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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI

NATION > 02

Attacks, media trials among new threats to judiciary: CJL...



HOLLYWOOD > 06

'The Matrix Resurrections' Encourages Audience Division...



SPORTS > 07

Rahul's sublime ton helps India rule day one of Boxing Day Test...



6 terrorists killed in 48 hours in Kashmir security operations

The killer of a police official was among the six terrorists neutralised in the last 48 hours in four anti-terrorist operations in Kashmir, officials said on Sunday.

Team Absolute | Srinagar

The killer of a police official was among the six terrorists neutralised in the last 48 hours in four anti-terrorist operations in Kashmir, officials said on Sunday. Police said based on specific information generated by them regarding the presence of a terrorist in the village Kalan Sirgufwara area of Anantnag, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by the police and army's 3 RR on Saturday. "During the search operation, as the presence of terrorist got ascertained, he was given ample opportunities to surrender. However, he denied the surrender opportunities and instead fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which retaliated leading to an encounter," police said.



ISJK. It is pertinent to mention that the killed terrorist had recently joined terror outfit ISJK and was the main accused behind the killing of ASI Mohammad Ashraf near Police Station Bijbehara," police said

arms and ammunition, were recovered from his possession.

Pertinently, in the last 48 hours, joint teams of police and the security forces neutralised six terrorists in four successful anti-terrorist operations without any collateral damage.

Incriminating materials, including

Union Minister clarifies, says no plan to bring back farm laws

Two days after his statement in Nagpur snowballed into a controversy, Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Narendra Tomar on Sunday clarified that the government has no proposal or plan to bring back farm reform laws. The Congress had alleged that the Centre was planning to bring back the contentious laws

rumours to cover up its own failures.

Tomar had on Friday said that the Government took a step back on the three farm laws due to some reasons, but would go forward again, leading the Congress to allege that the Centre was planning on bringing back the contentious laws.

In a tweet on Sunday, Tomar said the Government had no plans to bring back the laws. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had decided to withdraw the agricultural reform laws to "keep the honour of the farmers". He added that the Congress was sowing confusion "to cover up its failures" and "farmers should beware of this". Following more than a year of protests by farmers, Modi had announced the decision to withdraw the three farm laws in November. The laws were repealed in the recently-concluded winter session of Parliament.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Sunday clarified that the Government was not planning to bring back the farm laws that were recently repealed, adding that the Congress was spreading

PANEL TO LOOK INTO AFSPA WITHDRAWAL FROM NAGALAND

The Committee will be headed by Home Ministry official and include a top officer each of the Assam Rifles and the CRPF

Guwahati | Agencies

Days after a botched ambush by an elite armed forces unit killed 13 civilians at Oting in Nagaland's Mon district, a decision has been taken to constitute a committee to study the possibility of withdrawing the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) from the State. The Act is said to give the armed forces personnel the license to kill.

The committee will be headed by the Additional Secretary (Northeast) in the Ministry of Home Affairs and will include Nagaland's Chief Secretary and Director-General of Police.

The other members will be Inspector General of Assam Rifles (North) and a representative of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), an official statement issued by Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, Deputy Chief Minister Y.



Patton and former Chief Minister TR Zeliang said on Sunday.

The decision to form the panel was made during Home Minister Amit Shah's meeting with Mr. Rio, Mr. Patton and Mr. Zeliang along with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in New Delhi on December 23.

The statement said the committee would submit its report within 45 days. The withdrawal of the "disturbed area" notification and the AFSPA from Nagaland will be based on the recommendations of the committee, it added.

"A court of enquiry will initiate disciplinary proceedings against the Army unit and Army personnel, who are directly involved in the Oting incident and action will be taken immediately on the basis of fair enquiry. The identified persons who

will face the enquiry will be placed under suspension with immediate effect," the statement said.

It said the State government would provide jobs to the next of kin of the deceased and to initiate this process, the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police of Mon district would carry out necessary procedures in consultations with the village councils concerned.

Government jobs will be given on compassionate grounds on the basis of eligibility. The Nagaland delegation requested Mr. Shah to replace the Assam Rifles unit in Mon with immediate effect, the statement said.

The Nagaland government lauded Mr. Shah for taking the matter with utmost seriousness and the Government of India for taking the required steps to ensure justice and also for positively responding to the voice of the people.

The State government appealed to all sections to remain calm and continue to maintain a peaceful atmosphere.

"The democratic and peaceful nature of the civil society groups, tribal hohos (apex community-based body) and mass-based organisations in our collective quest for justice and truth has been well received and has created a positive image of the Naga people to the rest of the global community," the statement said.

MKU RESEARCHER DEVELOPS KIT TO DIAGNOSE COVID-19 IN 12 SECONDS

Srinagar | Agencies

A researcher in the Madurai Kamaraj University (MKU) has come up with a diagnostic kit to detect COVID-19 infection in 12 seconds. The kit has been patented in India and the researcher has applied for patent at Geneva as well. T. Arokiyadoss, Assistant Professor and in-charge head of the Department of Physics at the Directorate of Distance Education, developed the diagnostic kit based on lab-on-a-chip technology.

The research team included B. Ashokkumar, Associate Professor, Genetic Engineering Department, and P. Varalakshmi, Assistant Professor in the Molecular Microbiology Department in the School of Biotechnology. The then Vice-Chancellor of the university, M. Krishnan, partly funded the research.

"The RT-PCR kit requires 30 minutes to do the test. Our kit can perform the same in just 12 seconds. The kit directly interacts with the virus. When the virus enters the body, it attaches itself to ACE2 (antigen converting enzyme 2) and multiplies. Out kit takes the mRNA from the virus, amplifies and quantifies the virus," explained



Arokiyadoss. The researchers then sought the support of Madurai Medical College officials, including the then Dean J. Shangunani, and the college's Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratory, Institute of Microbiology, to test the kit. The college formed an ethical clearance board to approve the proposal. "We took 200 swab samples from COVID-19 infected patients to assess the performance of the kit. We were given 3 ml from the sample while another 3 ml went for the RT-PCR test. The results from both kits were similar," he said.

Arokiyadoss filed for a patent for his technology in India as well as in Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), Geneva. The PCT patent is pending approval. He has now signed an agreement with a Hyderabad-based private company that makes molecular diagnostics kits for manufacture and commercialisation of the device.

AMIT SHAH LIED TO PARLIAMENT ON NAGALAND KILLINGS: CONGRESS

New Delhi: Accusing Union Home Minister Amit Shah of lying to Parliament, the Congress on Sunday, presenting its report on the killing of 14 civilians at Oting village, Mon District of Nagaland, said the incident as recounted by Shah was vastly different from the truth. The Congress demanded his immediate resignation of Home Minister and setting up an inquiry commission under a judge of the Gauhati High Court. Presenting a fact-finding report, party's in-charge for Nagaland Ajoy Kumar said not a single Cabinet Minister of the Narendra Modi government visited the site of the dreadful incident. "The Home Minister, instead of visiting the spot and conveying his condolences to the people of Nagaland, went to Jaipur to address political rallies and try his hand at destabilising the Ashok Gehlot government. When he was supposed to go to the east, he went west just to serve his political purpose," Kumar said. The Congress had sent a four-member team comprising Kumar, Jitendra Singh, Gaurav Gogoi and Anto Antony. He said the government behaviour in response to the December 4 killings is just another example of the step-motherly treatment meted out to the northeastern States.

Kumar said the Home Minister had told Parliament that when the para-commandos of the Army signalled the vehicle they suspected was carrying the insurgents to stop, it tried to flee. In the ensuing encounter, six of the eight occupants of the vehicle were killed. A Minister in the Nagaland government and State BJP chief have contradicted his statement, he said. Kumar said the State government has announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the families of the deceased. The Centre has not announced or promised any compensation, he said. The Congress has demanded that the families of all deceased should be given Rs 1 crore and those who were injured Rs 10 lakh.

AS INDIA OPENS VAX FOR 15-18, CONG QUESTIONS AVAILABILITY OF JABS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi authorised booster dose and vaccination of those above 15 years of age, the Congress has questioned the availability of jabs. The party demanded vaccination for all above 3 years of age.

Addressing a press conference, party General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said: "Is Modi Govt failing India by tepid response to Omicron variant bordering on directionless drift? Is India's Covid-19 vaccine policy marred by failure of leadership, rudderless response and planless preparation?"

Wounds inflicted by the pandemic will not be healed by lip service or coming on the television and the government cannot run away from its responsibilities by changing vaccination policy each day, he said.

The Congress alleged that the government is playing with the lives of the people. Surjewala asked when will 47.95 crore people, whose second dose is due, be vaccinated?

"As per the government, the population of those over 18 years is 94 crore. But according to the government data till December 25, 36.50 crore people have not received the second dose, while 11.45 crore have not received even one dose," he claimed.

"The government said that the vaccine manufacturing capacity will be 16.80 crore per month but the required dose is 95 crore. How is it possible to vaccinate people in 149 days?" Surjewala asked.

Modi on Saturday announced that people

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi authorised booster dose and vaccination of those above 15 years of age, the Congress has questioned the availability of jabs. The party demanded vaccination for all above 3 years of age.

in the age group of 15-18 years will be eligible to get vaccine against novel coronavirus from January 3, 2022.

"The decision to vaccinate children will not only strengthen our fight against COVID, rather it would also reduce the worries of parents whose children are going to schools," the Prime Minister said while announcing the major decision.

Apart from children's vaccine, a precaution dose for healthcare workers will also start from January 10.

The country is currently staring at a possible third wave of COVID-19 amid growing concerns of the spread of new strain Omicron.

As the elderly and co-morbid people are more vulnerable to get serious illness from Omicron strain, Modi also announced a precaution dose for them.

"Those with comorbidities and above 60 years of age on the recommendation of their doctors will be eligible for precaution doses from January 10, 2022 onwards," Modi said.

'MANN KI BAAT':

Modi remembers Varun Singh, cautions people on Omicron

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' remembered Group Captain Varun Singh, who passed away after a weeklong battle with death after sustaining serious injuries in a helicopter crash on December 8 that led to the death of Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and 12 others.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' remembered Group Captain Varun Singh, who passed away after a weeklong battle with death after sustaining serious injuries in a helicopter crash on December 8 that led to the death of Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and 12 others.

The Prime Minister said, "When Varun was in the hospital, I saw something on social media that touched my heart. He was given Shaurya Chakra in August just this year. After this honour, he had written



a letter to the principal of his school. He wanted the lives of the students of the school that he studied in should also be a celebration. In his letter, Varun Singh ji did not boast of his valour; instead he referred to his failures. He talked about how he converted his shortcomings into abilities."

While cautioning people about the Omicron threat, the PM said, "We also have to keep in mind that a new variant of #Corona has already knocked at the door. Our experience of the last two years is that our own effort as a citizen is very important to defeat this global pandemic."

Modi said, "We have to learn so much, innovate, achieve new goals, therefore, we will have to persevere

without wasting even a moment. Our dreams will be such that development of our society and country is connected, our progress will open the way for the progress of the country and for this, we have to start working from today, without wasting a single moment, without losing a single particle or resource."

The Prime Minister said that in the new year every person, every organisation, should take a resolution to do something better, to become better in the coming year.

He said, "In these seven years, while doing #MannKiBaat, I could also have discussed achievements of the government, you too would have liked it; you would have appreciated it as well! But it is my experience of decades, that away from the glare of the media, there are millions of people who are doing great things." "This is the strength of the people; it is because of everyone's effort that India could fight the biggest pandemic in 100 years. We stood by each other like a family in every difficult moment," said Modi.

The Prime Minister also played

'Vande Matram' rendered by students from a High School at Illia, Greece.

"The beauty and emotion with which they have sung 'Vande Mataram' is amazing and commendable. Such efforts bring people of two countries closer. My greetings to these students of Greece and their teachers. I appreciate their effort," he said. He mentioned a startup working for pure water, "I have come to know about a start-up named Saaf Water which has been started by some youth. With the help of Artificial Intelligence and Internet of things, it will give information related to purity and quality of water in their area to people."

The PM also mentioned the efforts of Sagar Mule of Goa, who is involved in saving centuries old 'Kaavi' paintings from extinction. 'Kaavi' form of painting covers the ancient history of India.

Modi said there is a growing interest in the world to know about Indian culture. People from different countries are not only curious to know about the culture but are also helping to spread it. One such person is Serbian Scholar Dr. Momir Nikic.



ATTACKS, MEDIA TRIALS AMONG NEW THREATS TO JUDICIARY: CJI

Calling attention to the increasing incidents of attacks on the judiciary, Chief Justice of India (CJI) NV Ramana on Sunday underlined the need for the law enforcement agencies to deal with them effectively.

Vijayawada | Agencies

Calling attention to the increasing incidents of attacks on the judiciary, Chief Justice of India (CJI) NV Ramana on Sunday underlined the need for the law enforcement agencies to deal with them effectively. He made the remarks while delivering the fifth Late Sri Lavu Venkateswarlu Endowment Lecture. "In recent times, physical attacks on judicial officers are on the rise. At times, there are also concerted campaigns in print and social media against judges if parties do not get a favourable order. These attacks appear to be sponsored and synchronised. The law enforcing agencies, particularly the specialised agencies, need to deal with such malicious attacks effectively. It is unfortunate that unless the Court interferes and passes orders, the authorities generally do not proceed with the investigation. The governments are expected and duty bound to create a secure environment so that the judges and judicial officers can function fearlessly," he said. Justice Ramana also brought the spotlight on media trials, and said that they cannot be the guiding factors for deciding cases. "Another aspect which affects the fair functioning and independence of judiciary is the rising number of media trials. New media tools have enormous amplifying ability but appear to be incapable of distinguishing



between right and wrong, good and bad and the real and fake. Media trials cannot be a guiding factor in deciding cases," he observed. Explaining the new challenges and persistent challenges facing the judiciary, the CJI said the Constitution creates ample space for change as the country moves ahead as a democracy.

Justice Ramana also said that judiciary has to be quick to adapt and be flexible to resolve any chal-

lenge that comes its way. Appreciating the government for appointments of several judges, the CJI debunked the claims of judges themselves appointing judges. "It is nowadays fashionable to reiterate phrases such as, 'judges are themselves appointing judges'. I consider this to be one of the widely propagated myths. The fact is the judiciary is merely one of the many players involved in the process. Many authorities are involved including the Union Law Ministry, State Governments, Governor, High Court Collegia, Intelligence Bureau, and lastly, the topmost executive, who all are designated to examine the suitability of a candidate. I am sad to note that the well-informed also propagate the aforesaid notion. After all, this narrative suits certain sections." The CJI also noted that there is no impact assessment or basic scrutiny of constitutionality before passing of legislations. "The minimal that is expected out of the legislature while drafting laws is that they abide by settled Constitutional principles. While making laws, they must also think of providing effective remedies for issues which may arise out of the law. But these principles seemingly are being ignored." Citing the introduction of the Bihar Prohibition Act in 2016 as an example, the CJI said that "it resulted in the High Court being clogged with bail applications. Because of this, a simple bail application takes one year to be disposed of."

Ensure availability of Covaxin if mixed match policy for booster is adopted: IMA

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Sunday said that the Centre should ensure the large-scale availability of Covaxin if a mixed match policy is adopted for booster doses for healthcare workers, as majority of the people have taken Covishield as their first and second doses.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Sunday said that the Centre should ensure the large-scale availability of Covaxin if a mixed match policy is adopted for booster doses for healthcare workers, as majority of the people have taken Covishield as their first and second doses.

"On behalf of the frontline and healthcare workers, we hail the announcement of the Prime Minister for the precautionary booster dose for healthcare and frontline workers. It is the right step as the imminent third wave by the new variant is a matter of concern.

"Omicron is at our doorstep and we need to protect our healthcare and frontline workers in all possible ways", the IMA said in a statement. On the ongoing RDA strike which has hit all the medical services in the national capital, the IMA said that the issue of expediting PG counseling is the need of the hour to increase manpower ahead of the looming third wave threat. The infrastructure without manpower is a futile measure, it



added. The association has also welcomed the government's decision to inoculate children between 15-18 years of age. JA Jayal, National President of the IMA, said: "The IMA also welcomes the much-awaited decision of vaccination for children from January 3. At this moment of reopening of schools, this will be the welcome step to bring additional safety to children. The vaccination process for children must be handled with much more care and constant monitoring and surveillance must be ensured."

Rajnath, Yogi lay foundation stone of BrahMos unit

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here on Sunday that India was not making BrahMos missiles to attack any country in the world.

Lucknow | Agencies

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here on Sunday that India was not making BrahMos missiles to attack any country in the world. "We want to make BrahMos so that India has such power that no country in the world dares to look at us with an evil eye," he said, while laying the foundation stone of BrahMos Missile production unit and DRDO Lab in Lucknow.

Chief Minister Yogi



Adityanath, who was also present at the function, said that the new BrahMos Missile production unit will increase employment in the state. He said that new India is moving ahead fast in the defence sector.

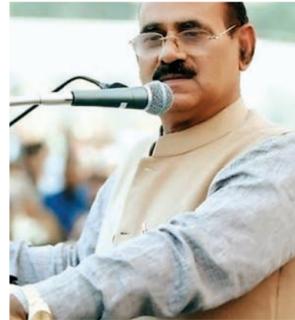
ED GRILLS UP MLA VIJAY MISHRA IN PMLA CASE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Sunday said that it grilled UP MLA from Bhadohi, Vijay Mishra, in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering (PMLA) case.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Sunday said that it grilled UP MLA from Bhadohi, Vijay Mishra, in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering (PMLA) case.

A team of elite officials of the ED reached Agra jail where Vijay Mishra is currently lodged to interrogate him. According to information, the ED in February had lodged a PMLA case against Mishra and his alleged aides. A



team of ED office from Prayagraj is looking into the matter. Sources have claimed that Mishra was involved in money laundering and for this he took help of his friends. He also acquired huge movable and immovable assets.

Mishra was grilled about his movable and immovable assets. He was also grilled about his aides. A source said that they will send the information about his assets to Income Tax Department and other agencies for further investigation. "We will also take the help of other agencies to know about his assets. He is hiding a lot of information. We did show him papers but he was trying to mislead us," said a source. The ED said that soon they will initiate proceedings to attach his assets under section 5 of the PMLA. Mishra has illegal properties in Prayagraj's Allapur, Handiya and Bhadohi, the probe agency said. The ED case is based on Police FIRs lodged against Mishra at different police stations. The ED is also gathering information about the assets of his family members.

Further probe in the matter is on.

PRESIDENT KOVIND GIVES ASSENT TO SURROGACY (REGULATION) ACT, 2021

New Delhi: President Ram Nath Kovind has given his assent to the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021.

The Presidential assent, which came on Saturday, was published in the government gazette immediately.

The Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on December 17 after the Rajya Sabha passed it on December 8.

According to the PRS research website, the Act defines surrogacy as a practice where a woman gives birth to a child for an intending couple with the intention of handing over the child to the couple after its birth.

However, the Bill prohibits commercial surrogacy and allows only altruistic surrogacy which involves no monetary compensation to the surrogate mother other than the medical expenses and insurance coverage during pregnancy.

Commercial surrogacy, on the other hand, includes surrogacy, or its related procedures, undertaken for a monetary benefit or reward (in cash or kind) exceeding the basic medical expenses and insurance coverage.

Surrogacy is permitted when it is: (i) for intending couples who suffer from proven infertility; (ii) altruistic; (iii) not for commercial purposes; (iv) not for producing children for sale, prostitution, or other forms of exploitation; and (v) for any condition or disease specified through regulations.

TWO MORE NAMES ADDED TO UTTARAKHAND HATE SPEECH FIR INVESTIGATION IS ON, POLICE SAY; NO ARRESTS MADE SO FAR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Uttarakhand Police on Sunday added the names of two more persons in the First Information Report (FIR) pertaining to hate speeches at a religious event in Haridwar organised between December 17-19, where calls were made for genocide and violence against Muslims.

Ashok Kumar, Uttarakhand Director General of Police said that many persons have been examined and the investigation was on. No arrests have been made so far in the case. Kumar said that adding the provisions of the anti-terror Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to the existing case was being legally examined. "Whether UAPA can be invoked or not is part of the investigation. It will depend on the facts of the case and we are getting it examined legally," he said. The Haridwar police has registered a case under Section 153A of the IPC (promoting enmity between different groups on



grounds of religion), entailing a maximum punishment of five years. "Our investigation is on from both points of view if more number of accused are to be added to the investigation and if any other Section is applicable," Kumar said. The FIR registered on December 23 had only named Wasim Rizvi alias Jitendra Narayan Tyagi as an accused as it was based on a complaint filed by a local resi-

dent who had only mentioned "Wasim Rizvi and others." Rizvi, a former Chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Shia Waqf Board, had recently converted to Hinduism.

On Sunday, the police added the names of Annapurna Maa alias Pooja Shakun Pandey; the 'Mahamandleshwar' of the Niranjini Akhada; the general secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha; and Dharamdas Maharaj, a resident of Bihar, to the FIR. In one of the video clips, the accused Annapurna Maa, is seen telling the gathering that Hindus should leave aside books and pick up arms against Muslims.

The other accused, Dharamdas Maharaj, said there were "500 Pakistans in India", where Hindu rituals could not be performed, and called for the killing of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Haridwar Superintendent of Police (City) Shekhar Suyal said they were taking action based on the investigation and as evidence emerges. On being asked if the two accused have been called

for questioning, Suyal said, "It is a part of the investigation; cannot reveal more."

At the event organised by Hindu extremist Yati Narsinghanand, he called on Hindu youth to become "Prabhakaran" and "Bhindranwale" and provoked Hindus to pick up arms against the Muslims. Narsinghanand has several FIRs registered against him in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. Earlier this year, his comments about Prophet Muhammad during a press conference in Delhi led the Delhi Police to file an FIR against him. The Haridwar FIR was filed after video clips of the event went viral. Reacting to the video, former Navy chief Arun Prakash had tweeted: "WHY IS THIS NOT BEING STOPPED? With our Jawans facing enemies on two fronts, do we want a communal blood-bath, domestic turmoil and international disgrace? Is it difficult to understand that anything which damages national cohesion and unity endangers India's national security."

PMK urges all-party meet on NEET exemption

S Ramadoss, founder of PMK, has appealed to the DMK government to conduct an all-party meeting for getting exemption from the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET).

CHENNAI | Agencies

S Ramadoss, founder of PMK, has appealed to the DMK government to conduct an all-party meeting for getting exemption from the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET).

In a statement on Saturday, the senior PMK leader said the only way ahead was to get the NEET exemption bill approved. The students must not be made 'scapegoats' for the NEET exemption issue, he said, adding that the dreams of students from the economically weaker sections must not be destroyed.

The NEET Exemption Bill has yet to get assent from the Tamil Nadu Governor, Ramadoss added. He said there was no clarity on when the Bill would be forwarded



to President Ram Nath Kovind. He added that no more poor rural students from Tamil Nadu be allowed to lose their life because of the fear of NEET and urged the government to conduct an all-party meet before the next academic year of admission process begins. The Tamil Nadu government has constituted a commission to study the impact of NEET headed by retired judge Justice Rajan. He had

given a report that the NEET exam be scrapped in the state and students provided admission based on marks in the plus-two examinations. Scrapping the NEET examination was a major plank of the DMK and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in particular. The DMK government is receiving criticism from all quarters for not being able to implement its poll promise on scrapping the NEET exam.

Madani seeks action in Haridwar hate speech, writes to Shah

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind president Maulana Mahmood Madani has written a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, National Commission for Minorities (NCM), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, demanding strict action against the organisers and attendees of the Dharam Sansad held in Haridwar last week.

Muzaffarnagar | Agencies

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind president Maulana Mahmood Madani has written a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, National Commission for Minorities (NCM), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, demanding strict action against the organisers and attendees of the Dharam Sansad held in Haridwar last week.

Speakers at the Dharam Sansad allegedly made hate speeches and called for violence against Muslim minorities.

"The government's silence on the issue is extremely harmful for the country. What is going on is a big threat to peace and communal harmony. Therefore, I demand that strict action be taken against the organisers and speakers at the event who made provocative and hate speeches and openly called for genocide of Muslims and urged the entire Hindu community to be armed," Madani wrote. In his letter, Madani also mentioned the provocative speech made by controversial head priest of the Dasna temple in Ghaziabad, Yati Narsinghanand, who had organised the event, which was held from December 16 to 19 at Ved Niketan Dham at Bhopatwala in Haridwar. After getting a complaint regarding the alleged inflammatory speeches at the event, police, late on Thursday registered an FIR against one named and several unnamed persons under section 153-A (offence of promoting disharmony, enmity or feelings of hatred between different groups on the grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language etc) of the IPC.

BJP SETS UP PANEL TO WOO BRAHMIN IN UTTAR PRADESH

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The BJP has decided to form a four member committee to decide on outreach programmes towards the Brahmin community in Uttar Pradesh covering all 403 constituencies in the State. Members of the committee include former Union ministers Shiv Pratap Shukla and Mahesh Sharma, BJP leader Abhijat Mishra and former national secretary Ram Bhai Mokariya.

The decision to set up the committee was taken at a meeting in New Delhi of leaders from the Brahmin community in UP along with Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who is also in charge of polls in UP on behalf of the BJP.

According to sources present at the meeting, the setting up of a committee and its outreach programme "is nothing out of the ordinary organisational work" being done before polls.

"The BJP always tries to reach as many groups and sections of society as possible every time," said a leader who was present at the meeting.

Brahmins are said to comprise 17% of the vote in Uttar Pradesh and



are a significant community in terms of having influence far beyond their own actual numbers. Several Brahmin leaders in Poorvanchal or

eastern Uttar Pradesh have recently switched to the Samajwadi Party, especially those who were earlier with the Bahujan Samaj Party.

Significantly, controversial Union Minister of State Ajay Mishra 'Teni' would also be roped in for events in his area, sources said. Mishra has been in the eye of controversy because of his son's involvement in the Lakhimpur Kheri incident that resulted in the death of eight people including four farmers.

The theme of Brahmins in the State feeling aggrieved has proven to have remarkable tenacity despite BJP's stellar performance in Uttar Pradesh during the 2019 general elections. That performance, senior leaders said was because the 2019 polls was to elect the Prime Minister, and Modi enjoying huge popularity.

"Frequent assessments have shown that the community has certain grievances against the party and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath who they feel favours Rajputs over Brahmins in the State," said a source.

Among those present at Sunday's meeting were deputy chief minister Dinesh Sharma, and ministers in the Yogi Adityanath government - Shrikant Sharma, Jitin Prasad, Brijesh Pathak and Lok Sabha MP Rita Bahuguna Joshi.



Cabinet withdraws ordinance on Panchayat election

CM Chouhan chaired a meeting regarding OBC reservation where the way to implement the triple test to decide on reservation in Panchayat polls was discussed.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh cabinet on Sunday withdrew a Panchayat election ordinance which was recently issued. On Friday, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had chaired a meeting regarding the OBC reservation where the way to implement the triple test to decide the reservation in Panchayat elections was discussed. CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday had announced that the local poll body elections will be held without a 27% OBC reservation. Chouhan had stated that the government will chal-

lenge the Supreme Court's stay on the reservation, similar to Maharashtra. The state Assembly had passed the 'Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj and Gram Swaraj (Amendment) Adhiniyam' providing the 27% OBC reservation, which has been stayed by the SC now. The state government said that the proposal has been sent to Governor Mangubhai Patel, said Home Minister Narottam Mishra. On Friday, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan held a meeting regarding the OBC reservation. During the meeting, the way to implement the triple test to decide the reservation in Panchayat elections was discussed. Madhya Pradesh is mulling over granting 22 per cent reservation for OBC in panchayat polls. Statistical data will be collected for this purpose. The government is also keeping an eye on the strategy of other states.

8 OMICRON CASES FOUND IN INDORE

Eight foreign travellers in Indore, Madhya Pradesh have been confirmed to be infected with the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, in the past one-and-a-half month. Of these six persons have recovered from the infection.

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Eight foreign travellers in Indore, Madhya Pradesh have been confirmed to be infected with the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, in the past one-and-a-half month. Of these six persons have recovered from the infection. Eight cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus have been found at Indore in Madhya Pradesh, state Home Minister Mishra said on Sunday. This is the first time that the MP government has reported cases of the new virus variant in the state. "Eight Omicron cases have been found in Indore. Out of these patients, six have recovered and have been discharged while two are undergoing treatment," Mishra, who is the state government's spokesman, told reporters. He said around 3,000 people recently returned to Indore from abroad and 26 of them were found to be infected with the coronavirus.



"Omicron was confirmed in the genome sequencing of eight of these people," he said. The samples of these people, who returned to the state's industrial hub Indore from different countries, were taken between December 17 and 21, according to officials. These infected people included two men aged 20 and 30 years, who came from New

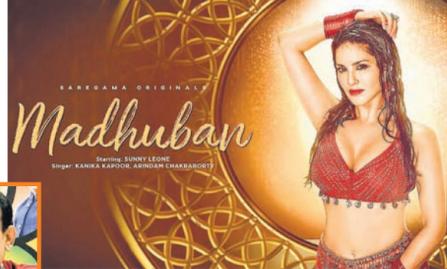
York (US) on December 14 and 19 respectively, a 23-year-old woman who arrived from London (UK) on December 14, two women aged 33 and 26 who returned from Tanzania (east Africa) on December 19, a 33-year-old woman who returned from Ghana (west Africa) on December 17, and two men aged 26 and 31 years, who arrived from Dubai on December 13 and 18 respectively, they said. On Saturday, Madhya Pradesh reported 42 new cases of coronavirus, raising the state's infection tally to 7,93,655, while the death toll remained unchanged at 10,532, an official earlier said. The state had 232 active COVID-19 cases, the official added. Efforts are on to deal with the third wave of Covid-19 in the state along with Omicron cases for which preparations are being made in hospitals. Necessary steps are being taken by the state government along with spreading awareness among people in the state.

LAGHU UDYOG BHARTI DELEGATION CALLS ON CHIEF MINISTER SHRI CHOUHAN

Bhopal: A delegation of Laghu Udyog Bharti, Madhya Pradesh met Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at his residence today. The office bearers of the organisation told Chouhan that this organisation is working in all the districts of the state. Letter of suggestions related to the development of small, micro and medium industries was also handed over to Chouhan. Chief also released the souvenir of the institution. State President of Laghu Udyog Bharti Mahesh Gupta- Indore, General Secretary Arun Soni-Katni, besides Jitendra Gupta and Uma Sharma - Bhopal and Rajesh Mishra - Pithampur were among those who met Chouhan.

Mishra Warns Sunny Leone & Singers To Remove Music Video In 3 Days

According to Home Minister Narottam Misra, the concerned music video 'Madhuban me Radhika nache' hurts the religious sentiments of Hindus.



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Home Minister Narottam Mishra on Sunday warned actor Sunny Leone and singers of the music video 'Madhuban me Radhika nache' Shaarib and Toshi to apologise and withdraw their music video 'Madhuban mein Radhika, jaise jungle me nache mor' within three days or else face action. The minister alleged that the video hurts the religious sentiments of Hindus. "Some vidharmis are con-

stantly hurting Hindu sentiments. The video 'Madhuban me Radhika nache' is one such condemnable attempt. I am warning Sunny Leone ji, Shaarib and Toshi ji to understand. If they don't remove the song after apologising in three days, then we will take action against them," Mishra told reporters when asked about the song. Mishra, who is also the Madhya Pradesh government spokesperson, said Hindus worship Maa Radha and the song has hurt the sentiments of the people. The song,

which was released last week, is sung by Shaarib and Toshi, and features Sunny Leone. On December 22, Leone had tweeted, "New Song Alert, Party Vibes only with #Madhuban", while sharing the video of the song 'Madhuban me Radhika, jaise jungle me nache mor.' The initial few words of this song match with the iconic 'Madhuban mein Radhika naache re' song from the 1960 film 'Kohinoor'. That song was sung by Mohammed Rafi and featured late actor Dilip Kumar. On Saturday, priests in

Uttar Pradesh's Mathura had demanded a ban on this latest video album of Sunny Leone, accusing the Bollywood actor of hurting their religious sentiments by performing an "obscene" dance on the song 'Madhuban mein Radhika nache.' In October this year, Mishra had issued a 24-hour ultimatum to fashion and jewellery designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee to withdraw an advertisement with "objectionable and obscene" portrayal of mangalsutra or else face statutory action. The designer had later withdrawn this advertisement. Similarly, a few days before that, Dabur India Private Limited had withdrawn its Fem cream bleach advertisement, which showed same-sex couple celebrating 'Karva Chauth' and watching each other through a sieve, after the MP home minister termed the ad as objectionable and warned of taking legal steps against the company.



CM SHIVRAJ PLANTED SAPPLINGS OF MAULSHREE AND SAPTAPARNI

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Saptaparni and Maulshree saplings in Smart City Park today along with the functionaries of Swachh Sanstha. Chouhan along with Commissioner Public Relations Sudam Khade and newly posted Principal Secretary and Commissioner Public Relations Raghendra Singh also planted a sapling of Gulmohar. Chouhan obtained information about the activities of the voluntary organisation from the office bearers of the organisation Lokesh, Shri Saket and Santosh Sharma. Saptaparni (Alstonia Scholaris) planted today is a medicinal evergreen tree, which has great importance in Ayurveda as a medicine. This tree is used to remove debility, to heal open wounds and in the treatment of jaundice and malaria. Maulshree is a well known tree. It is called Kesava in Sanskrit, Molsari or Bakool in Hindi. Maulshree is a medicinal tree, it has been used in Ayurveda for centuries.

Tribal Gets Rs 14,000 Bill After Governor's Visit

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Budhram Adivasi lives in a thatched hut in a village in Vidisha district. In August, thanks to the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana scheme, he was given the keys to an under-construction pucca house. In fact, Governor Mangubhai C Patel handed over the keys himself and shared meal with Budhram Adivasi. There was much joy in Budhram's life then, but little did he know that hosting lunch for the Governor would add misery to his life and cost him a fortune. On August 24 the Governor, while on a visit to the district, attended the 'griha pravesh', or housewarming ceremony, and his office scheduled the lunch at Budhram's home. Ahead of the 'VVIP' visit and photo-op, village and local officials swung into action installing a fancy new gate and fans for his modest home. The day after the 'VVIP' visit and photo-op, panchayat members took the fans away and slapped poor Budhram with a Rs 14,000 bill for the gate. "The officers came and said Governor sahib would eat lunch here. The new gate worth over Rs 14,000 was fixed... now they are asking for money I don't have. If I had known I would have to pay then I would not have got it installed," Budhram said. Budhram was also promised a cooking gas connection (under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana) with his new home. But six months later, he has neither gas nor the home, because it is not yet built. When Urban Development Minister Bhupendra Singh was asked to comment over the issue he said, we were told the guilty officials would be punished. "This should not have happened... action will be taken," he added. Singh then indicated "action" would be taken because "this is against dignity of the Governor." "We have a tradition that when a guest comes, we decorate the house. But, as you have said, this is against the dignity of His Excellency the Governor. So, we will act," he said. Poor Budhram's story, predictably, has led to a political row, with the Congress quick to react. "After the visit of the Governor, officials handed over a bill of Rs 14,000. My request is 'stop looting the poor'. The injustice being done to them... there should be an FIR against those who are responsible," MLA Kunal Chaudhary said.

Chief Minister pays tribute to Shaheed Udham Singh and former President Sharma

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid tributes to revolutionary Sardar Udham Singh on his anniversary and former President Late Shankar Dayal Sharma on his death anniversary by garlanding their portraits in the auditorium of his residence today. Chouhan also remembered the contributions of Shaheed Udham Singh and Sharma.



NGT ASKS CPCB, MP GOVT TO ASSESS HAZARDOUS WASTE AT BHOPAL'S UNION CARBIDE FACTORY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Madhya Pradesh government to ascertain the factual position of hazardous waste lying at the defunct Union Carbide factory in Bhopal. The tribunal's principal bench has sought that the situation be ascertained by the joint committee comprising of the CPCB, State Pollution Control Board (SPCB), and the Bhopal District Magistrate, and the final report be submitted to the tribunal within the next two months. The bench, headed by NGT Chairman, Justice Adarsh

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Madhya Pradesh government to ascertain the factual position of hazardous waste lying at the defunct Union Carbide factory in Bhopal.

Kumar Goel (retd) has fixed March 9, 2022 for the next hearing on this matter. The tribunal's decision came on December 22, while hearing a complaint filed in 2017 on the basis of media reports highlighting that a "huge amount of hazardous waste" is still lying at the factory premises and outside. The Union Carbide factory, located in old Bhopal, had caused the world's worst industrial disaster 37 years back, due to the

toxic gas leak on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984. "Having regard to the seriousness of the allegation, it appears necessary to ascertain the factual position in the matter through a joint committee of the CPCB, State PCB and the District Magistrate, Bhopal," the NGT said, adding that the state PCB will be the nodal agency for coordination and compliance on ascertaining the amount of hazardous

waste and the joint committee must make an inspection visit, within two weeks. As per official reports, the Madhya Pradesh government had, in June this year, initiated a plan to dispose of 337 metric tonnes of hazardous waste from the factory premises for construction of a memorial to the Bhopal gas tragedy victims. However, officials privy to the matter told IANS that the "plan of disposing of 337 metric tonnes hazardous waste was yet to be executed due to various reasons, including the Covid-19 pandemic". "Tendering process to hire a private agency for the purpose of disposing of hazardous waste is under process," said an official on condition of anonymity. On the other

hand, activists working for the welfare of the Bhopal Gas tragedy victims claimed that this 337 metric tonnes is just 2 per cent of the total hazardous waste. "There hasn't been any comprehensive scientific assessment to ascertain the actual amount of hazardous waste in and outside the factory's premises. It is needed to know that what chemicals are present, and at what depths and distances, and then, a plan for environmental remediation could be prepared." "Without doubt, much attention will need to be paid to thousands of tonnes of toxic sludge, buried outside the factory that is leaching poisons into the soil and groundwater," said activist Rachna Dhingra.

CHIEF MINISTER CHAIRS CABINET MEETING

Rs 215.53 crore approved for Khelo India scheme

This is an important decision regarding the organisation of Khelo India Youth Games 2022-23 in Bhopal after the excellent performance of the players of the state in Tokyo Olympics and making Bhopal a sports hub.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the meeting of the Council of Ministers held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, policy/in-principle approval of Rs. 215 crore 53 lakh was given for three years under the Khelo India scheme. Under this scheme, the Cabinet approved the capital expenditure amount of Rs. 137 crore 60 lakhs for the construction of International Sports Complex in Bhopal for 3 years, which will be used for the first time in Khelo India Youth Games 2022-23, capital expenditure of Rs. 38 crore 99 lakh for purchase of machines and equipment, recurring expenditure of Rs. 15 crore 56 lakh per annum for establishment and maintenance of sports complex from the year 2023-24 and revenue non-recurring expenditure of Rs. 23 crore 38 lakh for successful organisation of Khelo India Youth Games 2022-23. This is an important decision regard-

ing the organisation of Khelo India Youth Games 2022-23 in Bhopal after the excellent performance of the players of the state in Tokyo Olympics and making Bhopal a sports hub. The Government of India has received in-principle consent to host the Khelo India Youth Games 2022-23 in Madhya Pradesh. The approved sports complex will be used primarily for various competitions of Khelo India Youth Games 2022-23. It can be used for various international/national competitions held from time to time by the players of sports academies. Girls Education Campus of Tribal Affairs Department is running with the objective of increasing the literacy percentage of scheduled tribe girls and bringing about qualitative improvement in the state. The cabinet approved the revised amount of Rs 1877 crore 30 lakh in place of the original administrative approval of Rs 1785 crore 51 lakh for 65 girls education complex building construction work.

The cabinet has sanctioned an estimated amount of Rs. 1084 crore 52 lakh for the project of 1,200 FRV vehicles for the detailed action plan of second phase (2021-2027) of Centralized Police Call Centre and Control Room System (Dial-100) Service. Approval was also accorded to include the provision of gradually increasing the number of FRVs in the tender to 2 thousand FRVs in the period 2021-2027. The cabinet gave its approval to amend Rule 3 of the Madhya Pradesh Highway Fund Rules 2012. As amended, all money or receipts specified in sub-section (2) of section 3 and forming part of the Fund shall be deposited in a Fund to be called the Madhya Pradesh Highway Fund. The Fund will be deposited in any nationalized bank or scheduled bank or other financial institution as may be decided by the Executive Committee. The receipts



from consumer fee collection and permission and license fee will be deposited in the Fund, which will be called Madhya Pradesh Highway Fund. The Fund shall be deposited in any nationalized bank or scheduled bank or other financial institution as may be decided by the Executive Committee. The cabinet approved the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj and Swaraj (Amendment) Ordinance 2021.

KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES 2022-23 WILL BE HELD IN BHOPAL

Bhopal: In the meeting of the Council of Ministers chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, approval has been given to host Khelo India Youth Games in the year 2022-23 in Bhopal city. Along with this, in the first phase of the Khelo India scheme, the cabinet has given approval for the establishment of an international sports complex on 20.42 hectares of land at village Nathu Barkheda. Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Yashodhara Raje Scindia has thanked Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for giving another sports gift to the players of Bhopal and the state. Scindia said that Bhopal is now making its mark as a sports hub. Hosting Khelo India is not only an opportunity for us to showcase our skills but also a challenge. She informed that about Rs. 176.59 crore would be spent on the construction and equipment of the International Sports Complex to be built at village Nathu Barkheda Bhopal. This

work will be done in three phases, in which the first phase includes the Khelo India Youth Games 2022-23 in Bhopal. The sports complex will be equipped with a football stadium with a capacity of about 10,000, two hockey stadiums with a capacity of 4,000, parking, internal and service roads, landscaping, horticulture, solar panels, boundary wall, gate, guardrooms, sewage systems, street lights, etc. Scindia informed that in the second phase an indoor sports complex will be constructed at village Nathu Barkheda Bhopal and in the third phase, a cricket stadium will be constructed. Rs 23.38 crores will be spent for Khelo India Youth Games 2022-23 in Bhopal and Rs. 15.56 crore on its operation and maintenance after the construction of international sports complex. Approval of 68 posts has also been given by the Cabinet in which provision has been made to fill 21 regular posts and 47 posts on contract basis.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Rising global Covid cases are serious concern

Rising Covid cases globally have the potential to impact capital flows as well as heighten inflation, said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra). Accordingly, the agency cited that uncertainty related to a third Covid wave has already started showing signs in equity markets. It pointed out that foreign portfolio investors were the net sellers in the Indian markets to the tune of Rs 103 billion in November 2021 while the net sell-off in debt has been Rs 27 billion during the month. Besides, the agency said that there could be an adverse impact on the society because of a successive lockdown, and particularly when the domestic growth condition is still not broad-based but capex cycle is showing green-shoots. In terms of capital flows, it noted that the hardening domestic inflation and a reversal of the ultra-loose policies in advanced economies have built up pressure on the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The Monetary Policy Committee earlier this month left interest rates unchanged and reiterated that policy support was needed to ensure sustainable economic growth. The commercial paper issuances by corporates in November 2021 remained benign at Rs 727 billion due to no immediate need for funds and a timid demand, whereas the issuances by non-banks increased to Rs 1,616 billion in November 2021 from Rs 292 billion in October 2021. "The number of ultra-short-term commercial paper issuances has increased; concentration of issuances in the seven-day bucket is largely due to the initial public offer financing in the equity market. Easy liquidity had kept the yields low across the buckets in November 2021. In addition, 'Certificates of Deposits' (CD) issuances by state-owned banks in the primary market remained subdued due to prevailing high liquidity in the banking system and low credit offtake, whereas issuances by private banks increased by Rs 30 billion in November 2021.

STORM IN THE TEACUP: COVID, FALLING EXPORTS CONTINUE TO HURT INDUSTRY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The perfect storm in the cost-intensive tea industry is expected to spill over into 2022, as concerns such as rising tea prices as well as subdued export demand continue to hurt the producers. Tea production is a high-cost business, with 60-65 per cent of the input costs going into labour wages. The rest goes for coal, gas, fertiliser, and other machinery. The rise in tea costs was led by the pandemic-led disruptions in the plucking activities initially. The leaves mature if they are left on the shrubs for too long, leading to deterioration in the quality of tea. Later, floods in some key tea growing regions of Assam and West Bengal also damaged crops and reduced yields. These two states produce the lion's share of the beverage in the country, almost 75 per cent of the total. Then came the wage hike by both the state governments, just before the Assembly polls in the tea growing states. Votes of tea labourers, who are sizable in numbers, play a crucial role in many pockets of these two states. Assam raised daily wage by Rs 50 at Rs 202, while West Bengal raised it by Rs 26 at Rs 202.

Production loss and rising input costs are just one side of the coin. Importantly, the export demand for Indian tea had also dampened as out-of-consumption of the commodity had tanked sharply amid the pandemic globally. As per the latest data available on Tea Board of India's website, Indian tea exports during January-September fell 10 per cent to 138 million kg. The data for October and November are yet to be published. Outlook for exports is still dim with the detection of the new Covid-19 variant -- Omicron, tea producers said. "Outlook for tea exports is not very optimistic. Increased cost of production for crush tear and curl tea as compared to African prices are hurting the Indian market. African producers are making inroads in those markets, including Iran, where Indian tea was earlier dominant," said Anshuman Kanoria, Chairman of Indian Tea Exporters' Association. Kanoria also owns a few tea estates in Darjeeling. Iran was predominantly a major importer of tea from India. Besides, higher freight rates also add worries for the exporters, Kanoria said. "Subdued out-of-home consumption of tea in UK and Europe (two major export destinations) amid the resurgence in Covid case-

load will dent our export prospects further," he said. Further, he added that the high percentage of absenteeism of tea workers from their daily work is delaying harvests, which in turn lead to deterioration in quality crop. To streamline absenteeism, he said daily wage should be linked with productivity of the plantation workers. According to Dinesh Bihani, Secretary at Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers Association: "Recently, Sri Lanka has had an agreement with the Iran government where all the tea export dues will be cleared through barter system. They (Sri Lanka) will purchase oil from Iran against the tea exported by them. This may affect the orthodox tea prices which are mostly exported from India." On the availability of tea in the daily auctions at the Centre, Bihani said the volume is negligible as the tea season is almost at its end. Tea season starts typically from early-mid March till the onset of the winter. On the export side, he also echoed almost the same as said by Kanoria. "Tea sector faced serious challenges in 2021 -- lower crop, lower price and lower export. Low crop was due to inclement weather, low export due to Iran's payment issues, non-availability of containers, multi-fold increase in ocean



freight," said Sujit Patra, Secretary at Indian Tea Association, the premier tea body founded in 1881. "Except good quality tea that fetched higher prices, other teas fetched lower prices. Darjeeling saw an unprecedented crisis -- low crop and abnormally low price," Patra said. "There will be lower carry forward stock in 2022. Hope in the first few months, the price will remain firm." Besides, he suggested promotion exercises for tea in both domestic and overseas markets. India produces on an average 1,380 million kg tea annually, and is one of the top growers of the commodity. The country's tea sector employs around 1.2 million workers and contributes 23 per cent to the global output.

5 TRENDS THAT WILL SHAPE CYBERSECURITY THREAT LANDSCAPE IN 2022

Cybersecurity today is non-negotiable for individuals, businesses, and governments. 2021 saw cyberattacks increasing not just in size and scale, but also in sophistication. In fact, according to the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), around 12.1 lakh cybersecurity incidents were observed till October 2021 in India. Microsoft analyzes over 8.3 trillion signals each day for potential malicious activity in email, desktops, laptops, and cloud applications that people log into for work and personal life. Here are five cybersecurity paradigm shifts shared by Microsoft Security for 2022:



The rise of digital empathy
Digital empathy involves thinking about the ways in which people behave and engage with technology. By applying empathy to digital solutions, we can make these solutions more inclusive. In cybersecurity, that means building tools that accommo-

date more diversity with respect to people and their ever-changing circumstances, diverse perspectives, and varied abilities.
The Zero Trust journey is becoming increasingly important
Zero Trust is an "assume breach" security posture with strong identity authentication

everywhere. As we look past the pandemic to a time when workforces and budgets rebound, Zero Trust will become the biggest area of investment for cybersecurity. This means that right now, every one of us is on a Zero Trust journey -- whether we know it or not.
Diversity of data matters
Microsoft tracks over 24 trillion daily signals from a diverse set of products, services, and feeds around the globe. In 2021, the diversity of data allowed us to understand Covid-19 themed attacks in a broader context. This is an example of how the power and scale of the cloud and data have a clear advantage when it comes to combating threats.

The resiliency of a business is tied to its cyber resilience
Cyberattacks are increasing in frequency and sophistication and are deliberately targeting core business systems to maximise the impact of the attack or likelihood of a ransomware payout. With this context, we know a comprehensive approach to operational resilience must include cyber resilience. Microsoft benefits from a strategy that focuses on four basic threat scenarios: Planful events such as weather incidents, unplanned events such as earthquakes, legal events

such as cyberattacks, and pandemics like Covid-19.
A greater focus on integrated security
The first half of 2021 brought into stark reality the agility and callousness of cybercriminals. To uncover shifting attacker techniques and stop them before they do real damage, organisations must be able to see across their apps, endpoints, network, and users. Facing a new economic reality, organisations will now be driven to reduce costs by adopting security capabilities built into their cloud and productivity platforms of choice.

international

EGYPTIAN, RUSSIAN LEADERS AGREE TO INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO SETTLE LIBYAN CRISIS

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin have agreed on intensifying joint efforts to settle the Libyan crisis.



Cairo | Agencies
Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin have agreed on intensifying joint efforts to settle the Libyan crisis. During a phone conversation, the two Presidents reviewed the current situation in Libya, where Sisi highlighted Egypt's ongoing efforts to bring the views of the Libyan parties closer so that Libya can cross the current transitional phase and activate the free will of the Libyan people in choosing their leaders and representatives, Xinhua news agency

reported. According to an official statement, Sisi and Putin also stressed the importance of intensifying joint efforts and mutual coordination between their countries to settle the Libyan crisis and achieve the desired

aspirations of the Libyan people for a better future, as well as combating and undermining armed militias and terrorist organisations and putting an end to illegal foreign interference in Libyan affairs. The talks between Sisi and Putin

came after the High National Elections Commission (HNEC) of Libya, in coordination with the House of Representatives, proposed last week to postpone the first round of voting in the presidential election to January 24, 2022, provided that the House of Representatives takes the necessary measures to lift the state of force majeure that obstructs the electoral process. More than 2.5 million Libyan voters have received their voter cards from the HNEC, and are expecting to cast their votes to choose a president. The Libyan parliamentary elections, originally planned to be held on the same day as the presidential poll, have been postponed to January 2022. The elections are part of a roadmap adopted by the UN-sponsored Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in February, with the aim to bring stability to Libya.

Hundreds of Palestinians injured in fierce West Bank clashes

Hundreds of Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were injured during fierce clashes near the northern West Bank city of Nablus.



Ramallah | Agencies
Hundreds of Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were injured during fierce clashes near the northern West Bank city of Nablus. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said in a statement that 247 Palestinian protesters were injured by Israeli soldiers in the village of Burqa, northwest of Nablus, reports xinhua news agency. Among the injured, 10 were shot by live ammunition and 48 by rubber-coated metal gunshots, with one in critical condition after he was shot in the abdomen, said the statement. In the village of Bazarria, close to Burqa, 54 Palestinians were injured during clashes with Israeli soldiers, it added. Israeli media reported that a soldier was injured during the clashes in Burqa and Bazarria, where troops opened fire to disperse Palestinians who

threw stones at them. Palestinian witnesses said that fierce clashes broke out in Burqa between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli soldiers who arrived to protect Israeli settlers at an old settlement that was evacuated in 2005. The Palestinian Foreign Ministry said that it holds the Israeli government "fully and directly responsible for the comprehensive Israeli aggression on the Palestinian people". In a statement, the Ministry said that the Israeli soldiers and the settlers "continue escalating their aggression against our people who are celebrating Christmas and the New Year."

Deal with Turkey, Qatar over Afghan airports' management yet to reach

The Taliban-led government in Afghanistan has said that they were yet to reach an agreement with Turkey and Qatar over the management of five airports in the war-torn nation, the media reported.

came to Kabul on Thursday and held meetings with technical teams of the Islamic Emirate. These meetings will continue and in the near future they will reach an agreement in light of the country's national interests," TOLO News quoted Imamuddin Ahmadi, a spokesman of the Ministry, as saying. The statement came after Turkey's state-run Anadolu News Agency had reported that the two delegations have reached an agreement on the issue with the Taliban. Turkey and Qatar have agreed to manage the Kabul International Airport, Kandahar International Airport, Mazar-Sharif International Airport, Khost airport and Herat airport. Afghanistan has 24 airports and reportedly Kabul, Balkh, Herat, Kandahar and Khost airports are designed for international flights and the rest are for domestic flights. International and local flights were suspended at the Kabul airport and across Afghanistan after the Taliban seized power in August.

Kabul | Agencies
The Taliban-led government in Afghanistan has said that they were yet to reach an agreement with Turkey and Qatar over the management of five airports in the war-torn nation, the media reported. The Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation confirmed that discussions were underway with the visiting joint Turkish-Qatari delegation, Khaama Press reported. "The joint Turkish-Qatari technical team

Taliban commander warns Pak against firing at Afghanistan

A top military commander of the Taliban-led government has warned Pakistan against firing artillery towards Afghanistan, adding that Kabul was ready to respond if Islamabad did not stop, the media reported.

Kabul | Agencies
A top military commander of the Taliban-led government has warned Pakistan against firing artillery towards Afghanistan, adding that Kabul was ready to respond if Islamabad did not stop, the media reported. Abu Dojana, commander of the 201 Khalid Bin Walid Corps, said that despite the Taliban seeking good ties with the neighbouring nations, its forces also have the military equipment to defend Afghanistan in case of any provocation, reports TOLO News. "This is precious soil. We have paid a large sacrifice for it. We want to be good neighbours but if they keep attacking our soil, we will certainly give them a response," he said.



The commander's remarks come as residents of Kunar have claimed that Pakistan has been targeting several

parts of the province for the past two weeks. At least one civilian was also injured in mortar shelling by the Pakistani military on the Chogam area of Shiltan district in Kunar, said the TOLO News report. Chogam area runs alongside the Durand Line that forms the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. "I was wounded by the mortar, a fragment hit my head. I was taken to Asadabad during the night. I was in the hospital for two days," TOLO News quoted Anwar Shah, the injured person, as saying. Some residents have also claimed of seeing Pakistani drones operating in the province. "We are being attacked by Pakistan. Everyone is in trouble, including children and women," said Salman, a resident of Shiltan district.

S.KOREAN RULING PARTY, SPLINTER MINOR ANNOUNCE MERGER DEAL

South Korea's ruling Democratic Party (DP) and the splinter minor Open Democratic Party announced their merger agreement on Sunday, in a move meant to strengthen unity in the liberal political bloc ahead of the March 9, 2022 presidential election.



Seoul | Agencies
South Korea's ruling Democratic Party (DP) and the splinter minor Open Democratic Party announced their merger agreement on Sunday, in a move meant to strengthen unity in the liberal political bloc ahead of the March 9, 2022 presidential election. DP leader Song Young-gil and Choe Kang-wook, the head of the satellite party, signed the agreement, including a decision to use the ruling party's name as that of the merged party, along with a set of political and social reform goals, reports Yonhap News Agency. The agreement came as Lee Jae-myung, the ruling party's standard-bearer, has been stepping up his presidential campaign against Yoon Suk-yeol, the nominee for the main opposition People Power Party. Polls have shown them in a neck-and-neck race in recent weeks. The two parties' merger agreement entailed their political reform agenda, including adopting an open nomination system for proportional representation parliamentary seats and seeking a system to allow citizens to recall lawmakers. Their social reform agenda included installing a real estate market oversight institution. The minor party is considered a "satellite party" of the DP, as it was launched by former DP lawmakers ahead of last year's parliamentary elections. he party went on to win three proportional representation seats in the National Assembly.



52 STUDENTS INFECTED WITH COVID, MAHARASHTRA SCHOOL SEALED

The number of coronavirus cases at the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district has gone up to 52, including 48 students, a health official said on Sunday. A few days back, 19 students from the residential school in Parner tehsil had tested positive for the viral infection. The school has over 400 students across classes 5 to 12. The school is located at Takli Dhokeshwar in the Ahmednagar district of the state.

Ahmednagar | Agencies

The number of coronavirus cases at the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district has gone up to 52, including 48 students, a health official said on Sunday. A few days back, 19 students from the residential school in Parner tehsil had tested positive for the viral infection. The school has over 400 students across classes 5 to 12.

19 children were found to be infected with Covid-19 at Maharashtra's Jawahar Navodaya school, following which 450 students were tested for the virus. Now, 33 more children have tested positive. A total of 52 people tested positive for Covid at the school. The school has been sealed and the area has been declared a containment zone. The school is located at Takli



Dhokeshwar in the Ahmednagar district of the state. The number of cases of the fast-spreading Omicron variant of Covid

has risen to 422 in India, with Maharashtra reporting the most number of infections. The state has also reported the most number

of Covid cases. It has 108 cases of the new variant. Forty-two people have recovered in the state so far, according to the Health Ministry.

'BOOSTER SHOTS NEED OF THE HOUR'

Maharashtra welcomes Centre's decision to administer booster shots amid Omicron scare

"We welcome the central government's decision on boosters for 60+ and frontline staff and vaccines for 15-18 years. Booster dose amid Omicron scare is need of the hour," health minister Rajesh Tope said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Sunday welcomed the Centre's decision to administer Covid-19 vaccines to children and "precaution dose" to healthcare and frontline workers as well as people above the age of 60 with comorbidities.

Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope said those shots are a "need of the hour", especially amid concerns over the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, considered more transmissible than the previous strains responsible for the earlier waves of the pandemic in the country.

"We welcome the central government's decision on boosters for 60+ and frontline staff and vaccines for 15-18 years. Booster dose amid Omicron scare is need of the hour," Tope said.

"PM Modi has fulfilled the demand of booster dose and Covid-19 vaccines for

children. We demanded that children should be vaccinated for keeping them safe as schools are reopening," he added.

In an address to the nation on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the vaccination drive for children of age 15 and above will begin from January 3 onwards.

The Prime Minister also said "precaution doses" for health care, frontline workers and people above the age of 60 with certain health conditions.

In a televised address late in the evening, the Prime Minister also outlined the preparations made by the government to tackle any surges.

"We all have experienced that those who are Corona warriors, health care and frontline workers, they have a huge contribution in keeping the country safe in this fight... Therefore, from the point of view of precaution, the government has decided that a 'precaution dose' of vaccine will also be started for health care and frontline workers," PM Modi said. The recent announcement came amid widespread concerns over a third wave of the coronavirus pandemic which, experts fear, will be sparked by the Omicron variant. India's tally of Omicron cases has already surpassed 400 and Maharashtra has the most number of such infections.

Omicron tally rises to 110; 1,485 new Covid-19 cases, 12 deaths;

The state recorded two new cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus which took the tally of such cases to 110. As many as 57 of these patients have been discharged following treatment.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra on Saturday reported 1,485 new coronavirus cases and 12 fatalities which took the caseload to 67,56,240 and death toll to 1,41,416, officials said on Sunday.

The tally of active patients in the state rose to 9,102. As many as 796 coronavirus patients recovered during the day, taking the tally of recoveries to 65,02,039. The state recorded two new cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus which took the tally of such cases to 110. As many as 57 of these patients have been discharged. Mumbai reported 731 cases but no death in the last 24 hours, while the larger Mumbai division witnessed 1,011 new cases and one fatality. Meanwhile, the state government has said that imposition of a fresh lockdown in Maharashtra will be con-



sidered only if the daily demand for medical oxygen touches 800 metric tonne. On Friday, the state government had banned the assembly of more than five persons in public places between 9 pm to 6 am and restricted the number of people allowed at public functions in view of a spurt in Covid-19 cases. Public Health Minister Rajesh Tope said, "The situation is well under control. We firmly believe a complete lockdown is not on our agenda at this moment. We don't want to inconvenience people by imposing such extreme measures." Maintaining that Covid-19 cases of Omicron variant were on rise in Maharashtra, the minister said: "It certainly is a cause of concern. While the state is fully prepared to tackle the challenge... at the same time, I appeal to the people not to become complacent."

Maharashtra govt determined to hold poll for Speaker's post, BJP says it's Governor's call

"We have informed the Governor about our intention to hold the election for the Speaker's post. Even if he does not respond, we will hold the election," said Congress state president Nana Patole.

Team Absolute | Pune

While the Maharashtra Congress is likely to announce their candidate for the Legislative Assembly Speaker's post on Sunday, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government seems determined to hold an election for the same on Tuesday. Meanwhile, the state BJP has strongly opposed the process of conducting the election. The MVA government's determination to conduct the election for the Speaker's post has been made clear by



the Congress. "We have informed the Governor about our intention to hold the election for the Speaker's post. Even if he does not respond, we will hold the election," said Congress state president Nana Patole. The opposition BJP said it was not opposed to the holding of the election but to the way in which the government is trying to do it. "For six decades, the election has

been held through a secret ballot. But the MVA government is trying to break the tradition by announcing that the election will be held through voice vote. We are against this process," said state BJP spokesperson Keshav Upadhye. BJP reckons that if a secret ballot is held, several MLAs from the MVA will vote in favour of its candidate. "Like it happened in recent

Nagpur and Akola council elections where MVA members voted in favour of our candidates, it will also happen in case of Speaker's election as there is widespread disgruntlement among members of three parties - Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena," said a BJP leader. As for the government's determination to hold the election even if the Governor does not respond to the government's letter, Upadhye said: "It is the prerogative of the Governor who will go by the constitutional provision in this regard. We have nothing to say on this count." The BJP would not meet the Governor to oppose the holding of the election, Upadhye said. MVA leaders said they don't expect the governor to give a go-ahead for the election. "But it won't matter to us, we are determined to hold the election as our state party chief has made it very clear," said Congress spokesperson Gopal Tiwari. "The state unit has not recommended any name for the Speaker's post to the party high command. The party will announce the name," Patole said.

'Minor incident, keeps happening,' says Salim Khan about Salman snake bite

In a major scare on the eve of his birthday, Bollywood megastar Salman Khan was bitten by a snake in his bedroom at the family's sprawling farmhouse in Raigad, around 45 km from the outskirts of Mumbai.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a major scare on the eve of his birthday, Bollywood megastar Salman Khan was bitten by a snake in his bedroom at the family's sprawling farmhouse in Raigad, around 45 km from the outskirts of Mumbai. The incident happened in Khan's bedroom after he arrived from a shooting assignment early on Sunday morning, said the actor's 86-year-old father, the legendary Bollywood storyteller Salim Khan. "He was right inside the room and suddenly felt some pain in his hand. It was a snake which may have entered the house from some gaps," Salim Khan told IANS from the family's green nest, Arpita Farms, far away from their Bandra home.

Immediately, his worried family and panicky security detail checked out the wound, which appeared to be a snake bite, and rushed him in a motorcade to a private hospital at Kamothe in Navi Mumbai. After the initial examination, the medics and emergency staff concluded it was a non-venomous snake and gave Salim some first-aid and medicines. "As a precaution in all such cases, they kept him under observation for about three hours and then discharged him. Salman is now back at the farmhouse and he is absolutely normal and cheerful," a relieved Salim Khan assured IANS. About the snake, he said jokingly: "We have no issues. Salman is safe and we allowed the poor creature to go away on his path. (Ja bhai, tu bhi

chala ja!)" As the family recovered from the initial shock and seemed to take the episode merrily in their stride, Salim Khan sounded quite flummoxed at the sudden scrutiny the incident had attracted. "This is a remote, mofussili area. There are many wild creatures around, especially snakes, scorpions and other creepy-crawlies. Such minor incidents keep happening. I wonder why there's so much fuss over it," a bemused Salim Khan said. On the family's big-bash plans for Salman's birthday on Monday (December 27), Khan Sr. was not exactly forthcoming, but said: "The entire family is here. We are all preparing for his birthday. Salman is fine and at the farmhouse." Christened 'Arpita Farms', the

property is situated in a secluded, thickly forested area, spread across nearly 150-acres - which the Khan clan had bought more than two decades ago, and remains "in tune with nature". It is the Khan family's favourite - and regular - haunt during long weekends, holidays, festivals or special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries of the different clan members, besides the occasional Bollywood party or shoots, and when international or Indian celebs drop in for a private retreat, away from Mumbai's prying paparazzi. This, Khan had said, provided the local tribals and farmers with sufficient round-the-year water supply, besides enabling the wildlife in the neighbouring jungles to quench their thirst.

Retired judge calls Shakti Act 'draconian', objects to death sentence for rape

Justice BG Kolse-Patil said that he would be writing to the government suggesting certain amendments to make the law more effective.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Retired Bombay High Court judge Justice BG Kolse-Patil has strongly opposed Maharashtra's Shakti Act that entails a death sentence for rape. The retired judge has demanded that instead of a death sentence, a life sentence would be an appropriate punishment, or else "fake rape cases" would become the "order of the day."

On Thursday, the Maharashtra Assembly unanimously passed the Shakti Criminal Laws (Maharashtra Amendment) Bill, 2020, on crimes against women and children. On Friday, the state Legislative Council gave its nod to the bill that proposes a time limit of 30 days to complete the investigation from the day a complaint is registered.

Describing Maharashtra Shakti Act as a draconian law, the retired judge expressed fears that it would be misused. "There will be widespread misuse of the law, especially by politicians to target their rivals. Innocents are likely to be punished which will be a travesty of justice," said Justice Kolse-Patil, adding that he would be writing to the government suggesting certain amendments to make the law more effective. "The law is draconian like the UAPA and the sedition law. There is scope for amendments and the government should carry out the necessary amendments to ensure that genuine rape cases do not go unpunished and fake rape cases do not become the order of the day to settle personal or political scores," he said.

The retired judge said the possibility of many fake cases cannot be discounted. "Already, these days several fake rape cases are being registered; cases where the couple had consensual sex and later a discord leading to the registration of rape cases. Are you going to send a man who had consensual sex (with a woman) to death? Are you going to send a man who was in a live-in relationship which later soured to death? This is going to cause social disharmony and disturb social

peace," he said. The retired judge said these days youngsters fall in love and develop physical intimacy with their partners. "Many times their relationship does not last long. In some cases, they don't part easily. When a quarrel happens, the girl goes on to file a rape case. In cases where the relationship has soured over discords or disagreements and there was no use of force, how can such cases be termed as rape? We need to bring in amendments where forceful violation of a woman's modesty should become a rape case and not a consensual relation which has later gone sour," he said. He said the Supreme Court itself has said in the past that it had erred in more than 10 cases by giving death sentences. "When the highest court of the land has erred by punishing the innocent, then there is a need to rethink about awarding death sentences. In most cases, our investigating agencies have been found to be doing a dishonest job," he added.

"When world over death sentences are being done away with, India is walking on the wrong path while tomm-tomming about being the most civilised country."

The retired judge said it was good to note that the government was open to amendments. "This was made clear by state Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil last week itself when he said the Act was not foolproof and that there was scope for carrying out improvements. This means the government is ready to amend the Act in future. It should do so. The death sentence should be converted into a life sentence. Some sections in the Act, modelled on Andhra Pradesh's Disha Act, are not practical, he said.

Though the Act stipulates a sentence of three years or a fine of Rs 1 lakh for filing false rape cases, he said the government has not specified what constitutes fake cases.



Maharashtra district's New Year gift for transgenders - Rs 12K annual assistance

Fulfilling a long-pending demand, Palghar district has taken the lead in Maharashtra to provide monthly financial assistance to transgenders from New Year 2022, sending waves of excitement among this deprived sexual minority.

Palghar | Agencies

Fulfilling a long-pending demand, Palghar district has taken the lead in Maharashtra to provide monthly financial assistance to transgenders from New Year 2022, sending waves of excitement among this deprived sexual minority.

Around 100 identified and eligible transgenders in the district will be

entitled to a modest assistance of Rs 1,000 per month (totalling Rs 12,000 annually) which will be deposited directly into their bank accounts, Palghar District Collector Dr Manik Gursal said. "The financial assistance will be given under the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana of the state government which is available for destitutes, blind, disabled, orphans, victims of major illnesses, divorced or abandoned women, outraged or women rescued from prostitution, transgenders, etc," Gursal told IANS. The scheme stipulates an annual income limit of up to Rs 21,000.

With the help of a social worker, Vaibhav Sankhe, a district-level survey was undertaken and around 100 eligible transgenders were identified for the scheme.

Sankhe said the officials came to know how a majority of them were abandoned in childhood or thrown out due to embarrassment by their

own families when they realised their sexual divergence or preference. "A majority don't have even the basic documents or a bank account; ½ Most are illiterate. We shall register them, give them the certificate, prepare their necessary documents like Ration Card, Aadhaar Card, Election Card, etc, and assist them to open bank accounts where the government will transfer the money online," Gursal explained. For this purpose, the district administration has set up a four-member medical team comprising Dr Pradeep Thodi, Dr Vivek Kini, Dr Pragnya Savardikar and Dr Jaypalsingh Rajput, to certify the prospective beneficiaries as per the rules, he added. Sankhe explained how most transgenders are forced to lead a wretched life, are shunned and condemned by mainstream society, have no dignity or documents to avail assistance under any

official scheme, and are relegated to the societal pavements.

"However, we expect all this will change with the remarkable initiative taken by the Collector Dr Gursal and with mentorship from concerned persons like Dr Manoj Shinde of Boisar," Sankhe said.

Gursal said that to enable the maximum transgenders in the far flung areas, he has delegated powers at the local Sub-Divisional Magistrate level who can issue the certificate and other relevant documents. "We are not even asking them to come to the district or taluka headquarters. We organize camps where the transgenders can go and register themselves for the documents and other formalities," Gursal said. One of the transgenders, Aarti, told local newspapers how the community felt "overwhelmed" by the initiative which will help them to join the mainstream.



ANNE-MARIE CROWNED AS WINNER OF STRICTLY CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

London | Agencies

Fans praised Anne-Marie on Saturday evening after she was crowned the winner of the Strictly Come Dancing Christmas special. The singer, 30 took home the festive Glitterball trophy, beating out competition from Moira Stuart, Adrian Chiles, Mel Giedroyc, Fred Sirieux, and Jay Blades. She and her partner Graziano Di Prima wowed with their incredible Cha-cha-cha and managed to bag a whopping 40 out of 40 points. When they were announced as the winners, Anne-Marie couldn't believe her luck, saying: 'I didn't hear my name then, I'm so happy. He wanted it so bad as well, I'm so happy.'

Graziano said: 'For me it's been an honour. Since the first day I met her, I've done my best she's done her best and from that hard work, here we are.' Anne-Marie later took to Twitter to celebrate her win, writing: 'I CANNOT BELIEVE IT!!!! I'm so proud and so happy for the opportunity to dance. It brought out a side of me I hadn't seen in a long time.'

'Thanks to @GrazianoDiPrima and the whole team. You have made my Christmas so special!'

Fans took to social media to congratulate the pair on their win, with one saying: 'Well deserved Christmas winner Ann Marie with a perfect cha cha cha'.



Rhian Sugden tests positive on the Christmas day

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rhian Sugden led the stars being forced to cancel their elaborate plans after testing positive for coronavirus on Christmas Day.

The glamour model, 35, shared a photo of a lateral flow test to Instagram along with a 'Merry Christmas' sticker.

MailOnline analysis revealed on Friday that nearly 900,000 people could be forced to spend Christmas Day in self-isolation after catching Covid in the past 10 days, with celebrities being no exception to the rule.

Among those forced to isolate was Rhian, who later revealed she had been being contacted by fans who had incorrectly concluded that she had shared news that she's expecting a baby.

In her caption, Rhian wrote: 'The amount



of people that think that was a positive pregnancy test!?!? Where have you been for the last 2 years!?!'

Meanwhile, Dianne Buswell, 32, and her boyfriend Joe Sugg, 30, tried 'to see the positives in the POSITIVE' after the Strictly dancer contracted Covid.

She shared a masked-up selfie with her YouTuber boyfriend, who pulled a funny face while raising a glass of fizz.

Dua Lipa 'files trademarks for booze, fashion and make-up products'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Dua Lipa is reportedly eyeing up a career as a lifestyle guru after filing trademarks for hundreds of merchandise items. The Grammy winner, 25, has also confirmed she will launch a weekly newsletter titled Service95, which will provide make-up, fashion and restaurant tips.

She has allegedly ensured that her globally famous name can be put to cosmetics, food, alcohol, soft drinks, clothes and jewellery in addition. It has been claimed that Dua made the application with the law firm which handled Princess Diana's divorce, Mischon de Reya. Gardening equipment, household items, toys, games, electrical goods, books, soft furnishings and furniture have also been trademarked, according to legal papers uncovered by the Sunday Mirror.

Thought to have named the brand after her birth year, 1995, the move will see her follow in the footsteps of Gwyneth Paltrow, Kourtney Kardashian and Jessica Alba.

She told Vogue: 'All my friends and family, wherever they travel in the world - even if they're just there for one night - they'll text me to ask what they should do, reports dailymail.co.uk.'

'The Matrix Resurrections' Encourages Audience Division

Los Angeles | Agencies

All these years later, some viewers are still trying to bend the spoon, instead of accepting that there is no spoon.

'After all these years, to be going back to where it all started, back to The Matrix.' But the reality is, if there is such a straightforward term within this world, you can't go back, only forward. Lana Wachowski's sequel, The Matrix Resurrections, which follows the events established by her and her sister, Lily's, genre-defining Matrix trilogy, revives the franchise after nearly twenty years. But, like so much of Lana Wachowski's career, this revival is not one that follows the expected trajectory of a "legacy sequel," even as the film plays around with nostalgia by very deliberately inserting footage from the original trilogy within its narrative. 1999's film asked, "What is The Matrix?" and 2021's The Matrix Resurrections pushes that concept further by asking, "What is it about The Matrix that made you like it in the first place?" Wachowski welcomes division with her latest film, something she's no stranger to, by sequentially removing many of elements that fans associate with The Matrix in order to reveal what has always been underneath the surface, the source of the franchise: a love story between two humans making the choice to build a better world together.



'THE KING'S MAN'

Los Angeles | Agencies

It's been four-and-a-half years since Matthew Vaughn first pitched The King's Man to 20th Century Fox, and to say a lot has changed since then would certainly be an understatement. Vaughn's long-delayed film is a prequel to 2014's Kingsman: The Secret Service and 2017's Kingsman: The Golden Circle, as it explores the origin story of the Kingsman agency in conjunction with World War I. Since it's rare for the third film in a franchise to go back in time by nearly 100 years, Vaughn remembers catching Fox executives a bit off guard. "I think they were surprised," Vaughn tells The Hollywood Reporter. "But

Emma Watts was always incredibly supportive of any nutty ideas I had.

Matthew Vaughn shares dreams for 'Kingsman 3' and even a potential 'Statesman' streaming series, should the audience demand it: "we don't want to get too greedy or too arrogant to think that we can make loads and loads of these."

The more nervous I make the movie executives, the more I believe in it. I just know it'll be different. I don't know whether it's going to work with an audience, but at least it'll feel that we're pushing the boundaries of filmmaking and doing things a little bit more different than just repeating the same formula."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Megan Barton Hanson



INDIA VS SOUTH AFRICA, 1ST TEST DAY 1: IND END DAY AT 272/3

RAHUL'S SUBLIME TON HELPS INDIA RULE DAY ONE OF BOXING DAY TEST

India dominated the third and final session comprehensively as they ended the opening day for 3 in 90 overs against South Africa at SuperSport Park in Centurion. After the wicket of Virat Kohli, KL Rahul (122*) completed his 7th Test hundred and along with Ajinkya Rahane (40*) added an unbeaten 73 runs for the fourth wicket for India.



square leg off Keshav Maharaj. Kagiso Rabada troubled a bit but Kohli came forward and unfurled his cover drive. Rahul too was troubled by Rabada but managed to caress a drive through extra cover. Rahul then went on to smack Maharaj for a pulled four through mid-wicket, followed by

dancing down the pitch to hit a six over long-on and enter the 90s. Lungi Ngidi bowled seven consecutive dot balls to Kohli and on the eighth ball, Kohli in a bid to break free chased a delivery wide outside the off-stump and gave an easy catch to Wiaan Mulder at first slip.

Rahane was off the mark on his second ball, creaming a Ngidi half-volley through covers. Rahane began to deal in boundaries, slicing Ngidi through off-side, flicking Marco Jansen through mid-wicket, cutting off backfoot through backward point off Maharaj, and punching off back-foot through over off Mulder.

Rahul brought up his seventh Test century by steering Maharaj through backward point despite a desperate dive by Keegan Petersen. He also became the second Indian opener to score a Test century in South Africa after Wasim Jaffer's 116 at Cape Town in 2007. After reaching his hundred, Rahul upper-cut Jansen over the slip cordon. Rahane, on the other hand, leaned into a square drive off Jansen and nailed one along the ground pull on a bouncer from Rabada through backward square leg.

Brief scores
India 272/3 in 90 overs (KL Rahul 122 not out, Mayank Agarwal 60, Lungi Ngidi 3/45) against South Africa

Vijay Hazare Trophy: Himachal beat Tamil Nadu by 11 runs to win maiden title



Jaipur | Agencies

Riding on Shubham Arora's unbeaten century, Himachal Pradesh beat Tamil Nadu by 11 runs (VJD Method) in the final to win their maiden Vijay Hazare Trophy title, at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium, here on Sunday. Batting first, Tamil Nadu posted a challenging total of 314 in 49.4 overs, courtesy of a brilliant hundred by experienced Dinesh Kartik (116 off 103). Apart from Kartik, Baba Indrajith (80), Shahrukh Khan (42), and Vijay Shankar (22) also chipped in with useful

knocks. In reply, Himachal were 299 for 4 in 47.3 overs when bad light stopped play and the chasing side were declared winners via the VJD method. Shubham Arora's fantastic century overshadowed Karthik's century and carried his side past the finish line. Amit Kumar (74) and captain Rishi Dhawan (43) also made important contributions with the bat in the team's win. Brief scores: Tamil Nadu 314 in 49.4 overs (Dinesh Karthik 116; Pankaj Jaiswal 4-59) lost to Himachal Pradesh 299/4 in 47.3 overs (Shubham Arora 136) by 11 runs by VJD method.

Centurion | Agencies

A sublime century from KL Rahul helped India dominate day one of the Boxing Day Test at the SuperSport Park here on Sunday. At stumps, India are 272/3 in 90 overs with Rahul (batting 122) and Ajinkya Rahane (batting 40) at the crease on a day that totally belonged to the tourists. Captain Virat Kohli began the final session with a flick through

NATIONAL PARA-BADMINTON C'SHIP: PRAMOD BHAGAT, MANOJ SARKAR REGISTER WINS

Tokyo Paralympics gold medalist Pramod Bhagat and bronze medalist Manoj Sarkar registered wins at the ongoing 4th National Para-Badminton Championship, here on Saturday.



Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Tokyo Paralympics gold medalist Pramod Bhagat and bronze medalist Manoj Sarkar registered wins at the ongoing 4th National Para-Badminton Championship, here on Saturday.

Playing in front of the home crowd, Bhagat beat Chandra Prakash in straight-sets, 21-12, 21-18 in Round of 32 of the men's

singles SL3 category. On the other hand, Manoj Sarkar beat Gourav Nihal 21-3, 21-7 in a Round of 32 of the men's singles SL3 category. Meanwhile, another Tokyo Paralympics gold medalist Krishna Nagar beat Sudharshan 21-12, 21-12 in a 20-minute quarter-final clash in SH6 category. Over 500 shuttlers are competing in the three-day Para-Badminton tournament in Bhubaneswar.

The Ashes, 3rd Test:

AUSTRALIA DOMINATE ENGLAND ON DAY 1 WITH ALL-ROUND SHOW

Melbourne | Agencies

Australia showed their dominance with both bat and ball and were in a commanding position against England at the opening day of the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, here on Sunday.

Marcus Harris (20 off 51) and Nathan Lyon (0 off 5) were unbeaten at the crease as Australia finished Day 1 of the third Test at 61/1, trailing by 124 runs.

After bowling out England for 185 in their first innings, Australia began confidently and were cruising for the most part. With the pitch easing out, opener David Warner and Harris negotiated the initial overs expertly.

The 35-year old Warner, in particular, was the aggressor of the two and hit some cracking boundaries as the pair soon brought up their fifty partnership.

England finally got a breakthrough when James Anderson got Warner for 38 in the penultimate over before stumps. Warner looked



to dab a good-length ball towards third man but got an outside edge to gully, where Crawley took a good diving catch in the front.

However, Harris and nightwatchman Nathan Lyon ensured no further damage was done, returning unbeaten to the pavilion.

Earlier, Australia opted to bowl after a 30 minutes delayed start due

to a slight drizzle. Returning skipper Pat Cummins started strong, bowling testing lengths and lines to trouble England's openers. He drew first blood in his opening over when Haseeb Hameed poked at a fuller delivery that shaped away a tad bit, falling for a 10-ball duck.

The skipper then dismissed Zak Crawley (12) in his fourth over, leav-

ing England teetering at 13/2 early in the third Test.

However, England's fight-back was led by skipper Root, who along with Malan added 48 runs for the third wicket. The pair complemented each other well enough to keep Australia at bay for most parts until a lapse in the final minutes of the first session. Cummins was rewarded for his spectacularly consistent bowling as Malan (14) nicked in the last over of the morning session.

The second session started well for England with Root getting to another fifty. But their misery continued when Root fell to Mitchell Starc soon after reaching the landmark. Ben Stokes (25) and Jonny Bairstow then forged a stand and kept the runs ticking without taking too many risks.

However, Cameron Green was rewarded for some tidy bowling, as he picked the wicket of Stokes, who arched back in the crease to play the cut shot against a shorter ball and got out at point. England slipped further with Jos Buttler (3) falling to Lyon as the visitors went to

Tea at 128/6.

England's struggle continued in the final session. Mark Wood (6) survived for 15 balls before falling lbw to Boland, who claimed his maiden Test wicket. Bairstow (35), who had held on until then, bravely holding onto one end, was undone by Starc's short ball that reared onto him and had to be awkwardly fended off to the man at gully.

Lyon then wrapped up the innings, getting Jack Leach (13) and Ollie Robinson (22) in back-to-back overs as England were bowled out for a meagre 185.

After defeats in Brisbane and Adelaide, England trail the best-of-five series 2-0 and now face an uphill task to keep this Ashes alive.

Brief scores
England 1st innings 185 in 65.1 overs (Joe Root 50, Jonny Bairstow 35; Pat Cummins 3/36, Nathan Lyon 3/36) lead Australia 1st innings 61/1 (David Warner 38, Marcus Harris 20 not out; James Anderson 1/14) by 124 runs.

Former India pacer Sreesanth set to play Ranji Trophy for Kerala, again

Former India fast bowler S Sreesanth has been included in the 24-member preliminary squad of Kerala for the upcoming Ranji season. The 38-year-old is making a return to red-ball cricket after a gap of nearly nine years. Sreesanth last played a first-class match in 2013 when he was featured in the Irani Cup for the Rest of India against Mumbai.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former India fast bowler S Sreesanth has been included in the 24-member preliminary squad of Kerala for the upcoming Ranji season. The 38-year-old is making a return to red-ball cricket after a gap of nearly nine years. Sreesanth last played a first-class match in 2013 when he was featured in the Irani Cup for the Rest of India against Mumbai. After serving a seven-year suspension for his alleged involve-

ment in the 2013 IPL spot-fixing scam, the veteran pacer was elated after getting a place in the preliminary squad for Kerala. Sreesanth shared the news on Twitter on Sunday, saying, "Feels great to be back after 9 years playing Ranji trophy for my lovely state really grateful to each and every one of u, lots of love and respect." In 2013, Sreesanth was allegedly involved in the IPL spot-fixing scandal

where he was arrested by Delhi Police along with Ajit Chandila and Ankit Chavan. Sreesanth was accused of spot-fixing during the seventh season of the IPL but he was relieved of all the charges due to lack of evidence and his ban was ended on September 13, 2020.

Meanwhile, Sachin Baby will lead the Kerala side in Ranji Trophy this season while wicketkeeper-batter Vishnu Vinod will be Sachin's deputy. Sanju Samson had captained Kerala in the Syed Mushtaq Ali and Vijay Hazare Trophy one-day competition, but Kerala fell in the quarter-finals. Robin Uthappa, who is yet to regain his fitness, has not been included in the probable list. Varun Nayanar is the second stumper, while Mohammad Azharuddeen has been overlooked. The preliminary camp will be held in Wayanad from December 30.

Kerala are included in Elite Group B along with Bengal, Vidarbha, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Tripura.

DJOKOVIC PULLS OUT OF ATP CUP, ADDS TO AUSTRALIAN OPEN MYSTERY: REPORTS

Melbourne | Agencies

World No. 1 tennis player Novak Djokovic has added further mystery to his participation in next year's Australian Open -- where he is the defending champion -- reportedly opting to skip the ATP Cup, scheduled in Sydney from January 1-9. According to Serbian newspaper Blic, a member of his team reportedly said, "It is 99 per cent sure that Novak won't go to the ATP Cup. He is training here (in Belgrade) but he has decided to give that tournament a miss."

The 34-year-old, who ended the 2021 season as world No.1 for a record seventh time to break the tie with American great Pete Sampras, has kept the organisers guessing about his COVID-19 vaccination status and his reported pull-out of the multi-nation ATP Cup has made his Australian Open participation more complex. Djokovic is opposed to the Australian Open organisers' demand to allow only fully-vaccinated individuals compete at Melbourne Park. While tournament director Craig Tiley has said that a very small percentage of players will be granted medical exemption, he has not said whether the nine-time Australian Open champion will get it.

The Australian Open commences on January 17 and the

Victorian state-enforced COVID-19 vaccine mandate has put pressure on Djokovic's availability, who has refused to reveal his vaccination status.

The Serbian has stated that his vaccination status is a "personal" matter.

Djokovic's father, Srđjan, dropped the biggest hint yet that the world No.1 hasn't taken the vaccine when he told Serbian TV that, "They have to decide whether they will let Novak in."

"If they decide (not to let him in), they have to stand behind their decision. He has won the Australian Open nine times, he now wants to play -- but they have to permit him to play. Novak will do what he thinks is the best for him, nobody will impose an opinion on him," Wide World of Sports quoted Srđjan as saying on Serbian TV.



Amateur players need professional window registration to play in I-League, says AIFF

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) cleared the confusion over the participation of amateur players in the Hero I-League 2021-22 on Sunday, saying they can only play if they are registered in the professional window. The AIFF said that those players who want to play in the I-League will have to register in the professional registration window.

New Delhi | Agencies

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) cleared the confusion over the participation of amateur players in the Hero I-League 2021-22 on Sunday, saying they can only play if they are registered in the professional window. The AIFF said that those players who want to play in the I-League will have to register in the professional registration window. "As per the AIFF Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players 2021 (AIFF RSTP) amateur players may only participate in professional competitions (i.e., the Hero I-League) should such amateur players be registered in the professional registration

window," the AIFF said in a statement.

"Earlier this year a decision was taken that only professional players would be allowed to participate in the Hero I-League 2021-22. However, keeping in mind the clubs being promoted from the 2nd division, the League committee created an exception to allow the participation of amateur players till the 31st of December 2021 if they were already registered with such clubs in a professional registration period as per the AIFF RSTP," said the Indian football regulatory body.

Following the recommendation of the League Committee, the matter was referred to the Players Status &

Registration, and the Legal departments for their necessary inputs, who acted as per the statutes of the RSTP. It is pertinent to note that FIFA has approved the AIFF RSTP. In this regard, the AIFF is bound to respect its own rules which are in consonance with the FIFA RSTP," the statement read.

"Therefore, the AIFF is not in a position to allow any amateur players registered outside the professional registration window to take the field for the Hero I-League 2021-22 till they sign professional contracts and register themselves as professionals in the second transfer window of the 2021-22 season which opens on January 1, 2022," the AIFF said.





Neha Kakkar fulfils contestant Sanjana's wish on 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Neha Kakkar surprised contestant Sanjana Bhat with a special video of the latter's marriage on singing reality show 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa'. Neha is all set to appear as a special guest along with Rohanpreet Singh.

Sanjana's melodious rendition of 'Kala Chasma' and 'Badrinath Ki Dulhania' impressed Neha and everyone on the show.

Neha mentioned how she had heard that Sanjana and her husband couldn't make a video CD of their wedding due to certain reasons back then and hence, she wanted to do something special for them.

She said: "I know back then we couldn't be a part of your wedding. But you

are a part of our family, and we can be part of the wedding now by getting you remarried here on 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa'."

Neha and Rohanpreet also tied Sanjana's 'gathbandhan' with her husband with all the men on set turning into the 'ladkewale', while the women on set became the 'ladkiwale' for the wedding. Both of them took their seven vows with 'pheras'.

'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa' airs on Zee TV.



OFF THE MARK THROUGH LONG ON! '83' WEEKEND PICKINGS TIPPED AT RS 60 CR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Kabir Khan's '83' minted Rs 12.64 crore domestically on Day One (December 24), even as its overseas business has been close to Rs 11.79 crore, according to film trade analyst Komal Nahta, who shared the figures on his Twitter handle. It registered a good opening in multiplexes and in major Indian cities, Sumit Kadel, another independent analyst, said. "83' has seen a good opening in big cities such as Mumbai, Pune, Delhi-NCR, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Bangalore. The morning and afternoon shows were running at 35-40 per cent capacity on Day One, but the evening or night shows were house full," he added.

The turnout for the film, however, showed a jump on the second day of its release and was expected to gain from the weekend,



Kadel added. "The film is poised for gains on Saturday and Sunday as it will benefit from the Christmas holiday," Kadel pointed out, adding that according to initial reports, the net domestic earnings of '83' were in the range of Rs 16-17 crore. "The first weekend collections are estimated to go up to Rs 60 crore. People are loving the film and the word of mouth is quite strong." '83' is facing stiff competition from MCU's 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' and 'Pushpa:

The Rise - Part 1', both of which are in their second week and continue to reward theatre owners.

On the performance of Pushpa, Kadel said that it had "emerged as a hit in North India". The film has collected Rs 32.95 crore (net) till now, Kadel added, and is eyeing a lifetime collection of Rs 50-60 crore (net) in the north. "Telugu star Allu Arjun has cemented his position as a bankable star in the Hindi belt," he added.



Aman Maheshwari: I've always loved grey characters

Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Bade Achhe Lagte Hain 2' actor Aman Maheshwari, who is playing the role of protagonist Priya's (played by Disha Parmar) ex-boyfriend, shares about his character which is outright negative. He also opens up about his interest in the film industry and struggles to establish himself in showbiz. In 'Bade Achhe Lagte Hain 2', Aman is playing the role of a guy who eventually rejects and dumps Priya in the past and gets married to her younger sister, who is Maitri. Anjum Fakih is playing the role of his wife and Priya's younger sister in the show. Aman shares: "My character Neeraj is very egoistic, very selfish, and self-centered. He doesn't care and give respect to his wife. He is not happy with the fact that Priya got married to someone who is way richer than him and a well-settled guy. Neeraj always thought Priya would never move on but now he is jealous and an insecure person. Aman always loved to play negative characters. He also enjoyed being a video jockey and hosting reality shows besides his acting career. He says: "I used to enact and rehearse dialogues looking at how I would sound if I was playing that particular character. Especially when it comes to the grey shade characters, I always loved them so I always got one. Be it 'Gandi Baat' or 'Bade Achhe Lagte Hain season 2'. I have always been a people's person so the whole idea to get into acting is to become a video jockey and to host reality shows like 'Jhalak Dikhlata Hai', 'India's Got Talent'. But yes, a lot of people don't know about the humorous side of mine." Speaking further about his tonal quality, Aman adds: "I have always been appreciated for my voice. Being a radio jockey in the beginning, that was one thing that pushed me from audio to the industry of being visible, which is video."

On b'day-eve, Salman Khan bitten by non-poisonous snake; is fine

Team Absolute | Raigad (Maharashtra)

In a scare on the eve of his birthday (on December 27), Bollywood megastar and 'Bigg Boss 15' host Salman Khan was bitten by a snake at his farmhouse here, industry sources said. The snake was reported to be non-poisonous. On Saturday, Salman Khan was seen having a pre-birthday bash on 'Bigg Boss 15' with Alia Bhatt and other cast members of the multilingual S.S. Rajamouli film, 'RRR'.

The incident happened early on Sunday (December 26) at his sprawling farmhouse in Panvel, which is close to Navi Mumbai in the Raigad district. The farmhouse is located in a green, thickly forested area.

The snake bite caused panic in Salman Khan's security detail and family. He was rushed to a hospital in Navi Mumbai for treatment and later discharged. Despite efforts by IANS, his family was not available for comments on the matter.

Sources close to the family said that the star's Panvel getaway home, where the Khan clan spends quality time, especially during long weekends or in the festive season, is said to be populated with snakes.

A couple of years ago, a cobra was seen slithering around, but there have been no untoward incident.

BIGG BOSS 15



Salman, Shahid dance together; Karan proposes to Tejaswi on 'Weekend Ka Vaar'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The 'Weekend Ka Vaar' episode of 'Bigg Boss 15' will see Shahid Kapoor and Mrunal Thakur having some fun moments with host Salman Khan. They will be welcomed on the show with a dance performance by Karan Kundarra and Umar Riaz.

Meanwhile, Salman also praised Shahid for his dance moves on the track 'Tu Mere Agal Bagal hai' from his movie 'Phata Poster Nikhla Hero'. He said: "For so long I have been trying to do this move but couldn't do it properly." Later both performed together on the track.

Furthermore, all the contestants also received Christmas gifts. Karan and Tejaswi sorted their issues and Karan proposed to Tejaswi with a flower in his hand.

He said: "Never thought a girl would change me so much." Nishant Bhat also apologised to Pratik Sehajpal for his bitter words. Both hugged each other and again became friends.



Samantha wraps up first shoot of 'Yashoda' on Xmas eve

Team Absolute | Chennai

The team of actress Samantha's upcoming Tamil-Telugu bilingual 'Yashoda' has wrapped up the film's first schedule. Directed by Hari and Harish, the film also features actors Varalaxmi Sarathkumar and Unni Mukundan in pivotal roles. Says producer Sivalenka Prasad, "We're making this Telugu-Tamil film in an uncompromising fashion. We plan to release the film in Kannada, Malayalam & Hindi also simultaneously." Pointing out that the first schedule, which commenced on December 6, came to an end on December 24, the producer says, "Sampath Raj, Shatru, Madhurima, Kalpika Ganesh, Divya Sripada and Priyanka Sharma played pivotal scenes in this schedule. Rao Ramesh & Murali Sharma are also playing major roles in the film." The producer informs that the second schedule will commence from January 3 and go on till January 12. "The final schedule will be from January 20 to March 31," he says and points out that despite being debutants, the directors were making the film in a neat and confident manner. Stating that cameraman Sukumar's work in the film was brilliant, the producer says they have not compromised on the budget to ensure that the film has technical and visual grandeur.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Swaalina