA moment in a latest post shared by the actress.

Deepika posted a series of pictures on Instagram, where she looked every inch glamorous dressed in a floor-sweeping midnight-green ensemble. She completed her look with a statement jewelled necklace and bold eyes.

For the caption, Deepika simply wrote: "#ThisIs83". Ranveer couldn't stop himself from commenting on his wife's pictures. He exclaimed: "Ufffff."

In '83', Ranveer plays the role of the captain of the 1983 team and cricketing legend, Kapil Dev, who led the underdogs to coveted World Cup

glory, beating the mighty two-time previous winners West Indies in the final at Lord's.

Deepika, the film's co-producer, plays Kapil's wife, Romi Dev, in the film.

Others on the film's cast include Tahir Raj Bhasin, Jiiva, Saqib Saleem, Jatin Sarna, Chirag Patil (son of 1983 team member Sadeep Patil), Dinker Sharma, Nishant Dahiya, Harrry Sandhu, Sahil Khattar, Ammy Virk, Addinath Kothare, Dhairyra Karwa and R. Badree, apart from Pankaj Tripathi, Neena Gupta and Boman Irani.

The film is releasing theatrically on Friday, December 24.

Sonu Sood goes into action mode with 'Fateh'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Sonu Sood has been roped in to star in action thriller 'Fateh' directed by Abhinandan Gupta.

The film, touted to be inspired by real-life incidents, will see the actor pulling off high-octane action sequences in a cinematic universe.

Sonu, who was last seen in Rohit Shetty's cop movie 'Simmba', said, "The story piqued my interest. It is



one of the most crucial subjects that need our attention. As soon as I read the script, I knew I wanted to be a part of it. I am extremely excited to bring this thought-provoking story to the audience."

The film will be produced by Zee Studios and Shakti Sagar Productions.

Commenting on the development, Shariq Patel, CBO, Zee Studios shared, "Sonu is a fine actor and has proved himself

constantly for the last decade and a half. But given what he has done over the last year has made him a true hero. I'm sure his return to the big screen as the protagonist in such a gripping story will be exciting for everyone."

The film is expected to go on the floors in early 2022.

GREATEST GIFT AN ARTISTE CAN RECEIVE IS LOVE: ARMAAN MALIK

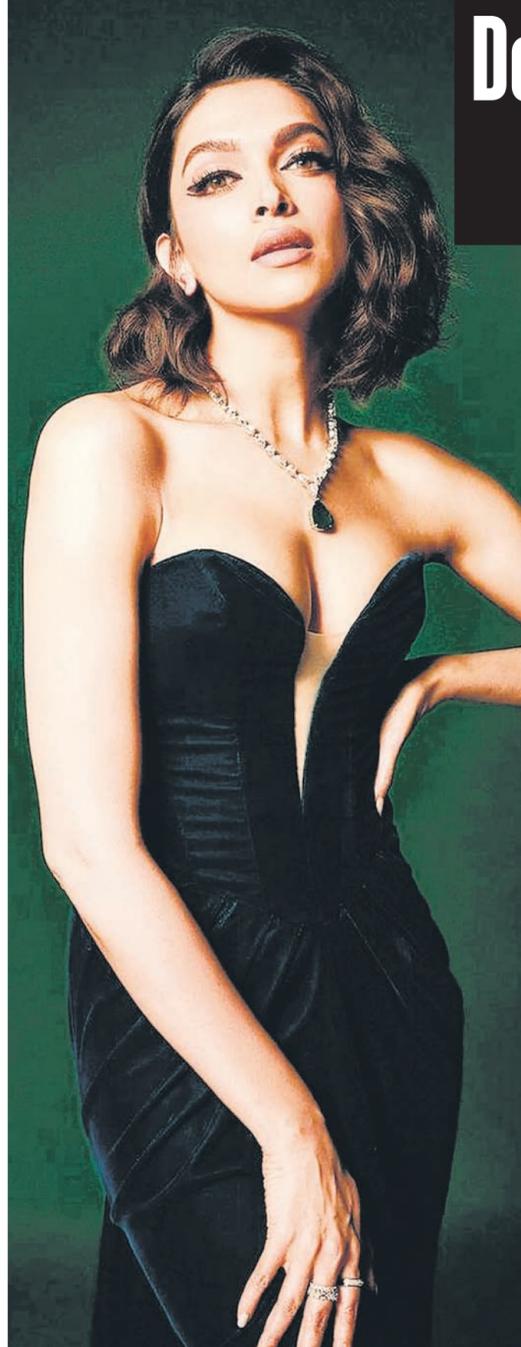
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Armaan Malik, who is known for crooning hits such as 'Buddhu sa mann', 'Tere mere', 'Boldo na zara', has completed 14 years in the music industry and he credits the love he gets from his fans for what he is today.

Talking about his 14-year journey in the industry, Armaan said: "I have nothing but gratitude and love for my family, gurus, composers, writers, music-producers and technicians who have helped me become the artiste that I am today. I'm also extremely blessed to have a fandom that celebrates milestones like these with such gusto."

He added: "A big thank you to all my fans for loving my music and giving me more reasons to pursue my passion. The greatest gift an artiste can receive is love and appreciation from his audience and I've always had that in abundance." The completion marks the 14th anniversary of his debut song 'Bum Bum Bole' from 'Taare Zameen Par'. Before his debut, Malik had made his presence felt in reality show 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Li'l Champs' at 11 years of age.

As a teenager, Armaan's discography had popular songs from films such as 'Chain Kuli Ki Main Kuli', 'Bhootnath', 'Ramaa: The Saviour', 'Chillar Party', 'Jai Ho', 'Khoobsurat' and 'Ungli'. Determined to make India proud, Armaan ventured into the global music scene with songs such as 'Next 2 Me', 'Control', and 'Echo'.



Proud to represent a blend of African cultures: Nora Fatehi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Nora Fatehi has presented a blend of diverse cultures and styles from different parts of Africa in her latest song 'Dance Meri Rani'.

Along with popular authentic Afro dance moves hailing from countries like Nigeria, Senegal, and Ghana, Nora has also paid attention to getting the look right as she dons ash blonde light brown curly hair for one of the looks in the song.

Nora said: "Growing up, I was surrounded by beautiful African women, be it my family members, my friends, my mother, who were blessed with beautiful curly Afro-like hair. I was always in awe of the variety of beauty we have in Africa from different shades of skin tones to different textures of hair." She said she has always wanted to celebrate that as an artiste.

"For years I've seen international artistes beautifully represent African hair styles, fashion and dance in various content across the globe. The African in me always wanted to celebrate Afro beauty and Afro dance on a big scale through my art! With 'Dance Meri Rani' I knew this was my chance to do just that." Talking about the fierce look, Nora said: "My looks in the song are a blend of African elements from the diamond headpiece that gives an Egyptian touch, to the dance moves that stay true to Afro dance styles that come from different parts of Africa and are widely popular amongst the dancers globally, to the beautiful curly hair, that was both a new look for my audience and a form of representation and celebration."

"My mother and my sister both have beautiful curly hair, in fact my mom growing up was famous for her honey brown curly Afro, which prompted me to put together the look for 'Dance Meri Rani'."

Guru Randhawa first Indian male singer to cross 30 million followers on Instagram

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer-songwriter Guru Randhawa has crossed 30 million followers on his Instagram, making him the first Indian male singer to have amassed such following. Guru is known for chartbuster tracks like 'Lahore', 'High Rated Gabru', 'Ishare Tere' and the most recent 'Dance Meri Rani'. He said, "It's overwhelming to receive so much love from my fans and audiences worldwide. My heartfelt gratitude to all who have unconditionally loved me, appreciated and cherished my music."



He credits his fans for accepting and appreciating his music and also for keeping him inspired, "It feels surreal and I am absolutely speechless to express my feeling in words. Without my fans' support this wouldn't be possible." Talking about his latest song he said, "With 'Dance Meri Rani' we are getting into a new zone of music and introducing people to Afro beats. It's a foot tapping number that has been picturized very interestingly."

He mentions Nora Fatehi, who has featured in the song with him, "This is definitely something new for audiences to look out for. With Nora, one can expect a lot of glitz and glamour."

ISHA KOPPIKAR TO STAR IN OTT HEIST DRAMA 'SURANGA'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Isha Koppikar will be soon seen in the investigative drama 'Suranga', a gripping series that revolves around a bank heist. The actress will be playing the role of an assistant bank manager named Dakshayani.

Talking about the show, the actress said, "It always feels good to be in front of the camera and the icing on the cake is a good, impactful script and Suranga has been that project. We shot in the beautiful locations of Haryana and it has



been a great experience shooting with such talented co-actors and an amazing team."

"I play an Assistant Bank Manager named Dakshayani who is carefree, independent, and a focused woman but the truth can be different from what meets the eye," she added. The storyline of the show depicts the journey of a heist from its plotting to execution. The Inspector, who sets out to unfold the secrets behind the heist after the robbery, becomes clueless about whom to hold responsible for the heist. The show has been produced

by Vibhu Agarwal and ULLU Digital. Commenting on the same, Vibhu Agarwal said, "We are absolutely delighted to have Isha Koppikar on board as the lead for our show. She is a powerhouse of talent and the audiences are definitely in for a treat."

The show, which has an ensemble cast of actors like Rakesh Bedi portraying the Bank Manager, Freddy Daruwala as an honest cop, Sachin Verma, Rahul Jaitley, Sanjeev Tyagi, Ashok Kalra, Piyush Ranade amongst others, will premiere soon on ULLU app.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Aahana Kumra