

# absolute india

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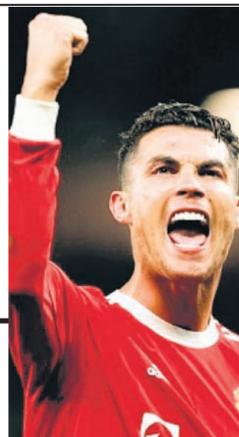
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## PREPARE FOR OMICRON SURGE, WHO WARNS ASIA-PACIFIC NATIONS

# GET BACK TO THE BASICS

The use of masks, physical distancing, ventilation of indoor space, crowd avoidance, and hand hygiene remain key to reducing transmission of Covid-19, even in the context of emerging variants. One should get vaccinated too. The new super-mutant Omicron variant of Covid-19 can increase risk of reinfection by three times as compared to other variants of concern such as Beta and Delta, according to a preliminary study by South African researchers.

**OMICRON CASES HAVE NOW BEEN REPORTED IN INDIA, JAPAN, MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE AND SOUTH KOREA, AND NEW CASES ARE BEING DOCUMENTED WITH EACH PASSING HOUR.**

**IN INDIA, AFTER DETECTION OF THE FIRST TWO CASES OF OMICRON INFECTION IN BENGALURU, THE KARNATAKA HEALTH DEPARTMENT IS NOW WORRIED OVER 10 SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONALS, WHO HAVE GONE UNTRACEABLE IN BENGALURU.**

**A TOTAL OF 10 PERSONS SUSPECTED TO BE INFECTED WITH OMICRON COVID VARIANT HAVE BEEN ADMITTED TO DELHI'S LOK NAYAK JAI PRAKASH HOSPITAL (LNJP).**

### INSACOG RECOMMENDS BOOSTER DOSE FOR 40 PLUS POPULATION

**New Delhi:** The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genetics Consortium or the INSACOG in its latest bulletin said, "Vaccination of all remaining unvaccinated at-risk people and consideration of a booster dose for those 40 years of age and over, first targeting the most high-risk / high-exposure may be considered, since low levels of neutralising antibodies from the current vaccines are unlikely to be sufficient to neutralise Omicron, although risk of severe disease is still likely to be reduced."

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The World Health Organisation (WHO) on Friday warned that countries in the Asia-Pacific region need to strengthen healthcare services and focus on vaccinating their people, as the Omicron variant spreads globally and enters new regions. In a virtual briefing, Takashi Kasai, WHO regional director for the western Pacific, said that it is clear that this pandemic is far from over. "I know that people are worried about Omicron. I understand. My message to you is that we can adapt



### LOCKDOWN SHOULD BE 'LAST RESORT' TO CURB OMICRON: WHO

**New Delhi:** Imposing lockdown to curtail transmission of Omicron could prove to be very costly and should be used as a last resort, according to the World Health Organisation. "Strengthening surveillance to rapidly detect importation of any new variant and transmission of existing virus and its variants, implementing calibrated public health and social measures and scaling up vaccination coverage, should continue to be our focus. The option of imposing lockdown to curtail virus transmission, though effective, is a very costly measure and should be used as a last resort." Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, South-East Asia Regional Director, WHO

the way we manage this virus to better cope w/ future surges and reduce their health, social and economic impact," he said. "We can adapt, so that #COVID19 has less impact on our lives in 2022, and we can start to regain - and hopefully retain - a sense of normality," he added. "People should not only rely on border measures. What is most important is to prepare for these

variants with potential high transmissibility. So far the information available suggests we don't have to change our approach," he said during the virtual media briefing. South Korea on Friday decided to tighten anti-virus measures from next week amid a surging number of Covid-19 cases and an emerging worry about the potentially more transmissible Omicron variant.

### CENTRE CLARIFIES ON 3RD WAVE POSSIBILITY

**New Delhi:** The Health Ministry on Friday has said that there is no evidence to suggest that existing vaccines do not work on Omicron, some of the mutations reported on Spike gene may decrease the efficacy of existing vaccines. However, vaccine protection is also by antibodies as well as by cellular immunity, which is expected to be relatively better preserved. "Hence, it is essential to mask yourself properly, take both doses of vaccines (if not yet vaccinated), maintain social distancing and maintain good ventilation to the maximum possible", said the ministry in a statement.

### DECISIONS ON BOOSTER DOSE, JABS FOR KIDS ON SCIENTIFIC ADVICE: MANDAVIYA

**New Delhi:** Replying to a marathon debate in the Lok Sabha on the Covid-19 pandemic situation and various related issues that began on Thursday, he said that the concerns were expressed by members over booster doses and vaccination of the kids, but they should trust the scientists, who, by their tireless efforts, produced vaccines for Covid-19 in less than a year's time.

## Govt. is lying, not willing to compensate farmers: Rahul Gandhi



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The centre is "lying" and "unwilling to compensate" the families of over 700 farmers who died during the months-long protest against the farm laws, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said Friday evening. Gandhi slammed the centre for having told Parliament this week (in response to a question he raised in the Lok Sabha) that it had no data on the number of farmers who died during the agitation. In response, Gandhi brandished a list of 403 dead farmers from Congress-ruled Punjab (whose families had been given Rs 5 lakh each by the state) and another list of 200-odd dead farmers from other states, and challenged the centre to, at least now, act on demands for their families to be compensated. "We would like to tell the government we have done some homework for them. We have here a list of 500-odd farmers whose families we (the Punjab government) have compensated with Rs 5 lakh. We have also given jobs to 152 family members and

are in the process of giving jobs to others," he said. All these details, Gandhi stressed, were available in the public domain. The list, he also said, would be tabled at the next session of Parliament - on Monday. "The government says it does not have a list... Here it is... we have names, numbers, addresses..." "The truth is the government already has this... so what is the problem? Prime Minister accepted his mistake... he publicly apologised (over the farm laws). So what is the problem in compensating them?" Gandhi asked, branding the Prime Minister's and the centre's actions "cowardly".

## RAKESH TIKAIT TO GO GLOBAL NOMINATED FOR 21ST CENTURY ICON AWARD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rakesh Tikait, the main leader of the long-standing farmers' movement in India and national spokesperson of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), for the 21st Century Icon Award-2021 (21st Century Icon Award) has been chosen. This award is given by Square Watermelon of Britain. He has been selected for this award for running a long movement and keeping the movement alive. The winners will be announced on 10 December in London. The Squared Watermelon Company of London gives the Icon Award every year to the personalities who set an example for the world. In this episode, the name of farmer leader



Rakesh Tikait has also been included in the nomination list for the 2021 award. He currently heads the Bharatiya Kisan Union. The farmers' agitation has been going on for the last one year regarding the three agricultural laws of the Center

and other demands. Which was mainly led by Rakesh Tikait. Although the central government has recently withdrawn agricultural laws after a long agitation by farmers, Rakesh Tikait is still vocal about other demands of the farmers.

## MYSTERIOUS LIGHTS IN THE SKY PUZZLE RESIDENTS IN PATHANKOT

Chandigarh:

A line of bright lights darting through in the night sky in Punjab's Pathankot left residents confused on Friday evening. The phenomenon appeared in the sky for a few minutes shortly before 7 pm. "We saw the fast-moving object with bright lights, like a train. It looked just like a train at a distance. The light was very bright and white. It was the first time we saw something like this. We saw it for five whole minutes, after which it vanished," said one resident. The unidentified object also sparked chatter on Twitter. Earlier this year, mysterious rows of bright blinking lights gliding across the sky were sighted in Gujarat's Junagadh and the surrounding region. At that time, experts had suggested that the lights appeared to have been satellites passing through a low earth orbit.



## Pepsico's potato patent revoked by Indian authority

Gandhinagar | Agencies

Accepting a farm activist's revocation application to revoke the varietal registration of Pepsico India Holding on potato variety FL-2027, The Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Authority on Friday revoked the registration, the multinational had. Even at the global level, this is the first time that the multinational had to face such a defeat. "This is a precedent setting judgement by the PPV&FR authority, meaning that anything that threatens farmers rights as contained in India's unique legislation is and ought to be a matter of public interest. This is a victory for farmers of India," said Kavitha Kuruganti, a farmers activist who fought the case against



the multinational. The PPV&FR revoked the PVP certificate granted to Pepsico India Holding (PIH) on a potato variety in India (FL-2027), on multiple grounds, including that the grant of the certificate of registration had been based on incorrect information furnished by the applicant (Sec

34(a)), that the certificate had been granted to a person not eligible for protection (Sec 34(b)), that the breeder did not provide the Registrar with such information, documents or material as required for registration (Sec 34(c)) and that the grant of the certificate of registration was not in the public interest (Sec 34(h)).

## Gita Gopinath: IMF's First Deputy Managing Director

Washington | Agencies

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has announced that Gita Gopinath, currently chief economist of the IMF, is set to succeed Geoffrey Okamoto as the institution's First Deputy Managing Director (FDMD) early next year. Gopinath, a US national and overseas citizen of India, will start in her new position as FDMD on January 21, 2022, according to the IMF. Prior to joining the IMF as chief economist in early 2019, Gopinath was the John Zwaanstra Professor of International Studies and Economics in the economics department of Harvard University. Gopinath's new appointment was unexpected as she said in October that she had planned to return to Harvard University in January 2022.



## Cyclonic storm 'Jawad' to hit coasts by early morning

It is likely to move north-westwards and reach west-central Bay of Bengal off north Andhra Pradesh-south Odisha coasts by tomorrow, the December 4 morning. Thereafter it is likely to recurve north-northeastwards and move along Odisha coast reaching near Puri around December 5 noon. Subsequently it is likely to continue to move north-northeastwards towards the West Bengal coast," the IMD said in its bulletin.

GALE WINDS SPEED REACHING 70-80 KMPH AND GUSTING TO 90 KMPH LIKELY TO PREVAIL OVER WEST CENTRAL ADJOINING NORTHWEST BAY OF BENGAL FROM FRIDAY EVENING AND GRADUALLY INCREASE TO 90-100 KMPH, GUSTING TO 110 KMPH, OVER NORTHWEST AND ADJOINING WEST CENTRAL BAY OF BENGAL FROM SATURDAY EVENING OF FOR THE SUBSEQUENT 12 HOURS.

SQUALLY WIND SPEED REACHING 45-55 KMPH GUSTING TO 65 KMPH LIKELY TO COMMENCE ALONG AND OFF NORTH ANDHRA PRADESH-ODISHA COASTS FROM THE MIDNIGHT OF FRIDAY AND INCREASE GRADUALLY BECOMING 80-90 KMPH GUSTING TO 100 KMPH FROM SATURDAY EVENING, FOR THE SUBSEQUENT 12 HOURS.

Team Absolute | Visakhapatnam

The deep depression in Bay of Bengal intensified into cyclonic storm on Friday and was heading for north Andhra Pradesh-south Odisha coasts, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The deep depression over west central Bay of Bengal moved north-northwestwards with a speed of 25 kmph and inten-

sified further into cyclonic storm 'Jawad' (pronounced Jowad) and lay centered at 11.30 a.m. about 420 km south-southeast of Vishakhapatnam, it said. The met office has forecast light to moderate rainfall at many places with heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places over south coastal Odisha and heavy rainfall at isolated places over north coastal Andhra Pradesh on Friday. Heavy to very heavy

rainfall at isolated places over north coastal Andhra Pradesh is likely on Saturday. IMD Amaravati director Stella Samuel said isolated places in Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram, Visakhapatnam, and East Godavari districts are likely to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall. She said fishermen have been advised not to venture into the sea as the sea condition will be rough.

## 'YOU WANT TO BAN INDUSTRIES IN PAK', SC TO UP COUNSEL IN AIR POLLUTION MATTER

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid severe air pollution in Delhi, the Supreme Court has often witnessed either Centre blaming the Delhi government for not doing enough to curb pollution and vice versa. The Delhi government has also blamed stubble burning carried out by farmers in the neighbouring states. But, on Friday during the hearing, the Uttar Pradesh counsel, while opposing the closure of industries in UP, blamed the winds from Pakistan. Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, representing the Uttar Pradesh government, submitted before a bench headed by Chief

Justice N.V. Ramana that if industries were to shut down in UP it would impact sugarcane and milk industries in the state. Kumar said: "Closure of industries may affect sugarcane industries. UP is on down wind, air is mostly coming from Pakistan." The Chief Justice replied, "So you want to ban industries in Pakistan?" Kumar said if sugar mills are closed then the farmers will suffer. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said the government can approach the commission. The top court allowed the Uttar Pradesh government to raise the grievance before the commission for air quality management.



# 'WILL AID IN DEFEATING BJP': AKHILESH ON TIE-UPS WITH SMALL OUTFITS FOR UP POLLS

Mohammed Suaib Khan | Jhansi

Training guns on the Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government on various issues, Samajwadi Party President and former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav said on Friday that Uttar Pradesh is headed for change and his party's strategy will help in dethroning the BJP in next year's Assembly elections.

His arrival to address meetings at various places in Jhansi city and district on the last day of his 'Vijay Yatra' enthused the party cadre, who poured out in large numbers, including one mounted on a horse, while his pictures festooned the streets. Talking to correspondent before addressing a public gathering at Moth in the district, Akhilesh Yadav, when asked what benefits he saw by taking smaller parties on board, said: "Samajwadi Party is taking the support of small political outfits, which can help us defeat the BJP. The present dispensation is only misleading the people and has



done nothing for them. During the Covid pandemic, it just forced them into lines for everything. Even if a farmer goes to get fertiliser, he has to stand in line. It is just like the conditions after demonetisation."

"The people of Uttar Pradesh will now get into line to wipe out the BJP," he added.

Asked how he saw the warm welcome in Bundelkhand with people showering flowers on him, Akhilesh

Yadav said: "The people of Bundelkhand have now closed their doors on the BJP. The people have supported the Samjwadi Party's rally. This time the BJP will not get a single seat in Bundelkhand."

"The people had given full support to the BJP in the last elections, but have got nothing to show for it. The people of Jhansi are not going to fall in this trap again."

"The Yogi government only changes the names of various places... they have not come to Moth, otherwise its name would have been changed too."

Asked about AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi, Akhilesh Yadav declined to respond.

Addressing the gathering at Moth, he attacked the BJP over rising prices. "Our emotional people voted for them (the BJP), but now see how much prices have risen. Petrol, diesel, and LPG cylinder prices are going out of the common man's reach. Money is being taken out of the pockets of the poor to fill the treasuries of the rich," he said.

# Global action needed to regulate technology like cryptocurrency: Sitharaman

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said collective "global action" is the only way to regulate the evolving technologies, including the cryptocurrencies.

Speaking at the InFinity Forum organised by Bloomberg and IFSCA, Sitharaman noted that no country has found a one-point formula to regulate technology such as cryptocurrency. "Even as we are thinking about it at a national level, there should simultaneously be a global mechanism through which we are constantly monitoring the movement of technology, so that whether it is your cryptocurrency, whether it is tech-driven payment system, data privacy..." she said. Her comments come at a time



निर्मला सीतारमण

when the government is preparing to come out with legislation to regulate cryptocurrencies. It is expected that the Centre might table

the Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021 in the ongoing session of Parliament.

# SKM's crucial Saturday meet to decide agitation's future course

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Days after the Parliament repealed the three contentious farm laws, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) will be holding a crucial meeting on Saturday to discuss whether to end the over-an-year-old agitation, among other issues.

Reiterating their demands from before the government announced to repeal the laws, the SKM - a consortium of 40-odd farmers' agitation - has been demanding legal backing for, among others, Minimum Support Price (MSP), withdrawal of cases against the farmers' families since last year, and compensation to the farmers' families that died in the last one year during agitation.

The meeting will be held at the Singhu Border camp site,



which acted as the headquarters for the SKM.

Soon after the Prime Minister's announcement on November 19 about repeal of farm laws, the SKM had written a formal letter to him putting forth their demands in no uncertain means. "With no formal assurance from Government of India as yet, the farmers struggle for their still-pending demands continues. SKM has not received any reply from the govern-

ment in response to the letter to the Prime Minister, where SKM had raised six key demands as a pre-condition for withdrawal of the farm movement," a statement from the SKM said on Friday.

Meanwhile, the permanent morchas in dozens of places continue at Delhi borders and elsewhere, "reflecting the discipline and determination that protesting farmers have", the SKM release said.

# PUNJAB POLICE RECOVER TIFFIN BOMB, FOUR HAND GRENADES

Chandigarh: The Punjab Police on Friday recovered four hand grenades and one tiffin bomb concealed in a sack from Salempur Araiyan village in Gurdaspur district, close to the Indo-Pakistan border.

Sharing details, Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Iqbal Preet Singh Sahota said keeping in view the recent recoveries of RDX, hand grenades and pistols from the border district, strong barricading has been done.

He said that during checking near Salempur Araiyan village, the police found a sack in the bushes on the roadside. On checking, four hand grenades and one tiffin bomb concealed in it were recovered.

Bomb disposal teams have defused the explosive material, he added.

# Namaz offered on Gurugram ground despite 'disruptions'

GURUGRAM | Agencies

The row over offering Namaz on Friday on open grounds resurfaced again after more than 200-300 people belonging to the Islamic faith performed offered Friday prayers at a ground here in Sector-37 ground here despite disruption attempts by some Hindu groups.

The members of Hindu groups staged a protest against the Friday prayers.

The Gurugram Police detained around 10 people of Hindu organisations including Dinesh Thakur, the chief of a right-wing group, for trying to disrupt Friday Namaz at Sector-37, an industrial area.

The Bharat Mata Vahini



group demanded discontinuation of offering prayers in public parks and spaces.

In view of the tense situation, several police personnel were also deployed at the spot to avoid untoward incidents. They cordoned off the

ground to stop Hindu right-wing members to create any ruckus during Friday Namaz.

Many people of the right-wing group had gathered at the ground and raised slogans such as "Jai Shri Ram", "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and

"Vande Mataram". However, during the prayers, no untoward incident happened and the congregation offered prayers and left the ground peacefully, police said.

# 36 STUDENTS TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID IN TELANGANA

HYDERABAD | Agencies

Thirty-six students of three government-run residential schools in Telangana have tested positive for Covid-19.

According to health officials, 24 students at Jyotiba Phule BC welfare residential school at Indresham in Sangareddy district tested positive on Thursday. Health authorities conducted Covid tests for 300 out of 960 students. The tests for remaining students will also be conducted.

According to school authorities, a class 9 student had developed fever in hostel on November 24. Her parents took her home to Gajwel and got a Covid test done which was found positive.

Sangareddy district Medical and Health Officer G. Gayatri Devi said all students have been kept in isolation. Officials are advising parents to allow children to stay at hostel in iso-



lation so that they do not spread virus to others but parents are insisting on taking them home. This is the second Covid cluster in Sangareddy district. Last week, 48 students of Jyotiba Phule Gurukul School at Muthangi village had tested positive for the infection. Meanwhile, nine students at a residential school-cum-junior college at Tatepalli in Jagtial

district have tested positive. According to school officials, a student tested positive on Tuesday while six more were found infected the next day. Two students tested positive on Thursday. The school and college together have 586 students. Three students of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya at Julurupadu in Bhadradi Kothagudem district have

also tested positive. A few days ago, Mahindra University near Hyderabad was shut down after 25 students and five staff members had tested positive for Covid-19. Earlier on November 21, a total of 29 students of a government-run residential school and junior college for girls in Khammam district had tested positive for the Coronavirus. This was the first time since reopening of residential schools in the state in October that such a large number of students were found positive. Educational institutions in Telangana reopened from September 1. However, the High Court allowed reopening of residential schools in the last week of October after the Education Department gave an assurance that all preventive measures will be taken. Meanwhile, six members of district Medical and Health Official in Suryapet district have also tested positive for Covid.

# Five dead, one injured in road accident in Gurugram

GURUGRAM | Agencies

Five people were killed after a car crashed into a roadside wall and overturned on Sadhrana road near Gadhi village here on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday. According to police, the deceased have been identified as Sagar, Jibech, Niaz Khan, Prince and Jagbir.

One person, identified as Hardik Tiwari, was injured in the incident. The victims were returning to Gurugram city from Sadhrana village after attending a marriage. "All of them were coming from a wedding ceremony in Sadhrana village. The



mishap was a result of speeding and a damaged road. All the victims used to work in a city-based private hospital. Police are taking necessary action," Gurugram police spokesperson

Subhash Boken said. "The injured man has been shifted to a hospital in critical condition. While the bodies have been sent for post-mortem. Further probe is on," he added.

# In 'deep distress' due to Nitish's comment, says BJP woman MLA

PATNA | Agencies

BJP MLA Nikki Hembrom said she is "under deep distress" due to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's remark on her physical personality on Friday.

Hembrom, who represents Katoria Assembly constituency (ST) in Banka district, said that she had pointed out an issue related to the condition of tribal people in Bihar during the legislative party meeting of the NDA here on Monday.

According to her, the Chief Minister, during the meeting, stopped her in the middle of a sentence and said that she is beautiful but she do not go to her Assembly constituency, adding that the state government has launched so many welfare initiatives for tribal people but she is saying just the opposite.

"I had pointed out the issue of Mahua farming in the state. The tribals are dependent on Mahua farming for many years. It is their sole source

of earning but as the state government banned Mahua farming to make liquor ban successful in the state, the tribal people, as a result, have reached at the stage of starvation. The state government has not given any alternative jobs to them to earn for their livelihood," Hembrom said.

"The remark of the Chief Minister on my physical status is derogatory. I cannot repeat it in public again. He is senior to me but his remark deeply hurt me. I put my point before the party legislative meeting in Patna on Tuesday," she added. Sources said that Deputy Chief Minister Tar Kishore Prasad tried to suppress the issue during the closed-door meeting but as other MLAs supported her, BJP state President Sanjay Jaiswal realised the situation could turn out to be tense, and gave assurance to Hembrom that he will make the top party leadership aware of the situation. "I have put my point before the party's top leadership and am waiting for a reply," Hembrom said.

# K'taka braces for third wave; 18,000 nursing students to be trained

BENGALURU | Agencies

Karnataka government has decided to get 18,000 nursing students who are pursuing their final year MSc course trained for the treatment of patients during the course of possible third wave of Coronavirus or Omicron's probable effects.

Health Minister K. Sudhakar made this announcement after chairing a meeting of Directors, Deans, HoD's and Medical Superintendents of all government Medical Colleges on Friday.

"The service of nurses in ICU and hospitals is crucial during the time of pandemic. There are 18,000 nursing students pursuing their final degree in the state. It has been decided to utilise their services as the health department will get 18,000 additional staff if they pitch in. During the second wave, there was a shortage of nurses," he said.

It has been directed to get them trained for delivering treatment through digital courses and by signing MoU with other institutions, he added. In the meeting, the review of 21 gov-



ernment medical institutions was made. In every district, the district government hospital attached with the medical college is going to play a pivotal role during the crisis. It has been discussed thoroughly about preparedness on possible third wave or Omicron's probable effects, Sudhakar

explained. It is important that HoD's, Professors, Assistant Professors and senior doctors should behave with utmost responsibility. The meeting also discussed utilising the services of home doctors and PG medical students for effective treatment of patients, he explained.

Sudhakar announced that Covid Risk Allowance for Resident Medical Doctors has been released. The government has released Rs 55 crore out of Rs 73 crore and the rest will be released in a day or two. He also assured timely release of salaries for doctors and medical staff.



SAMPLES OF 28 RETURNEES FROM HIGH-RISK COUNTRIES SENT FOR GENOME SEQUENCING: TOPE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The state government has so far tested 485 of 2,868 persons who have returned from various countries between November 10 and 30 Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Friday said the swab samples of 28 persons, who returned to the state from high-risk countries last month with nine of them already testing Covid-19 positive, have been sent for genome sequencing amid concerns over the new Omicron variant of the virus.

Tope gave the information while talking to reporters in his home district Jalna.

"The international travellers who arrived in Mumbai from the high-risk countries have been identified and the swab samples of 28 such persons have been sent for genome sequencing. Out of them, nine persons have already tested Covid-19 positive. However, we are yet to establish whether they are carrying the new Omicron variant," he said.

"We expect to get their genome



sequencing report in two days and the next course of action will be decided in case any of them is found infected with the new variant," the minister added.

As many as 2,868 persons have returned to the state from various

countries between November 10 and 30, he said, adding that the state government has so far tested 485 of them and nine of them have tested positive for Covid-19. The state health department has instructed the staff to isolate the international travellers, who

have tested positive for the infection, an official said.

"We are trying to keep them away from the other Covid-19 patients as there is little information available about the new variant and its impact on our lives," the official from the health department said.

The first cases of Omicron variant in India have been confirmed in two individuals in Karnataka.

Maharashtra on Thursday amended its air travel rules making seven-day institutional quarantine mandatory for passengers from only three "high-risk" countries - South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Earlier, the state government's November 30 order had made institutional quarantine mandatory for passengers arriving from all 'at risk' countries in the central government's list in view of global concerns over the Omicron variant of coronavirus.

The Omicron strain, first detected in South Africa, has been classified as a 'variant of concern' by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Elgaar Parishad case: NIA moves SC challenging bail to Sudha Bharadwaj

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has moved the Supreme Court challenging the bail granted to accused Sudha Bharadwaj in the Elgaar Parishad case.

On Wednesday, the Bombay High Court granted bail to human rights activist Bharadwaj in the Bhima Koregaon caste violence case. However, it refused to entertain bail pleas of eight other accused - Rona Wilson, Varavara Rao, Sudhir Dhawale, Surendra Gadling, Shoma Sen, Mahesh Raut, Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreira. All the accused are lodged at the Taloja Central Jail.

A division bench comprising Justice S.S. Shinde and Justice N.J. Jamadar directed that Bharadwaj should be produced before the Special NIA Court next Wednesday which will impose the bail conditions and finalise her release. It had noted that a special court designated under the NIA Act already existed in Pune, as a result, the sessions judge had no jurisdiction to extend the detention beyond the stipulated 90 days.

Bharadwaj is the first among the 16 activists arrested in the case to be granted default bail. Earlier some accused like P. Varavara Rao were granted bail on medical grounds while



accused Fr. Stan Lourduwamy passed away in custody in July after a prolonged illness.

Hailing from Chhattisgarh, Bharadwaj, 60, has been in jail since August 2018 after her arrest from New Delhi by the Pune Police which was probing the twin case.

The high court granted her bail on the ground that her detention under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) was extended by a sessions court, which had no power to do so. A lawyer-activist and working for tribal rights, Bharadwaj was teaching at the National Law University when she was nabbed. A few months ago, through her lawyer Yug Chaudhry, Bharadwaj filed a plea for bail, contending that after a lapse of 90 days of detention, there was no valid or lawful order extending the time for filing of the charge sheet and hence she was entitled to a default bail.

Maharashtra Police files chargesheet against 33 accused in Dombivli gangrape case

The Maharashtra Police filed a chargesheet against 33 accused in the Dombivli gangrape case.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Police in Maharashtra's Thane district have filed a chargesheet against all 33 accused, including four minors, in the Dombivli gang-rape case, in which a 15-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted multiple times over a period of eight months earlier this year.

The police filed the chargesheet in Kalyan sessions court recently, a senior official of Manpada police station in the district, where the case was registered on September 22 this year, said.

"The chargesheet runs into 885 pages and the statements



of 122 witnesses have been recorded to make the case watertight," the police official said on Friday.

The chargesheet says that the minor victim was gang-raped by the accused at various locations, including Dombivli, Badlapur, Murbad and Rabale, between January 29 and September 22 this year, and that she was also drugged.

Of the total 33 accused,

four juveniles are presently out on bail, while 29 others are in judicial custody.

The police have booked the accused under IPC sections 376 (rape), 376 (n) (repeated rape), 376 (d) (gang-rape), 376 (3) (rape on a woman under sixteen years of age) and also under provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

No exam fee for SSC, HSC students who lost their parents to Covid-19

The exam fees for Class 10 students appearing for the secondary school certificate (SSC) exam, and for Class 12 students appearing for the higher secondary certificate (HSC) exam varies from Rs 300 to Rs 500.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Uddhav Thackeray-led Maharashtra government on Thursday announced that it was waiving off this year's exam fees for those Class 10 and Class 12 state board students who had lost their parents to the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) infection during the pandemic. Calling the gesture a "small solace" on part of the government to the children who had to suffer heartbreak during this difficult phase, state government officials



confirmed that the fee to be waived is for the board exams are set to be conducted in 2022. "A small solace from our side to the children who lost their parents to the pandemic," Maharashtra school education minister Varsha Gaikwad was quoted by the PTI news agency as saying. "The fee for state board exams 2021-22 is being waived off."

"We are aware that they have gone through a lot already, but their education must continue," she added.

The exam fees for Class 10 students appearing for the secondary school certificate (SSC) exam, and for Class 12 students appearing for the higher secondary certificate (HSC) exam varies from Rs300 to Rs500.

The Maharashtra government has asked schools to submit the names of those students who lost their parents to the pandemic, so the administration can initiate appropriate proceedings to waive off their board exam fees. Maharashtra State Board for Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (MSBSHSE) had last month decided to refund only 20.85% of the nearly Rs104 crore collected as exam fees from approximately 2.9 million SSC and HSC students for the academic year 2020-21.

The Bombay high court had on July 29 this year directed the state government to consider refunding exam fees after board exams were cancelled on account of the Covid-19 pandemic. SSC students paid Rs315 each as exam fee, of which the board agreed to refund Rs59, or 18.73 per cent of the original fees. Similarly, HSC students paid Rs415 each, but the board planned to return Rs94, or 22.65 per cent.

Maharashtra Sees Record-Breaking December Rain: What Led to the Untimely Showers

THE RAINS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO A LOW-PRESSURE AREA IN THE ARABIAN SEA AND A WESTERN DISTURBANCE, AS PER THE IMD.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai, its satellite cities, along with north and central Maharashtra, received unseasonal rainfall in the first few days of December, marking a disruption in the usual weather pattern of the region.

The maximum temperature observed in Mumbai on 1 December plummeted to 24 degrees Celsius - eight degrees below the normal - after the untimely showers, as per the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD). This is the second-lowest temperature in Mumbai for December in a decade. "We sometimes do see rainfall



in December in this region, but this year it was record breaking," said Anupam Kashyapi, Head of Weather Forecasting Division for IMD, Pune.

Talking about the weather abnormality, AVM (Rtrd) GP Sharma, President of Meteorology (Skymet), said, "Rainfall in December is unusual for the Konkan belt. Not only Maharashtra, even Gujarat received a very heavy amount of rainfall.

When we say unseasonal, we mean

that these events are rare. It's not very common. This time it was rarest of all because Mumbai received nearly 100 mm of rainfall, which is a record for highest rainfall received by the city in 24 hours in December. Situation is, however, expected to get better tomorrow onward." The December rains can be attributed to a low-pressure area in the Arabian Sea and a western disturbance, as per the Indian Meteorological Department.

"There was a weather system in the Arabian Sea which came in the proximity of the coast which changed the wind pattern and caused clouding. It interacted with a weather system which moves up north and the combined effect caused this rainfall. This is definitely unexpected and untimely, and the frequency of such freak events is only increasing due to climate change." Kashyapi further elaborated on the environmental factors that facilitated the formation of conducive conditions for rain -- a cause for worry. "Upper air cyclonic circulation over the Arabian Sea resulted in heavy and untimely rains in Maharashtra. Initially, it was off the Karnataka coast and slowly moved northward. On 1 December, the location of this cyclonic circulation was off Maharashtra coast and a trough like low-pressure area extended throughout the Konkan region. These two combined, brought a lot of moisture. Districts such as Palghar, Thane, Mumbai, Raigadh upto Ratnagiri and Sindudurg received heavy isolated rains," explained Kashyapi.

Second arrest in leak over Maharashtra Health Department exam paper

The police has identified the accused person as Arun Dagadu Gaikwad (31) from Ambad in Jalna district. He was arrested on Thursday.

Team Absolute | Pune

The Pune city police has arrested one more person in connection with the alleged leaking of the question paper for the Maharashtra State Health Department's Grade C and D recruitment examination.

The police has identified the accused person as Arun Dagadu Gaikwad (31) from Ambad in Jalna district. He was arrested on Thursday. A court in Pune returned him to police custody till



December 7 for further investigation. The police suspects that a conspiracy to leak the recruitment examination paper was hatched at Gaikwad's house. Earlier, the police had arrested Vijay Prahlad Murnade (29), who is also a resident of Ambad in Jalna district. Murnade is also in police custody. The police said Gaikwad received the leaked paper on his Instagram account from wanted accused Baban Mundhe on October 31.

While a search is on for Mundhe, the police are investigating how he procured the examination paper. Smita Koregaonkar, Chief Administrative Officer of the

health department, had lodged the first information report in the case at the Cyber police station of the Pune city police last Friday.

As per the FIR, answers for 92 out of the 100 questions in the examination paper were leaked and circulated on social media, thereby cheating the government and the students. The police booked the accused persons under Sections 406, 420 and 34 of the Indian Penal Code, and Sections of the Maharashtra Prevention of Malpractices at University, Board and Other Specified Examinations Act, 1982. The written examination for recruitment for Maharashtra State Health Department's Grade C and D positions was held at various centres on October 31, 2021, between 2 pm and 4 pm. But, the examination paper was leaked and circulated that morning around 8.30 am.

Vibrant Gujarat by scraping Mumbai? Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut asks BJP

Gandhinagar | Agencies

Shiv Sena MP and its spokesperson Sanjay Raut on Thursday asked the BJP that if it was accusing West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of 'diverting' business from Maharashtra to her state, why was the Maharashtra BJP silent during Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel's visit to Mumbai on Thursday.

The Gujarat CM was in Mumbai on Thursday to hold a roadshow as a precursor event to the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors Summit to be held from January 10-12 next year in Gandhinagar. He, along with a high-level delegation, met business leaders and industry executives in Mumbai's Taj Mahal Palace Hotel.

"Gujarat was becoming 'self-reliant' by feeding on Mumbai," Raut remarked. "The Gujarat Chief Minister

has brought half of his Cabinet to Mumbai for the Vibrant Gujarat Summit."

"The BJP was absurdly accusing Mamata Banerjee of trying to 'rob' Maharashtra after she met industrialists in Mumbai on Wednesday. They accused her of trying to rob the state of its industries by taking them to West Bengal. Today, the Gujarat CM is meeting Mumbai industrialists with half of his Cabinet and organising a roadshow here. But the Maharashtra BJP leadership is conspicuously silent about this, why," he asked.

"The Rajya Sabha member from the Shiv Sena in Marathi and English tweets, expressed his anguish over Bhupendra Patel's roadshow in Mumbai. In his Marathi tweet, he asked 'did the Chief Minister of Gujarat come to Mumbai to become self-reliant?' Raut also attached the photograph of an advertisement in a newspaper fea-

turing Patel's road show in Mumbai. In his English tweet, Raut said: "When W Bengal CM met industrialists in Mumbai, BJP's stomach got upset, it alleged that she is here to rob industries from Maharashtra. Today, Gujarat CM is meeting the industrialists with half of his cabinet and organising roadshow in Mumbai. Vibrant Gujarat by scraping Mumbai?"

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Ashish Shelar had some time ago demanded that the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra should announce the official details of the meeting between Banerjee and Shiv Sena Minister Aditya Thackeray.

"There seems to be some conspiracy over Ms. Banerjee's Mumbai visit. Is the ruling Shiv Sena facilitating the migration of industries from Maharashtra to West Bengal?" Shelar asked.

Mamata Banerjee Snubs Congress In Maharashtra Amid Growing NCP-Sena Ties: Didigiri?

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee left out the Congress from a meeting between NCP chief Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena leaders Aaditya Thackeray and Sanjay Raut in Mumbai.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two years in power in Maharashtra has brought the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Shiv Sena much closer to each other than when it first established the government in the state. The third constituent of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, the Congress Party, has been pushed into a corner by this increasing fondness between the NCP and the Shiv Sena.

The meeting of NCP chief Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena leaders Aaditya Thackeray and Sanjay Raut with West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee in Mumbai without Congress leaders is a strong indication of the latter's ebbing weight in Maharashtra politics. In a setback to the Congress no Maharashtra leader of the party was extended an invitation by Mamata Banerjee. Miffed by the visiting CM's angry references to the Congress, the party's leaders were in unison that there could be



no alternative to the BJP without the Congress. Former chief minister Ashok Chavan, the minister for Revenue Balasaheb Thorat and the state president of the Congress Nana Patole through separate statements reiterated the importance of the Congress Party. "It is the Congress which keeps talking of going alone in the future polls. So why should they be angry about not being invited to be a part of any new anti-BJP alliance which will be formed?" said an NCP minister.

It is no secret that Pawar has been actively involved in the functioning of the MVA government. While the NCP and the Shiv Sena have been in unison since the tripartite alliance was formed, the discordant notes from the Congress camp have not gone down too well with the other two constituents. It is not just the West Bengal CM

Mamata Banerjee who felt that the Congress "just wastes its time making the BJP more powerful", this is a sentiment that has found many takers across the MVA political spectrum.

Sources within the Congress told Outlook "slow pace is not always a steady pace, it can be destructive too". While the NCP and the Shiv Sena have been aggressive and vocal on various issues - the more recent one being the Aryan Khan drug case - the Congress has taken a cautious stand. "We want to see our leaders taking a strong stand on issues. Our leaders work for themselves and their families not for the party," said an angry Congress MLA. "Our leaders talk of the Congress fighting elections on their own, the question is do we have the strength to do so? Unless we have a miracle our party will keep declining," said the same MLA. Mamata Banerjee's snub to Congress has also opened the floodgates of disgruntlement again. Despite a no-poaching agreement between the MVA constituents, many of the Congress MLAs are willing to shift sides. "There will definitely be a lot of movement from the Congress to the NCP and the Shiv Sena. Why be in a party which is on a self-destruction mode," said another MLA to Outlook. Mamata Banerjee's efforts to establish a third front to take on the BJP and her meetings with Pawar, Thackeray and Raut, has buoyed both the NCP and the Shiv Sena as if giving them a new purpose.



EDITOR'S SPECS

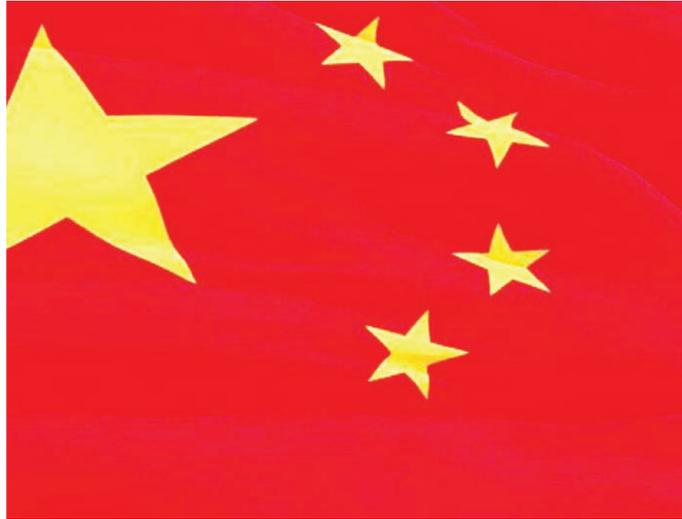
## Sri Lanka to end up like Uganda!

**S**arath Fonseka, Sri Lanka's former Army Commander and Presidential candidate, has warned that Sri Lanka which has fallen into China's debt trap would end up like Uganda, which had to give away their only international airport to China. Fonseka, who led Sri Lanka's three-decade long civil war against Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels to victory in 2009, said this in a Facebook post titled "Sri Lanka is being engulfed in Chinese debt trap that destroyed Uganda". Drawing a parallel between Uganda's airport and Chinese-funded new airport built in Hambantota in southern Sri Lanka, going beyond the country's foreign diplomacy, it has been made a slave of one camp and also have worked to achieve political and military ambitions of another state, and thereby let the country lose its integrity and sovereignty. Just as what happened during the Rajapaksa's regime, the corrupt political leaders of Uganda, ignoring the national plan and priorities, had gone on with the constructions with commercial loans at high interest rates that attract commissions. Instead of developing the Colombo Harbour, Hambantota Harbour which was not so important project, is now owned by China and it is being used as a naval corridor in the centre of the Indian Ocean. Hambantota Harbour is being looked at as a Chinese Naval base by India, the US and other Quad countries. This is a serious threat to Sri Lanka's security. We would be able to see the result of these idiotic decisions during the definite power struggle in the region within next 60 to 80 months. The opposition MP, Fonseka, who said with the way how Chinese Ambassador is being reacted like a "mad man for the dirt ship", the future is very clear and we have to rectify this situation in the future.

# GLOBALLY ACTIVE CHINA

Asad Mirza

**T**he aggressive and planned manner in which Chinese companies have forayed globally, poses a risk not just to the economic interests but also the defence interests of the collaborating and neighbour nations. Recent reports by Wall Street Journal have revealed that the US intelligence agencies found evidence of construction work on what they believed was a secret Chinese military facility in the United Arab Emirates, and which was stopped after Washington's intervention. It says that satellite imagery of the Port Khalifa revealed suspicious construction work inside a container terminal built and operated by a Chinese shipping corporation, Cosco. It included huge excavations covered in an apparent attempt to evade scrutiny and apparently for a multi-storey building. The Biden administration initiated urgent contact with the UAE authorities, which appeared to be unaware of the military activities, according to the WSJ. It said the discussions included two direct conversations between Joe Biden and Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in May and August. The US officials visited the UAE in late September and presented the intelligence details to the Emirati authorities. The construction work was suspended after the US officials recently inspected the Port Khalifa site. **Chinese forays in the Gulf** Basically, China, the world's largest trading nation, has thrown its weight behind Abu Dhabi as the Middle East hub for its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its biggest project is the Khalifa Port. Moreover, it is trying to expand its presence globally by constructing ports, railways and roads in partner countries albeit at terms which tilt hugely in its favour, besides challenging the US interests. Cosco, the Shanghai-based, state-owned group that ranks among the biggest shipping companies in the world, has invested an initial \$300 million in the CSP Abu Dhabi Terminal, the first step in an investment programme that could help make it one of the biggest ports in the Arabian Gulf over the next five years. The deal with Cosco is aimed at attracting foreign investment into the UAE via the Khalifa Industrial Zone of Abu Dhabi (KIZAD), the huge logistics and manufacturing zone that borders the port. By 2023, the Port Khalifa is expected to overtake Jebel Ali, just 50 km away in Dubai,



in capacity terms, thus proving once again which is the strongest emirate in the UAE. Trade ties have been growing between China and the UAE since a visit by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan to Beijing three years ago. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the UAE last summer. In alignment with their goal of augmenting UAE-China trade, DP World, a UAE owned company in partnership with Zhejiang China Commodity City Group (CCC) has also launched the Yiwu Market as part of the first phase of Dubai Traders Market, located in the heart of Jafza. Dubai Traders Market will span approximately 800,000 square metres, with Yiwu Market covering about 200,000 square metres. The market will give traders and businesses from across the globe access to wholesale discounts with minimised supply chain costs and turnaround times. **Regional Geopolitics** China's BRI is a state-sponsored strategy to enhance land and sea trading infrastructure in Asia, the Middle East and Africa via multi-billion-dollar investments in trading hubs across the eastern hemisphere, though it has been criticised by some observers for leaving the partners of Chinese companies in debt, as happened in Sri Lanka and Venezuela. In recent times Persian Gulf powers like

the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been engaged in expanding their influence in the Horn of Africa and are busy opening commercial and military facilities in the Red Sea region. Major global powers like the United States (US), Japan, China and France have established military bases in Djibouti. Reportedly, India had also demonstrated interest in opening the base at Djibouti and Russia has recently announced that it will establish a military base in Sudan. China is engaged in developing major infrastructure projects such as ports and railways in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. As a result of these activities, the littoral and continental space from Sudan in the north to Kenya in the south has become a focal point of strategic rivalries between regional as well as global powers. **Chinese ventures in Somaliland** The port of Berbera and Somaliland's geopolitical location at the crossroads of West Asia, Horn of Africa and Indian Ocean is likely to assume increasing strategic importance as the Indo-Pacific rivalries sharpen. Historically, the strategic location of the port near the straits of the Bab-el-Mandeb, which is a key maritime choke point for international trade and global energy security, has attracted foreign

powers. In the last few years, UAE has established a firm foothold at Berbera. Meanwhile the UAE, Ethiopia and Somaliland have reached an alliance for developing Berbera Economic Zone. The Chinese navy established a facility in Djibouti, its first overseas base, about four years ago, which was placed within a Chinese-run commercial port, at Doraleh. In addition in June this year, a new container terminal was inaugurated at the port of Berbera in the self-governing territory of Somaliland. Somaliland is a breakaway region of Somalia and is not recognised by any other state. The port of Berbera is located along the southern coast of the Gulf of Aden. For UAE, developing the port of Berbera and building strategic partnership with Somaliland serves two inter-related objectives: challenge the pre-eminence of the port facilities at Djibouti for the shipping enroute to the Suez Canal and expand its influence in the Horn of Africa. Through its entrenched presence in Somaliland and in Southern Yemen, UAE is in an enviable geopolitical position: it can monitor the strategically important Gulf of Aden closely and shape the strategic affairs of the region. **India's Interests** Gulf of Aden is an integral part of India's maritime neighbourhood and sharpening rivalries between major powers underscore the need for increasing India's strategic presence in the region. India has recently opened its embassy in Djibouti and has been steadily expanding its engagement with the Horn of Africa. Officially, there is no contact between India and Somaliland. A foothold in Somaliland would expand India's presence and prove useful in monitoring Chinese activities in the region. India could use its ties with the UAE to forge newer ties with Somaliland. Compared with the unstable politics and prevailing insecurity in Somalia, democratic Somaliland is stable and secure. This will also serve its purpose of keeping an eye on the Chinese activities in the region and be a force to reckon with in the Gulf of Aden. (Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi. He writes on Muslims, educational, international affairs, inter-faith and current affairs.)

## international

## ISRAELI PM URGES US TO HALT NUKE TALKS WITH IRAN

**Jerusalem** | Agencies  
**I**srael has urged the United States to halt the nuclear talks with Iran immediately, accusing Iran of having begun to enrich uranium with advanced centrifuges. The call was made on Thursday during a phone talk between Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, according to a statement issued by Bennett's office, Xinhua news agency reported. Bennett quoted a report released on Wednesday by the International Atomic Energy Agency, according to which Iran has started the process of enriching uranium to the level of 20-per cent purity



with advanced centrifuges at its Fordow underground facility. Accusing Iran of "carrying out 'nuclear blackmail' as a negotiation tactic," the Israeli leader said "this must be met with an immediate cessation" of the ongoing negotiations between Iran and world powers in Vienna. The talks in the Austrian capital are aimed at

reviving the 2015 nuclear deal under which Iran curbed its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. A vocal opponent of the nuclear deal, Israel insists that Iran has been secretly seeking to obtain nuclear weapons despite Iran's repeated statements that its nuclear programme is peaceful.

## UN EXCLUDES N. KOREA FROM HUMANITARIAN AID PLANS AGAIN

**Seoul**: The United Nations has excluded North Korea from its global humanitarian assistance plan for 2022, its recent report showed, apparently due to the impoverished country's prolonged border lockdown against the Covid-19 pandemic. The Global Humanitarian Overview 2022 released by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said, "Afghanistan, North Korea and Myanmar are facing acute food insecurity situations, which are likely to deteriorate further by the year's end", Yonhap reported. But its response plans for the Asia-Pacific region only included those for Afghanistan and Myanmar. It marked the second year in a row for the annual report to exclude North Korea from its assistance plans. The decision comes as North Korea is maintaining a strict border lockdown to stave off the coronavirus, prompting international organization staff members necessary for on-site monitoring and assessment to leave the country. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization's December report on global crop prospects and food situation, North Korea was among 44 countries requiring external assistance for food, with a large portion of its population estimated to be suffering from low levels of food consumption. "The persisting economic constraints, exacerbated by restrictive measures to control the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, have significantly reduced imports, including critical agricultural inputs and humanitarian goods, increasing the population's vulnerability to food insecurity," the report added.

## Taliban supreme leader issues decree safeguarding women's rights

**Kabul** | Agencies  
**T**he Taliban supreme leader Haibatullah Akhundzada on Friday issued a special decree regarding women's rights and directed relevant authorities to take actions to safeguard these rights. "The Islamic Emirate's leadership directs all relevant Organizations, Ulema-e Karam (scholars) and Tribal Elders to take serious action to enforce Women's Rights," Afghan caretaker government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement, Xinhua news agency reported. According to the decree, women's consent is necessary during marriage and no one can force women to marry by coercion or pressure. "A woman is not a property, but a noble and free human being; no one can give her to anyone



in exchange for peace deal and or to end animosity," the decree said. No one can marry a widow by force including her relatives and a widow has the right to marry or to choose her future, the decree added. A widow has the heritage right and fixed share in the property of her husband, children, father and relatives, and no one can deprive a widow of her right, according to the decree. "Those

with multi marriages (more than one wife) are obliged to give rights to all women in accordance with sharia (Islamic) law, and maintain justice between them," the decree said. The Taliban leader has instructed the Ministry of Information and Culture to publish articles related to women's rights and also called for proper implementation of the decree. He also called on provincial governors and district chiefs to cooperate comprehensively with the relevant ministries and the Supreme Court in the implementation of decree. The security situation in Afghanistan has remained generally calm but uncertain since the Taliban's takeover in mid-August and the formation of the Taliban caretaker government on September 7.

## JAPAN CONSIDERS INSTALLING SECURITY CAMERAS MANDATORILY ON TRAINS

**Tokyo**: The Japanese government is considering requiring railway operators across the country to install security cameras in newly built trains following a knife attack inside a train in Tokyo in October, transport ministry officials said on Friday. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism will study revising an ordinance on disaster prevention measures that instructs operators to take safety measures to prevent fires, but so far, there are no requirements for security cameras, Xinhua reported. The decision is made after the ministry exchanged opinions on security measures with major railway operators including the Japan Railways group. Regarding the October 31 attack, the operator Keio Corp. has said that the staff was unaware of what had happened after passengers pushed emergency buttons at several locations inside the train. There were also no security cameras to help staff properly grasp what was happening. In addition, after an emergency stop, as the train stopped slightly behind the proper stopping position, some doors closed, and many passengers had to escape by climbing out of train windows onto the platform. The officials said that the transport ministry and railway operators are also studying how to handle emergency buttons and levers in case of emergency. In the October 31 attack on the Tokyo train, a man in his 70s was seriously hurt after allegedly being stabbed in the chest, and the other 16 victims sustained minor injuries. The suspect also allegedly ignited a fire inside the train. A number of attacks on trains and station premises in the Tokyo area have occurred this year. A man stabbed and slashed 10 passengers in August on an Odakyu Electric Railway commuter train. Two men were stabbed on October 15 by a man at JR Ueno Station. In a separate incident, two people were injured at a Tokyo subway station in late August as a man sprayed sulfuric acid in the face of another man.

## Mossad recruited Iranian scientists to blow up nuclear facility

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi  
**I**srael's Mossad recruited a team of Iranian nuclear scientists to carry out a covert operation which blew up one of the regime's most secure nuclear facilities earlier this year, the Jewish Chronicle reported. Up to 10 scientists were approached by Israeli agents and agreed to destroy the underground A1000 centrifuge hall at Natanz in April, though they believed that they were working for international dissident groups. Some of the explosives they used were dropped into the compound by a drone and quietly collected by the scientists, while others were smuggled into the high security facility hidden in boxes of food on a catering lorry, the report said. The ensuing destruction caused chaos in the highest echelons of the Iranian leadership. It demolished 90 per cent of the centrifuges at the nuclear plant, delaying progress



towards a bomb and putting the key complex out of action for up to nine months, the report added. The new details are among astonishing secrets of three connected Mossad operations that took place over an 11-month period of sabotage in Iran. The first two, in July 2020 and April 2021, targeted the complex in Natanz using explosives, while the third, in June this year, took the form of a quadcopter assault on the

Iran Centrifuge Technology Company (TESA), in the city of Karaj, 30 miles northwest of Tehran, Jewish Chronicle reported. Mossad spies hid explosives in building materials used to construct the Natanz centrifuge hall as long ago as 2019, then triggered them in 2020. Agents sneaked an armed quadcopter, weighing the same as a motorbike, into Iran piece by piece, and used it to launch missiles at the TESA site in Karaj in June,

the report said. The three operations were planned together over an 18-month period by a team of 1,000 technicians, analysts and spies, as well as scores of agents on the ground. The three-part assault on Iranian nuclear infrastructure was carried out by Mossad acting alone -- known in Israeli intelligence circles as a 'blue-and-white operation' -- and not jointly with the US, dubbed 'blue-white-and-red'.

## GLOBAL COVID CASELOAD TOPS 264.13 MN

**Washington**: The global coronavirus caseload has topped 264.13 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 5.23 million and vaccination to over 8.07 billion, according to Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Friday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 264,131,554 and 5,233,849 respectively. And the total number of vaccine doses administered was 8,077,311,814. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 48,832,302 and 785,907, respectively according to the CSSE. The second worst hit country in terms of cases is India (34,606,541 infections and 469,724 deaths), followed by Brazil (22,118,782 infections and 615,179 deaths). The other worst countries with over 5 million cases are the UK (10,387,200), Russia (9,533,593), Turkey (8,841,861), France (7,877,490), Iran (6,125,596), Germany (6,026,903), Argentina (5,335,310), Spain (5,189,220) and Colombia (5,074,079), the CSSE figures showed. Nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are Mexico (294,428), Russia (272,279), Peru (201,176), the UK (145,728), Indonesia (143,850), Italy (134,003), Iran (129,988), Colombia (128,528), France (120,311) and Argentina (116,617).





# GOVERNOR, CM PAYS TRIBUTES ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan have expressed condolences to the affected citizens by paying homage to the people who died during the gas disaster on the 37th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy.

Governor Patel participated the all religion meeting organised in the memory of the departed persons on the 37th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy and paid tribute at the Central Library, Barkatullah Bhawan. Various religious leaders recited in the meeting. A two minute silence was observed in the memory of the departed souls to pay them homage. Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Vishwas Sarang was also present on this occasion.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed condolences to the affected citizens by pay-



ing homage to the people who died during the gas disaster on the 37th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. Chouhan has tweeted- "In the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, we have lost many precious lives untimely, I pay my humble tribute to all those departed souls. May such a tragedy never recur on Earth. With the joint efforts of the government and society, we can stop such humanitarian errors."

Appealing to maintain a balance between development and environment and adopting all measures to protect the environment,

Chief Minister has tweeted - "The Government of Madhya Pradesh always stands with the families of the victims. Deteriorating environment causes destruction. God has created this Earth for all. Animals-birds, insects-mites, rivers-seas, trees-plants are all parts of the Earth along with humans. Therefore, it is extremely important to maintain a balance between development and environment. We have to adopt all the measures of environmental protection and make the Earth green by planting more and more trees.

# Government is working on the front foot for public welfare and development: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the State Government is working on the front foot to conduct development and public welfare activities in the state. An amount of one lakh 50 thousand crores has been deposited in the accounts of farmers in a year, Sambal Yojana has been started again. The result of the schemes implemented for women empowerment including the Ladli Laxmi Yojana implemented in the state is that the sex ratio has increased from 912 to 956 per thousand. Better implementation of all the schemes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is being ensured in the state. It is the resolve of our government to change the lives of the people of the state. For the betterment of the people, the state government is continuously active under the leadership of PM Modi with one team, one view, one resolve. Chief Minister expressed his views at a programme organised by a media group in New Delhi.

Chouhan said that PM Modi is an extraordinary person. He is man of ideas. The country is changing as a result of his thoughts and actions. The State Government is always striving to ideally implement the schemes launched by Modi and to be in the forefront. Under the leadership of Modi, work is going on continuously in the state for infrastructure development, welfare of farmers and betterment of



daughters. Chouhan said that Modi has shown direction to the world for environmental protection in Glasgow Conference. Tree plantation is essential for environmental protection. I have resolved to plant saplings every day. With the aim of involving social organisations, voluntary organisations and individuals in this activity, I undertake tree plantation with them every day. Chouhan said that work is being done in the field of green energy in the state for environmental protection. Our aim is to save electricity up to 10 percent, which we will achieve through public participation. Chouhan said

that I myself try to save electricity at personal level also and I constantly motivate people for this. At my level, if I see any bulb or tube light switched on in vain, then I myself put it off. Chouhan said that such small efforts at individual level will save electricity. Chouhan said that the tribal community constitutes more than 21 percent of the state's population. It is our goal for their welfare and making them empowered. Efforts are also being made in the state to disseminate correct information regarding the contribution and sacrifice of the tribal community in the history of the country. Maintaining social harmony is our top priority.

Chouhan said that the new variant of corona infection, Omicron, will be tackled on the basis of public-participation model. We are standing on the verge of crisis. Oxygen plants, ventilators and all other emergency necessary arrangements are available in the state. It will be our endeavour that all these are not needed at all. At present, the process of creating an atmosphere for strict adherence to masks, social distancing and other precautions is being speeded up. The potential crisis will be dealt with collectively. Chouhan said that the state government stands with full humanitarian sympathy with the children who were orphaned in Corona. Arrangements are being made for the maintenance, housing and education of these children with the feeling of family members.

# Medical camp a Yajna for service to humanity: Governor

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that the medical camp is a Yajna of service to the suffering humanity. All those who give a part of their service in this yajna are worthy of merit. He said that an event organised to help the underprivileged and needy is a unique and exemplary initiative of social service.

Governor Patel was addressing a free medical camp organised by Late Kailash Prason Foundation. Vidhan Sabha Speaker Girish Gautam and Minister of Medical Education Vishwas Sarang were also present. Governor Patel visited the camp site and held discussion with the people who came to the camp.

Governor Patel said that organizing the medical camp is a commendable effort and appreciated the efforts of Vishwas Sarang for organizing the camp. He said that a social worker must always be ready to help the needy and deprived. The suggestion of the Vidhan Sabha Speaker Girish Gautam to organize a camp in Vindhya Pradesh, reflects this sentiment. Recalling the Sarang couple, he said that the dedication, determination and spirit of service with which their children are following their path is the positive outcome of their sense of serv-



ice. He wished that the Kailash Prason Foundation would make continuous progress while working for the welfare of the deprived sections. Recalling Kailash Sarang, Vidhan Sabha Speaker, Girish Gautam said that the work for the welfare of

the poor is Satkarma (good deed). Only the one who does good deeds is a Karma Yogi. The work done by Kailash Sarang for social service and the organization is unforgettable. While appreciating the efforts of the project to serve the suffering humanity in an era of fear of attack of Corona variant, he described it as an exemplary initiative.

Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang said that the goal of the Foundation is to provide medical facilities with the help of the society. He said that after surveying 50 thousand houses, patients have been identified. Free treatment is being provided to them in the camp. 42 medical experts of the country are rendering their services in the camp. These include 5 Padma Shri awardee doctors. He said that free of cost arrangements have been made for super specialty treatment of serious patients identified in the camp.

Eminent ophthalmologist Dr TP Lahane, Neurosurgeon Dr Chandrashekar Devpujari, Cancer Specialist Dr Jyoti Bajpai and Pediatric Neurosurgeon Dr Pawan Chawla were welcomed with a bouquet. In the beginning, the guests offered prayers to Maa Saraswati, Lord Dhanwantri and paid floral tributes to Kailash Prason Sarang. Dr SP Dubey proposed the vote of thanks.

# MP ask govt offices to reduce power consumption by 10 per cent

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has asked all its departments to reduce power consumption by ten per cent.

In a circular, the government has said that power switches should be turned off when not in use.

Before leaving office the electric appliances should be switched off, it added.

The circular stressed on the need to replace normal electric bulbs consuming more power with the less power consumption LED bulbs. Similarly, computer screensavers should not be used and the setting should be changed to blank to save power, it suggested.

It said that air conditioners installed in government offices should be set at an ideal temperature and should be used only when required.

"Printers, monitors and other such electric devices should be kept in sleep mode to save power," it added.

It has also urged government employees to make small changes in their habits to save power at home as the state has been facing regular electricity cuts. For this purpose, the government has decided to launch a campaign -- 'Urja Saksharta Abhiyaan' -- involving school and college students across the state. A decision in this regard was taken during a Cabinet meeting on November 23.

# Governor and CM to unveil the statue of Tanya Mama

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will pay homage by unveiling the statue of Tanya Mama at Patalpani, the place of work of Tanya Mama, the great leader of the tribal pride and freedom movement on his martyrdom day on Gourav Diwas on 4th December. After this, they will attend the death anniversary programme of Tanya Mama at Nehru Stadium Indore.

Patel and Chouhan will visit the exhibition based on the life of Jannayak Tanya Mama, set up at Nehru Stadium in Indore. Chief Minister will welcome Tanya Mama Gourav Kalash Rath and descendants of Tanya Mama in the programme. Various cultural programmes will also be organised in the ceremony.

The new statue of Tanya Mama has come

from Gwalior for installation. This statue, about ten feet high, will be unveiled. Governor Patel and Chief Minister Chouhan will also perform worship and plantation at the Kalka Mata Temple at Patalpani Railway Station. The British officers accepted the indomitable courage of Tanya Mama and used to tremble at his name. Tanya Mama used to be active in helping the poor. The British officers were also scared of his activities. That is why Tanya Mama was also called Indian Robin Hood by many British officers.

It is said that Tanya Mama, who specialized in imitating sounds of many types of animals and birds, happily kissed the noose of the gallows. British soldiers used to fear him very much. He made a lot of efforts at the personal level to make people aware of the country's self-respect

and the value of freedom. In the words of Chief Minister the centre of reverence for everyone, the tribal pride, the great hero of the country's freedom movement, the revolutionary sacrificer Tanya Mama is revered by all. The cooperation given by him in the freedom movement continues to inspire us even today. On the day of his sacrifice, I will pay homage to such a great hero by going to his place of work Patalpani.

Jannayak Tanya Mama has been a symbol of courage and bravery. The stories of his contribution are heard and narrated from house to house in Nimar and Malwa regions. Born in the year 1842, patriot Jannayak Tanya Mama was hanged by the British in 1889. Tanya Bhil lived for only 47 years, he did the work of two centuries. He also played an important role in resolving mutual disputes in the tribal society, he was a Jannayak in the true sense. The Culture Department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh has staged a play centred on the contribution of Tanya Bhil. Before the sacrifice day of Jannayak Tanya Mama, two Gourav Yatras taken out from Baroda Ahir of Khandwa district and Ratlam district will enter Indore city, they will converge in Dhar. These yatras will collectively end with a cultural programme after reaching Rajwada in Indore. The yatra will start from Nehru Stadium at around 9 am on December 4 and will reach Bhavarkua Chouraha Indore. This intersection will be ceremonially named as Tanya Bhil Chouraha. The naming ceremony will also see the unveiling of the inscription. From here, a motorcycle rally of about 5 thousand people will also be taken out.

# CM plants Rudraksha plant in Haridwar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan along with Junapeethadhishwar Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Avdheshanand Giri ji planted a Rudraksha sapling at Harihar Ashram in Kankhal Haridwar today. Chouhan named the Rudraksha sapling as 'Rudra Raj.' Chouhan said that this sapling has been planted with the purpose of protecting and promoting nature, environment, human existence and the entire biological world. Chouhan along with his wife Sadhna Singh Chouhan performed Parikrama of the 450-year-old holy Rudraksh tree and prayed for the well-being of the people of the state.

Chouhan performed Rudrabhishek at Pardeshwar Mahadev Temple at Harihar Ashram Kankhal. He also sought blessings of Swami Awadheshanand ji. Chouhan presented a replica of Sanchi Stupa and a picture of Adi



Shankaracharya to Swami Awadheshanand ji.

Chouhan sought the blessings of Mahamandaleshwar Yug Purush Parmanand Giri Maharaj at Akhand Param Dham Ashram Haridwar and planted a Rudraksha sapling with him. Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Balkanand was also present on the occasion.

Rudraksha is a symbol of faith and is considered a sacred tree. Garlands made from its fruit are also worn. It is a popular belief that Rudraksha originated from the Jalbindu of Lord Shankar's eyes. Wearing

Rudraksha gives positive energy. Rudraksha is also worn for chanting mantras. Its seeds are mainly used as ornaments and garlands in India and Nepal. Rudraksha is mainly found in the Himalayan regions. Rudraksha is also found abundantly in the forests of Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Arunachal, Bengal, Haridwar, Garhwal and Dehradun. It is also found in Gangotri and Yamunotri region. Apart from this, Rudraksha trees can be seen in Nilgiris and Mysore in South India and also in Karnataka and Rameswaram.

# CHILDREN CALL ON GOVERNOR ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Bhopal: Disabled children of Umang Gauravdeep Welfare Society called on Governor Mangubhai Patel on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities at Raj Bhavan. Governor Patel had an intimate discussion with the children. Joint Director Social Justice Manoj Tiwari, Principal of the Society, Deepti Patwa and others were present.



# Bhopal Gas Tragedy: On 37th anniversary justice still eludes the survivors

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The 37th anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy, one of the world's worst industrial disasters in which 3,000-4000 people lost their lives on being exposed to methyl isocyanate gas and other highly toxic substances, is being observed on Friday.

Every year on this day, thousands of people gather to remember those who had lost their lives in the tragedy. Besides, in the immediate post-leak situation, more than half of the city's population complained of coughing, itchy eyes, skin and breathing problems. Tens of thousands suffered from blindness and ulcers.

Friday marks 37 years of the tragedy and sadly, the survivors still await justice. For them, justice remained elusive as none of the main culprits have been jailed so far. In the absence of adequate compensation and medical treatment they are left with no choice but to survive with damaged lungs and other complications.

Seventy-two-year-old Bano Bi, who lost four members of her family, and is surviving with multiple diseases, said, "Thousands of people died and lakhs

were affected by the toxic gases but the survivors were not compensated properly. Unfortunately, it did not stop there as the young generation is also bearing its brunt."

"Several women, who were children then, are facing multiple issues, including miscarriages or infertility. How will you compensate them?" a weeping Bano asked.

Thirty seven years ago on this day, India experienced a horror of untold magnitude in the form of the Bhopal gas leak in which over 5,00,000 people were exposed to methyl isocyanate gas and other highly toxic substances like carbon monoxide, hydrogen cyanide, etc that made their way into and around the small towns located near the plant. On the intervening night of December 2-3, about 40 tonnes of the dangerous gas methyl isocyanate escaped from an insecticide plant that was owned by the Indian subsidiary of the American firm Union Carbide Corporation. The incident had taken place at Plant Number C of the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal. As per reports, the leak occurred when water entered tank number 610 containing 42 tonnes of Methyl Isocyanate (MIC). The result was a runaway chemical

reaction that vented highly-toxic MIC gas into the atmosphere. The gas cloud consisted of MIC and other gases like carbon monoxide, hydrogen cyanide, etc, all of which were extremely toxic to humans and animals. According to the Madhya Pradesh government's estimates, the tragedy killed 3,787 people in and around Bhopal. However, the death toll and the number of affected people has always been debatable till today. Many of those who were exposed to the gas have given birth to physically and mentally disabled children. Children born in the affected areas had twisted arms and legs, extra limbs or body parts, musculoskeletal disorders, brain damage and underweight issues. The legal proceedings between India, Union Carbide and the US began right after the catastrophe. The government passed the Bhopal Gas Leak Act in March 1985, which allowed it to act as the legal representative of the victims.

In June 2010, seven former employees of Union Carbide, who were all Indian nationals, were convicted of causing death by negligence and sentenced to two years imprisonment. However, they were later released on bail.

केंद्रीय नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्री जन-जन के लाडले

श्रीमंत ज्योतिरादित्य सिंधिया जी के नगर आगमन पर हार्दिक...स्वागत... वंदन... अभिनंदन...

निवेदक - भारतीय जनता पार्टी एवं समस्त कार्यकर्तागण, जिला गुना

महेन्द्र सिंह सिंधोदिया "संजु भैया" पंचायत एवं जिला विकास मंत्री, ज.स. खरदोल खाला



## Machine Gun Kelly once stabbed himself while trying to woo Megan Fox

Los Angeles | Agencies

**M**usician Machine Gun Kelly, whose real name is Colson Baker, has revealed that he once accidentally stabbed himself while trying to impress actress Megan Fox, as he was trying to do cool tricks with a knife.

Kelly said he was playing around with an engraved knife given to him by Blink-182 drummer Travis Barker when the incident occurred, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

He said: "Travis got me this knife that had an engraving from the new album on it and I was like, 'Check this out, this is sick,' and I threw it up and it came and stuck in my hand."

While the 'Daywalker' hitmaker tried to act as though the injury was no big deal while he was with the 35-year-old actress, he quickly crumbled after she left.

He added during an appearance on 'The Tonight Show' starring Jimmy Fallon: "The next morning as soon as she left, I was like, 'Yo, I need stitches real quick.'"

Meanwhile, a source shared last month that Kelly could be set to propose to Fox in the near future.

An insider said: "They're very in love and beyond obsessed with each other. They are ready to take this next step in their relationship."

The music star has been "telling friends that he is planning to propose" to his girlfriend, who was married to Brian Austin Green between 2010 and 2021, with whom she has sons Noah, nine, Bodhi, seven, and Journey, five.

The 'Wild Boy' musician and the 'Transformers' star started dating after they worked together on the film 'Midnight in the Switchgrass'.

## Cardi B: First-ever creative director in residence for Playboy

Los Angeles | Agencies

**R**apper Cardi B has been named Playboy's first-ever creative director in residence. The 'WAP' hitmaker took to social media to share the news, which will see her become the very first person to be creative director in residence of the iconic brand, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Sharing the news on Instagram, she said: "Introducing the FIRST EVER Creative Director In Residence at the legendary @playboy, it's ME!!! Joining the @playboy family is a dream and I know y'all are going to love what we put together."

"I'm startin this party right as the Founding Creative Director and a founding member of Centerfold the new creator-led platform from Playboy coming soon!! We're going to have soooooo much fun."

According to a press release obtained by People magazine, Cardi's role will involve providing "artistic direction" across the Playboy brand.

The release stated: "Cardi will provide artistic direction across co-branded fashion and sexual wellness merchandise collections, digital editorial, experiential activations and more."

"In addition, Cardi B will serve as the Founding Creative Director and a founding member of Playboy's upcoming creator-led platform, Centerfold."

According to People, Centerfold is expected to launch this month and will be Playboy's social content platform that will offer creators tools to directly interact with fans.



## 'RuPaul's Drag Race' announces Season 14 cast

Los Angeles | Agencies

**R**eality show 'RuPaul's Drag Race' is all set to return with its Season 14 with a two-part premiere on January 7. The news was announced by the network VH1 on Thursday, reports variety.com.

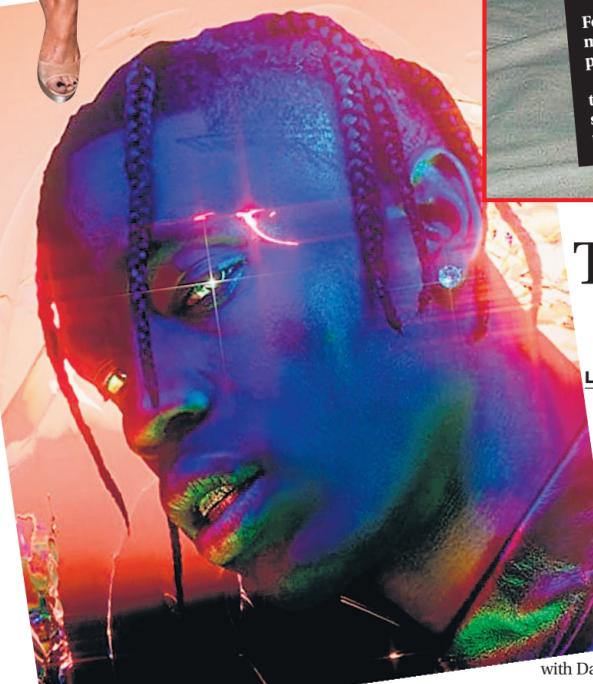
A gaggle of 14 queens will vie for the \$100,000 grand prize including the show's first-ever heterosexual, cisgender male contestant.

The after-show, "RuPaul's Drag Race: Untucked," will premiere immediately following the premiere.

For several seasons, the 'Drag Race' franchise has expanded its vision of what defines a drag queen.

The just-concluded third season of 'RuPaul's Drag Race UK' included the franchise's first cisgender woman, Victoria Scone, who identifies as a lesbian.

The first season of "RuPaul's Drag Race" featured a bisexual performer, Scaredy Kat, who had a girlfriend when he was on the show. The most recent season of 'RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars' was won by Kylie Sonique Love, the first out trans woman to win in franchise history. And last year, 'Drag Race' featured its first trans male contestant, Gottmik, who identifies as pansexual. Bringing a straight man into the 'Drag Race' workroom, however, marks the first time someone who does not identify as LGBTQ has participated on the show that has been celebrated for bringing queer identities into the mainstream.



## Travis Scott hires Trump's lawyer to fight Astroworld lawsuits

Los Angeles | Agencies

**R**apper Travis Scott (II) is getting ready to appear in court after billions worth of lawsuits filed against him following the Astroworld Festival accident.

He has reportedly secured himself with a high-powered legal team, including Donald Trump's lawyer, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Travis has teamed up with Daniel Petrocelli, the lawyer

who once defended the former US president against fraud lawsuits over Trump University real estate seminars in 2016. Petrocelli will represent him against his mounting suits.

In addition to Petrocelli, firm partners Steve Brody and Sabrina Strong will also be representing the hip-hop star. Travis has been named in more than 250 lawsuits, seeking approximately \$3 billion in damages, alongside Live Nation, Drake, Apple Music and other festival organisers over the November 5 tragedy in Houston that left 10 concert-goers killed and hundreds injured.

On November 24, Petrocelli reportedly offered to pay for the funeral costs of the victims.

However, on November 29, Bob Hilliard, a lawyer for the family of 9-year-old victim Ezra Blount, shared in a letter that the family declined the offer. "Your client's offer is declined. I have no doubt Mr. Scott feels remorse," the attorney stated.

"His journey ahead will be painful. He must face and hopefully see that he bears some of the responsibility for this tragedy." As for now, half of the victims' families have turned down Travis' funeral cost offer.

## 'RESIDENT EVIL: WELCOME TO RACCOON CITY': A SOULLESS FILM WITH LOWBROW BRILLIANCE

**FILM REVIEW**  
**TROY RIBEIRO**  
**Direction:** Johannes Roberts  
**Cast:** Kaya Scodelario, Hannah John-Kamen, Robbie Amell, Tom Hopper, Avan Jogia, Donal Logue, Neal McDonough, Lily Gao.  
**Ratings:** \*\*1/2 (two and a half stars)



**L**oosely based on the video game series of the same name, this action-horror film is the seventh live-action film of its franchise and a reboot that aims for a more faithful adaptation of its interactive source material. But unfortunately, this reboot of lowbrow brilliance is a ghostly but soulless film.

It is bereft of the visual distinction or creative identity hence making its predecessors appear much superior.

The film opens like a paranormal fan film with a flashback scene to the untoward experiences of siblings Claire and Chris Redfield at an orphanage run by the Umbrella Corporation, an immoral Pharma conglomerate that dominates Raccoon City. This sequence is revisited later in the narrative.

Then foregrounding the siblings, Claire (Kaya Scodelario) and Chris (Robbie Amell), with a dark link to the cruelties of the corporation, the plot then takes us to the year 1998, where the grim post-industrial town has just lost its biggest employer, the Umbrella Corporation.

Claire believes that the company has

polluted the town's water with a mysterious and dangerous substance. Chris, an operative of the elite police does not believe his sister till he along with his trigger-happy partner Jill Valentine (Hannah John-Kamen) and the blond Albert Wesker (Tom Hopper), is called to investigate a killing in a deserted mansion.

That is when they realise that Raccoon City's population has turned into flesh-eating zombies. Claire and the other hand teams up with rookie cop Leon S. Kennedy (Avan Jogia) to escape. En route, she starts to unravel the mystery that bothered her since her childhood.

The film is fun when showcasing Leon as a rookie cop who is transferred to Raccoon City after he accidentally shoots his partner in the butt. This bad joke turns into a workable gag.

Director Robert's script delves into the mythology of the game's universe

hence audiences will have to overlook a lot of narrative-bungling. Despite this, the narrative goes a long way by gleefully embracing primal creepiness.

The first twenty minutes push every available opportunity to freak the audience out with eerie dolls, rasping voices from the shadows, scrawled warnings, cheerful children's drawings with ominous undertones, and much more.

Then, it quickly evolves into a full-fledged action-horror narrative drawing its strength from the spooky aesthetics of the games, which includes the cast of monstrosities like; The Mutant Hound, the man with many eyes, and the exposed brain creature. These all look sharper than they ever have, even if there is hardly any inspiration in their mayhem.

Overall, the film suffers from inconsistent editing especially during the overtly sharp horror stings and generic action sequences.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Lucie Donlan



## INDIA VS NEW ZEALAND, 2ND TEST

# AGARWAL'S TON PUSHES INDIA AHEAD AFTER AJAZ PATEL'S FOUR-FOR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mayank Agarwal struck a fantastic unbeaten century and helped India reach a strong position at 221/4 in 70 overs against New Zealand at stumps after surviving a three-wicket burst in 10 balls by Ajaz Patel on a truncated first day of the second and final Test at the Wankhede Stadium, here on Friday. Agarwal's fourth Test hundred, came off 196 deliveries and was studded with 13 fours and three sixes as he propelled India after New Zealand had come back strongly just before tea, keeping one end up even as wickets tumbled at the other. The opener batted with a lot of confidence, did not play any false shot and was batting on 120 (226 balls, 14x4, 4x6) at stumps, with Wriddhiman Saha keeping him company with 25 (55 balls, 3x4, 1x6). The Indians had a mighty scare just before tea as Patel struck three quick blows, sending back Shubman Gill on the third ball of the 28th over, Cheteshwar Pujara on the second ball of the 30th over and Virat Kohli on the last ball of the same over. Agarwal, who suffered a concussion when he was hit by Mohd Siraj in nets in August this year, along with Iyer stemmed the rot and kept the scoreboard moving, punishing the loose balls and playing the good ones with caution. Agarwal, who has scored two double centuries so far, was involved



**Brief scores**  
India 221/4 in 70 overs (Mayank Agarwal 120 not out, Shubman Gill 44, W Saha 25 not out; Ajaz Patel 4/73).

in three half-century partnerships -- 80 runs for the first wicket with Shubman Gill (44), 80 with Shreyas Iyer (18) for the fourth wicket and an unbeaten 61-run stand with Wriddhiman Saha (25 not out).

Patel came back to claim Iyer in the final session of the day, revving the ball and extracting good turn and bounce on a track that had a lot to offer bowlers that slowed it down, ending the day with 4/73 off 29 overs, bowling 24 off them unchanged from the Tata End. Earlier, it looked like India was running away with the Test with Agarwal and Gill in full flow after play started at 12 noon -- the delay caused by some wet patches on the ground because of the heavy rains on Wednesday before Patel halted their progress with three quick wickets. Meanwhile, Virat Kohli's return to the India Test team lasted only four deliveries but resulted in a big debate as he got out for a duck. Given lbw by umpire Anil Chaudhary off Patel, Kohli reviewed the decision but the TV umpire could not conclusively decide whether the ball hit the bat first or the pad. Earlier, India made three chances in their squad as vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane, Ishant Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja were all ruled out due to niggles. Kohli, Mohammed Siraj and Jayant yadav came in their place. New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson too had to pull out of the match due to an elbow injury and Daryl Mitchell came in for him.

## ISHANT, RAHANE, JADEJA RULED OUT OF 2ND TEST DUE TO NIGGLES

Mumbai: India suffered a big setback on the opening day of the second Test against New Zealand on Friday with three players - senior pacer Ishant Sharma, vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane and all-rounder Ravendra Jadeja - being ruled out with niggles. As the start of the match was delayed by wet ground conditions caused by rains on Wednesday and Thursday, the BCCI put out the news that three senior players will not be available for the match. Sharma is out with a dislocated left little finger, Jadeja has a right forearm injury while Rahane has a slight left hamstring strain -- all three getting hurt during the final day of the first Test at Kanpur. BCCI secretary Jay Shah informed in a release on Friday.

# Ronaldo touches Peak 800; at 36

London | Agencies

Star Portuguese and Manchester United footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has become the first player in history to notch 800 top-level career goals as he scored twice to guide his club to a 3-2 win over Arsenal in a Premier League match late on Thursday night.



With his performance, the 36-year-old now has a total of 801 goals from 1,097 games and looks good to score at a prolific rate as always, given that he has already notched up 12 goals in 17 appearances in all competitions since re-joining the English club from Serie A side Juventus this summer.

But despite the striker's superb showing this season, the club continues to languish at joint seventh spot on the Premiership table with just 21 points -- six wins, three draws and five defeats in 14 games. With the two goals on

Thursday, Ronaldo now has scored a total of 130 goals across two stints for Manchester United. He has scored five for Sporting Lisbon, 450 for Spanish giants Real Madrid, 101 for Serie A top side Juventus and 115 for Portugal.

Ronaldo is also the all-time highest scorer in men's international football, in the UEFA Champions League and for Real Madrid.

Ronaldo's contemporary, Lionel Messi, who has bagged the Ballon d'Or a record seven times, has 756 top-level career goals -- Argentina (80), Spanish side Barcelona (672) and French side Paris St-Germain (4).

## WORLD TOUR FINALS

# Already qualified for semis, Sindhu loses her final group match to Chochuwong

Bali (Indonesia) | Agencies

Bali (Indonesia): Ace Indian shuttler PV Sindhu, who has already qualified for the semi-finals of the 2021 BWF World Tour Finals, lost to Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand in her third and final group A women's singles match, here on Friday.



Two-time Olympic medalist went down fighting 12-21, 21-19, 14-21 world no 10 Chochuwong, in a match that lasted an hour and 11 minutes. With this loss, Sindhu finished runners-up in group A and will face either Pornpawee Chochuwong or the Group B winner Akane Yamaguchi in the top four.

Heading into the match, both Sindhu and Chochuwong had already confirmed their semis berths and were playing for the top position in Group A.

Starting the proceedings, the Thai shuttler controlled

the rallies and kept Indian on the backfoot. Down 6-11 at the mid-game interval, Sindhu tried to take control of the net but Chochuwong countered with some impeccably-placed shots to win the first game. Reigning badminton world champion took control early in the second game and even took a handy 12-6 lead but Chochuwong fought back to level it up at 16-16. In the end, Sindhu won the game 21-19 and forced a decider.

In the third and decisive game, Sindhu couldn't apply enough pressure and it was Chochuwong, who won the match in an hour and 11 minutes. The 26-year old Indian had beaten Denmark's Line Christophersen and Germany's Yvonne Li in her first two group matches.

Sindhu, along with Lakshya Sen, in men's singles, will be India's only representatives in the knockout rounds.

## PREMIER LEAGUE

# London derby for Chelsea, Wolves' claws out for Liverpool

London | Agencies

League leaders Chelsea have an injury crisis as they prepare to visit West Ham for what is traditionally one of the fiercest London derbies of the season on Saturday.

Reece James, Ben Chilwell, Mateo Kovacic and N'Golo Kante are all in the treatment room for the trip across London, with the losses of wing-backs Chilwell and James important to the plans of coach Thomas Tuchel, who will at least be happy that Romelu Lukaku got 20 minutes under his belt in their scrappy midweek win over Watford. That game saw Saul Niguez give another underwhelming display in midfield and Jorginho should be back against a rival who remain fourth but have taken just one point from their last three matches.

It promises to be a tough week for Watford, who, after entertaining



Chelsea, now welcome Manchester City to Vicarage Road. City have injury problems with Kevin de

Bruyne, John Stones, Kyle Walker and Ilkay Gundogan all doubtful, while Ferran Torres is out until the

end of the year with a broken foot.

Nathan Ake will probably continue alongside Ruben Dias in the City defense after his impressive display away to Aston Villa in midweek, Xinhua reports. Liverpool travel to play Wolves after steam-rolling Everton in the Merseyside derby and will expect to beat a side that struggles to score goals despite their at times impressive football. Key to Wolves' football is winger Adama Traore, who needs to improve his product in the final third to get the best out of his undoubted talent. With Liverpool thought to be interested in the Spaniard, now would be a good time for Traore to deliver. Saturday also sees a south-coast derby between Southampton and Brighton, who have gone nine games without a win due mainly to their problems in converting chances, while there is drama assured at St James' Park.

# ATP backs WTA, asks China to come clean on tennis player Peng Shuai's wellbeing

New York | Agencies

The Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) has thrown its weight behind the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), expressing concern over the well-being of Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai, who disappeared from public view for three weeks after accusing a top Chinese government official of sexual assault.

WTA chief Steve Simon recently said that he has "serious doubts" that Peng was "free, safe and not subject to intimidation". He also announced suspension of all WTA tournaments in China, including Hong Kong, with immediate effect till the country investigates in a full, fair and



transparent manner the allegation of sexual assault made against a former senior politician by the 35-year-old doubles player.

Late on Thursday, the ATP, the body which governs men's international tennis, said, "the situation involving Peng Shuai continues to raise serious".

ATP chairman, Andrea Gaudenzi, issued a statement, saying, "The situation involving Peng Shuai continues to raise serious concerns within and beyond our sport. The response to those concerns has so far fallen short. We again urge for a line of open direct communication between the player and the WTA in order to establish a clearer picture of her situation."

# Rashid's hat-trick propels Delhi Bulls to second spot on points table

Abu Dhabi | Agencies

England leg-spinner Adil Rashid ripped through Team Abu Dhabi's batting line-up, taking a hat-trick to give Delhi Bulls their seventh victory and deny Abu Dhabi a chance to make it to the top-two on the points table in Abu Dhabi T10 here. Team Abu Dhabi's strong batting line-up required 108 to finish in the top-two but they collapsed like ninepins in the middle overs. After a strong start, they slipped from 41/1 to 67/7 in a matter of 10 deliveries giving Delhi Bulls a 49-run win. The result of this match meant Delhi Bulls finished in the top-two while Team Abu Dhabi along with Bangla Tigers occupy the third and the fourth place on the points table. Chasing 136, Team Abu Dhabi lost Paul Stirling in the first over, before Phil Salt and Liam Livingstone steadied the ship with a few big hits. The duo added 34 runs in 12 balls but once Salt fell to Shiraz Ahmed, Team Abu



Dhabi innings went off-track. Adil Rashid, bowling his second over, first got Livingstone to top edge to the keeper and then removed Colin Ingram. Jamie Overton, facing the hat-trick ball, had no answer to Rashid's googly and was bowled for a duck. Dominic Drakes took out Bell-Drummond and Danny Briggs in the next over to reduce Team Abu Dhabi to 67/7. Fazalhaq Farooqi sent down a maiden over to reduce Livingstone's team's chances of reaching the top two. Eventually, Team Abu Dhabi finished on 86/8.

# JUNIOR MEN'S HOCKEY WC: ARGENTINA BEAT FRANCE 3-1 TO REACH FINAL

Bhubaneswar: Former champions Argentina reached the finals of the FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup after beating France 3-1 in penalty shoot-out of the first semifinal at the Kalinga Stadium, here on Friday.

Both teams failed to score in the stipulated 60 minute time, forcing the match into a penalty shoot-out, where Argentina emerged victorious.

Lucio Mendez, Bautista Capurro and Franco Agostini scored for Argentina while only skipper Timothee Clement found the net for France during penalty shoot-out.

The 2005 champions Argentina will now face the winner of the second semi-final between India and Germany.

Argentina's Facundo Zarate was named Player of the Match for leading his country to their third final at the Junior World Cup.

# MARY KOM SUPPORTS SPECIAL OLYMPICS BHARAT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Olympic medallist and six-time world champion boxer MC Mary Kom on Friday facilitated athletes with intellectual disabilities who have won medals for India at the Special Olympics World Games in 2019.

Mary Kom launched Special Olympics Bharat's National Health Fest to improve health care and development of special athletes and assured them of her "unwavering support".

"It is a great privilege for me to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities with the athletes of Special Olympics," she said.

FICCI and Special Olympics Bharat jointly organized the "National Health Fest for Divyangjan - We Care" on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities where Mary Kom facilitated athletes with intellectual disabilities who have won medals for India at the Special Olympics World Games in 2019.



Speaking at the event, the six-time world champion Mary Kom said, "These athletes are the true heroes of our country, and they are my inspiration. My unwavering support will always be with them, sending them strength and courage in their journey ahead. Never stop fighting and you will surely achieve all your goals."

Launched under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav initiative by the Government of India, the health initiative will reach a record 75,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities in 75 cities of India marking 75 years of progressive India. The National Health Fest aims to set records for screening and training the highest number of athletes in a single day.

The initiative also aims to train 7500 medical and sports professionals to provide high quality healthcare and training to athletes with intellectual and developmental disability. Moreover, 750 Special Olympics Bharat Centres will be activated to develop fitness and sports through a community-based approach.



## ALI FAZAL JOINS GERARD BUTLER IN ACTION THRILLER 'KANDAHAR'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Ali Fazal is all set to star in an action thriller titled 'Kandahar' alongside Gerard Butler. 'Kandahar', is being directed by Ric Roman Waugh, who has directed films like 'Angel Has Fallen', 'Felon', 'Greenland' and an upcoming film with JK Simmons 'National Champions' among many others. Commenting on being a part of the project, an excited Ali said: "I always look forward to new and exciting ventures. We are all set to begin production soon." 'Kandahar' is based on the screenplay, which the director developed in tandem with former military intelligence officer Mitchell LaFortune. Mitchell's experiences at the Defense Intelligence Agency in Afghanistan have shaped up the story and the principal photography of the film is expected to begin soon in Saudi Arabia. The film is being produced by Thunder Road Films, the producers of the 'John Wick' and 'Sicario', G-BASE and Capstone Group. Back at home, Ali will be soon seen in an untitled Arati Kadav film. The actor took to his Instagram a few days back to share the first look of the futuristic space film.



## 120 BIGWIGS EXPECTED FOR KATRINA-VICKY KAUSHAL'S WEDDING

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A total of 120 top Bollywood and other celebrities are expected to attend the wedding of film stars Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal which is scheduled on December 9 in Rajasthan, said Rajendra Kishan, the District Collector (DC) of Sawai Madhopur district of the state on Friday. The District Collector told mediapersons: "These 120 guests shall follow all COVID-19 protocols and fully vaccinated guests will get

entry in the much-hyped celebrity wedding."

Kishan said that the organisers have been asked to strictly follow all Covid-19 protocols. Also, those who are not vaccinated, will not be allowed without the negative RT-PCR test report, he added. "We have been informed by organisers that a total of 120 guests are invited to the wedding and the events will take place between December 7 to December 10," he added.

Earlier at 10.30 a.m., Kishan called a meeting

which was attended by administrative, police and forest department officials, hotel and event managers to ensure adequate arrangements for crowd control, smooth regulation of traffic, and law and order situation amid the VIP movement.

The wedding venue Fort Barwara, that has been converted into a heritage hotel, is situated in the panchayat samiti Chauth Ka Barwara. The venue is around 22 km away from Sawai Madhopur and is around 174 km from Jaipur.

## An actor can create magic on sets: **Lara Dutta**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Lara Dutta's digital debut 'Hiccups and Hookups', directed by Kunal Kohli, has set the stage for the entry of Lionsgate Play in India. The show revolves around a modern Indian family, who are quite open about talking about pretty much anything that is considered a taboo in our society, from their dating to their sex lives. Lara, who plays Vasudha Rao, a single mother recently separated from her husband at the age of 40, spoke with IANS about the show, her thoughts on the changing nature of conversations on taboo subjects and how she approaches a character. Excerpts from the conversation. Speaking specifically about the central theme of 'Hiccups and Hookups', Lara said: "Picking up a subject like this and presenting it in a relatable and humorous way, and to normalise a lot of things that are considered taboo subjects in a contemporary way, is what makes it truly special." Sharing how she approaches a character, the actress said: "When I hear a story, I already start seeing certain scenes in my head, imagining what those scenes would look like on screen. For 'Hiccups and Hookups', I was the first actor to be cast, followed by Prateik (Babbar) and Shinnova."



## RAM MADHVANI: I CHOOSE FEMALE CHARACTERS BECAUSE I'M INTERESTED IN STORIES, THEMES



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ram Madhvani, the director of 'Neerja' and the crime - thriller 'Aarya', has earned the distinction of sketching impactful female characters that manoeuvre the narrative flow in his artwork. The director says that he does not purposely choose female characters to headline his stories. What intrigues him is the crux of the story, the depth in the characters, the themes that a story touches upon and how he can lend his voice as a filmmaker to those stories. Sharing his thoughts on the subject, Ram said, "This is one of the questions

that has been coming my way. 'Neerja' was also a women oriented subject, 'Aarya' is also a woman oriented subject. I don't choose them as they are women oriented, I choose them because I'm interested in the character, in the story, by what I want to say, by the themes and I think in Season 1, it was Dharam". Adding on to the theme of 'Dharam', he said, "What would you do? What are your duties? What are your responsibilities as a daughter as a wife as a mother? I think those questions were asked and in Season 2, you'll see questions which are posed to society, as a value system because I think that's really what I'm interested in putting out".



## SARA ALI KHAN PENS HEARTFELT NOTE FOR ROHIT SHETTY, AANAND L RAI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Sara Ali Khan, who will soon be seen in 'Atrangi Re' along with Akshay Kumar and Dhanush, has expressed her gratitude to her upcoming films director Aanand L Rai and her 'Simmba' maker Rohit Shetty for giving her the opportunity to be a part of their films. The actress took to her Instagram and shared a collage of their photographs in her story where the three can be seen indulging in a funny conversation. Using her rhyming skills to portray her love for the directors, Sara wrote: "Only love, respect, gratitude and a little masti (fun). Aapki bacchi always hashti (your kiddo is always smiling)". Earlier, during the wrap of 'Simmba', Sara also thanked Rohit Shetty for his warmth, guidance, patience during the shoot. The actress is now awaiting the release of 'Atrangi Re', which has been produced by T-Series, Cape Of Good Films and Colour Yellow Productions. The film directed by Aanand L Rai and written by his long time collaborator, Himanshu Sharma, is all set to stream on Disney+ Hotstar from December 24.

## 'BOB BISWAS': INTRIGUING BUT PERFUNCTORILY MOUNTED

**FILM REVIEW**

TROY RIBEIRO

**(Streaming on Zee5)**

**Director:** Diya Annapurna Ghosh  
**Cast:** Abhishek Bachchan, Chitrangda Singh, Parin Bandopadhyay, Ronith Arora, Tina Desai, Samara Tijori, Diti Priya Roy, Pavitra Rabha.  
**Duration:** 132 minutes  
**Ratings:** \*\*\*\*1/2



ed becoming an intriguing figure worth exploring his backstory, and thus this film germinated. Unlike the high-octane, nifty thriller Kahaani, Bob Biswas with a character-driven plot, is a slow-paced film. The titular character in a vulnerable state of mind embarks on a journey of self-discovery after being in a coma for eight years. Unable to recall his past, and while trying to piece his life together with his wife Mary, son Benny and step-daughter Mini after he steps out of the hospital. How he gets his prospective victim's MMS on a mobile phone and is forced to kill them while working undercover as a life insurance agent, forms the crux of the film. Set in Kolkata, the script does have its moments, with the twists in the tale and the code of conduct among criminals, but it is Bob's gullibility that keeps you hooked to the screen. While we miss Saswata Chatterjee as the eponymous killer, Abhishek Bachchan with his bemused appear-

ance and unwonted demeanour delivers an equally earnest performance. He is aptly supported by Chitrangda Singh as his wife Mary, Ronith Arora as Son Benny, and Samara Tijori as Mini. Purab Kohli has his moments of onscreen glory as the drug peddler Bubai. Similarly, Pavitra Rabha as Dhonu the street-food seller, and Parin Bandopadhyay as the pharmacist Kali Da who keeps saying: "Niyam, Niyam hota hai..." leave their mark on the screen. Tina Desai in a significant role as Police Officer Indira Verma is stereotypical and so are all the other supporting actors who are a part of the city's underbelly. While Bob Biswas' back story is intriguing and the film informs you of how he is connected to the tale in 'Kahaani', writer Sujoy Ghosh takes the lazy way out. His script fails to tell us about Bob's initiation into the world of crime, how he became a contract killer in the first place. This would have been much more interesting. Also, Bob's journey as the assassin is smooth and perfunctory that beyond a point, you just don't get emotionally hooked.



Tamannah Bhatia