

absolute india

VOL. 5, ISSUE 35, NEW DELHI | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2021 ₹ 5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM NEW DELHI, MUMBAI AND BHOPAL

NATION

> 02

Two from Kenya, Somalia test positive for Omicron in Hyderabad ...



HOLLYWOOD

> 06

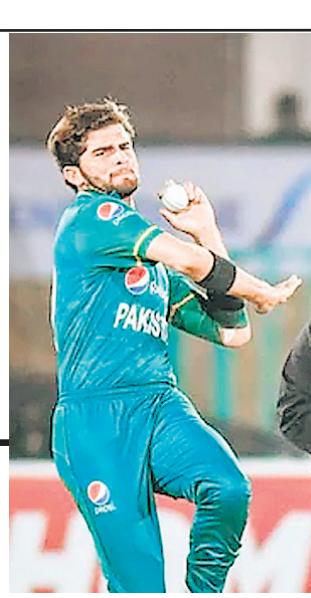
Keanu Reeves expresses his interest to star in 'Constantine'...



SPORTS

> 07

Labuschagne, Shaheen Afridi make big rankings push in Test cricket...



'Can't put all people behind bars': CJI to ED on indiscriminate use of Act

PMLA, A WEAPON

A bench, headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and Hima Kohli, made strong remarks on the financial probe agency on the plea filed by Patna-based Usha Martin Ltd against attachment of its properties worth Rs 190 crore, on allegations of an iron ore sale scam.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday warned the Enforcement Directorate against "indiscriminate" use of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, saying the law will lose its relevance.

The counsel for the petitioner prayed for grant of interim protection from arrest to the petitioner in relation to the ECIR case no 02/2021, pending before the special judge, CBI-PMLA Act, Ranchi and also sought ex parte, ad interim stay on the operation of summoning order dated May 20, 2021 passed by the said special judge.

Additional Solicitor General K.M. Nataraj, appearing for the Centre, had vehemently



"If you (ED) indiscriminately use the PMLA, it will lose its relevance. You are diluting the Act. Not just this case. If you start using it as a weapon against a 10,000 rupees case and 100 rupees case, what will happen? You can't put all people behind bars. You have to use it reasonably."

opposed grant of interim protection and stay of operation of the summoning order.

After hearing arguments, the bench said: "Taking into consideration the facts and circumstances of the case, we grant interim protection from arrest to the petitioner as also grant stay of operation of the Summoning Order dated May 20, 2021 as stated above. List the matters after four weeks." The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Usha Martin Ltd, challenging the Jharkhand High Court order, which refused to grant protection to the petitioner. Criminal proceedings had been started against the firm, under the PMLA. In another matter, the top court, hearing an appeal filed by the CBI, challenging the Telangana High Court's order granting anticipatory bail to PMLA accused Narendra Kumar Patel, issued notice in Patel's matter. It took up the two matters together.

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

VANISHING IN INDIAN MEDIA: CJI

Hyderabad: The concept of investigative journalism is "unfortunately" vanishing from the media canvas, "at least in the Indian context", Chief Justice of India NV Ramana said on Wednesday.

The CJI said at the launch of a book - Blood Sanders: The Great Forest Heist - authored by a journalist, Uduom Sudhakar Reddy. "It is true at least in the Indian context. When we were growing up, we eagerly looked forward to news papers exposing big scandals. The news papers never disappointed us. In the past, we have witnessed newspaper reports on scandals and misconduct creating waves leading to serious consequences. Barring one or two, I don't recall any story of such magnitude in the recent years. Everything in our garden appears to be rosy," he said.

Quoting Mahatma Gandhi, the CJI asked the media to introspect and test itself against his words that "the newspapers should be ready for the study of facts. They should not be allowed to kill the habit of independent thinking." He suggested that locals, if involved in conservation efforts of red sander, will make a huge difference.

"I'm really excited about this partnership. I think it's all about this entrepreneurial spirit and bringing some of these tools around the Metaverse and in India. This is a great opportunity to impart training to the education system."

Mark Zuckerberg



and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will introduce secondary education curriculum through this agreement by allowing students to have online access to quality educational material. It will be available on the official website of CBSE.

In line with the National Policy on Education (NEP) 2020, META and CBSE will collaborate on the development of curriculum integrating immersive technologies like AR and Virtual Reality (VR), which is relevant to grow in a digital scenario.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

META on Wednesday announced to expand its partnership with CBSE to provide a course on digital security for over one crore students and one million teachers. Mark Zuckerberg, founder and CEO of Meta (formerly Facebook), gave this information on Wednesday.

In addition, in line with the government's vision of universalizing education, META



Cabinet Okays seeding Aadhar with electoral rolls

New Delhi: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday learnt to have cleared a bill on electoral reforms, including allowing the Election Commission to seed Aadhaar number with electoral rolls on voluntary basis. According to the bill cleared by the cabinet, the electoral law will be made 'gender neutral' for service voters. Another provision of the bill will allow the youth to enroll as voters on four different dates every year, as of now those turning 18 on or before January 1 of every year are only allowed to register as voters.

TENI 'MISBEHAVES' WITH JOURNALISTS

LAKHIMPUR KHERI | Agencies

Union minister Ajay Mishra lost his cool at reporters in Lakhimpur Kheri on Wednesday, calling them "thieves" and lunging at one of them when they questioned him on the October 3 violence for which his son is among the accused.

The opposition has renewed its demand for the minister's dismissal after SIT report that the Lakhimpur Kheri violence was a "pre-planned conspiracy".

The court on Tuesday also allowed the SIT to add the attempt to murder charge in the FIR against the minister's son, Ashish Mishra, and 12 others booked in the case, replacing it with lesser charges.

A video clip purportedly shows the minister getting angry when asked about these developments by a reporter from a television



news channel.

"Don't ask questions like a fool. Have you lost your mental balance (dimag kharab hai kya)? he is heard saying in Hindi.

"What do you want to know? You turned an innocent person into an accused. Aren't you ashamed?"

He is also heard calling the media "chor", or thieves,

and angrily asking a journalist to switch off his mobile phone. The clip shows him moving aggressively towards a reporter.

The confrontation took place at a government health centre, 15 kilometres from the Lakhimpur Kheri district headquarters, where he had gone to inaugurate an oxygen plant.

CDS chopper crash
Group Captain Varun Singh passes away

New Delhi: Group Captain Varun Singh, who was injured in a military chopper crash on December 8, succumbed to his injuries. He was the lone survivor of the chopper crash in which Chief of Staff General Bipin Rawat, his wife Madhulika Rawat and 11 other armed personnel were killed in Coonoor in Tamil Nadu.

Indian Air Force issued a statement on Wednesday saying, "IAF is deeply saddened to inform the passing away of braveheart Group Captain Varun Singh, who succumbed this morning to the injuries sustained in the helicopter accident on 08 Dec 21. IAF offers sincere condolences and stands firmly with the bereaved family." A day after the crash, he was rushed to Bengaluru for treatment. He was moved by a ambulance to Sulur then further moved to the Command Hospital in Bengaluru. His condition was stated to be very critical throughout. He was recently conferred with the Shaurya Chakra.



LUCKNOW | Agencies

Since the past 120 days, Shikha Pal, 36, has been living atop a water tank near the Directorate of Education, in Nishatganj area in Lucknow. She is not aiming at setting any record but it is a kind of protest.

Shikha is demanding that the government include her in the 22,000 seats left vacant when the recruitment for 69,000 teaching posts was recently carried out.

Shikha claims that she has completed her Master's degree from Lucknow University in commerce but is still forced to fight for a job in this unique manner.

She says that she is forced to spend her days and cold December nights atop the water tank. "I do not leave my perch for anything other than to use the washroom. Protesters below the tank pass me food and other essential things in a bag through



rope. I charge my mobile phone using a power bank. My mother is dependent on me but I am continuing the protest," said Shikha.

Shikha said that she is even

willing to teach in a primary school run by the education department. "It has been 120 days but the government has not even taken cognisance of my protest,"

UP BJP leader asks people to vote in return for free foodgrain

Agra: Former minister and BJP leader Raja Aridaman Singh has been caught on camera asking ration card beneficiaries in Agra to vote for 'Yogi ji', as 'they were getting direct benefits of schemes announced by his government.'

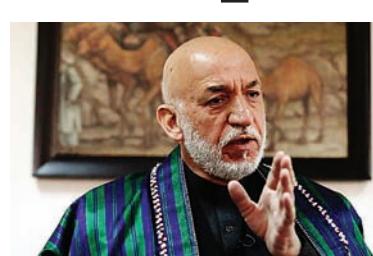
The video, which has gone viral on social media, was shot while the BJP leader was talking to ration card holders at the launch of UP government's statewide free ration distribution campaign. In the video, Singh is seen purportedly saying: "If the poor are getting benefits of government schemes, then their vote should also go to the government. This scheme is not for any particular caste, as every poor person is getting free ration." He is also heard asking the women to tell their kin to vote for BJP saying: "Irrespective of the advice given by your son or husband you give your vote to Yogi ji only." Aridaman Singh's wife Pakshikha Singh is a sitting BJP MLA. Singh, when contacted, defended his statement saying: "If government is providing free ration to the poor, they should give their votes to it." He said he also showed images of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Prime Minister Narendra Modi printed on packets of salt and dal to make people aware about the scheme. Congress spokesman Surendra Rajput said that the video was a proof in the manner in which the ruling BJP was using government money to buy votes.



Hamid Karzai Invited Taliban to capture Kabul

KABUL | Agencies

The Taliban did not capture the capital of Afghanistan, but it was invited, and this is what the person who invited them said. In an interview, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai disclosed about the secret and sudden departure of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani from Afghanistan. He told how he invited the Taliban to come to the city to protect the people, so that the country and the city do not



fall into chaos and the unwanted elements who looted the country, they do not start looting the shops.

When Ghani left the country, his security officers also left. When Karzai contacted Defense Minister Bismillah Khan to find out if any remnants of the government were still left, Khan also asked him if he wanted to leave Kabul. Hamid Karzai learned that no one was left, not even the Kabul police chief. Karzai, who was the country's president for 13 years, refused to leave Kabul. He became president after the Taliban was ousted from power in the light of the 9/11 attacks.

Hamid Karzai maintained during the interview at his compound in the heart of the city that he, Abdullah Abdullah, the government's chief negotiator, and the Taliban leadership in Doha were trying until the last minute to enter the capital under an agreement, but Ghani The departure turned it off at the last moment. The countdown to the possible deal began on August 14, a day before the Taliban took power. Karzai maintains that if Ghani had remained in Kabul, there would have been a settlement of peaceful transition. He lives here with his wife and children.

HC junks plea to scrap Class 12 textbook's content on Mughal rulers

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday nixed a plea seeking directions to the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to remove and rectify a portion of a Class 12 History textbook which is related to the policies of Mughal rulers grant for construction of temples.

A bench presided over by Chief Justice DN Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh said it "cannot decide on policies of Aurangzeb and Shah Jahan". Further, remarking that the PIL was wasting judicial time, the court has allowed the withdrawal of the plea.

In the PIL, petitioners Sanjeev Vikal and Dapinder Singh stated that the Class 12 History book "The Themes of Indian History" contains a paragraph -- "Even when temples were destroyed during the war, grants were later issued for the repairs as we know from the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb".



- which they want court's directions for its removal.

"It has now become questionable that in the absence of any physical proof or record, how NCERT could promote misconception in the minds of an indefinite number of students and the ironically same has been carried out since last many decades," Advocate Baisla, representing the petitioners, submitted. "It is well-known fact that most of the Mughals emperors levied heavy taxes upon the performance of the religious ceremony and pilgrim tours from the people who belong to Hindu religion. It is not a new fact that the Mughal emperors also compelled the non-Muslim people to get converted to the Islamic religion," the petition read.



TWO FROM KENYA, SOMALIA TEST POSITIVE FOR OMICRON IN HYDERABAD

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD BECOMES WEST BENGAL'S FIRST OMICRON CASE

Kolkata: West Bengal reported its first case of Omicron on Wednesday as a seven-year-old boy tested positive for the coronavirus variant in the state's Malda, officials said.

The seven-year-old had arrived at Hyderabad from Abu Dhabi, one of the non-high-risk countries on December 11, and then arrived at Kolkata on the same day before going to Malda. He was found positive at Hyderabad and his sample was sent for genome sequencing.

The child at Kaliachak Malda was admitted at Malda Medical college along with his father and sister. He is said to be stable now. Incidentally, he and his sister both tested negative on December 12 in a test conducted at a private lab at Malda.



Hyderabad | Agencies

tries arrived at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport on Wednesday. Of them, three tested positive for Covid-19. Out of 6,644 passengers who have arrived since December 1, 21 have tested positive for Covid. The genome sequencing reports of 15 of them were negative for Omicron while results of remaining six passengers are awaited, said Director General of Public Health, Dr G. Srinivasa Rao. While no case of Omicron was detected among passengers from "at risk" countries, the authorities found two Omicron cases among passengers arriving from other countries. Srinivasa Rao announced earlier in the day that a passenger each from Kenya and Somalia tested positive for Omicron.

Both had arrived on December 12 via Abu Dhabi and Qatar. A 24-year-old female had arrived from Kenya while a 23-year-old had come from Somalia. The Kenyan national was immediately isolated at the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS) but the Somalian was reported missing. Later, the authorities also traced him and sent him to TIMS for isolation.

MAHA DETECTS 4 NEW OMICRON CASES, TALLY RISES TO 32

Mumbai: Four new cases of Covid-19 variant Omicron have been detected in Maharashtra, taking the state's tally to 32, officials said on Wednesday. The cases include two in Mumbai and one each from Osmanabad and Buldhana districts, of whom one is a minor. Of these new infectees, one is a woman, and three had recently travelled to Sharjah, Dubai, and Ireland. The three adults have been vaccinated while the 16-year-old is not eligible for a jab. All patients are asymptomatic but admitted to hospitals for treatment. Presently, Maharashtra's Omicron cases are spread in several regions including the highest (14) in Mumbai, followed by Pune district with 12 patients, while there is one each in Palghar, Thane, Latur, Nagpur, Osmanabad, and Buldhana. Intensive surveillance of passengers arriving at the three international airports - Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur - is currently underway since December 1.

ANYHOW, TENI WILL BE SENT TO JAIL: RAHUL GANDHI



New Delhi: Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi has targeted Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra alias Teni, saying that even if it takes 15 years, he will keep sending him to jail. Significantly, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Lakhipur Kheri violence case on Tuesday claimed on the basis of its investigation and evidence that the son of Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Kumar Mishra 'Teni' and his associates were deliberately, well-planned. The incident was carried out as per the conspiracy. Many farmers were also killed in this accident. Since then the opposition parties are attacking the BJP.

Sidhu-Channi faction calmed down after Ambika Soni became the chief of coordination panel in Punjab

Team Absolute | New Delhi



The factions of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and State Congress President Navjot Singh Sidhu have called for a ceasefire or compromise after Ambika Soni was made the head of the election coordination committee in Punjab. Soni is a senior Congress leader. She is said to have been Sonia Gandhi's top choice for the chief minister's post after Amarinder Singh left, but she reportedly herself declined. The appointment of Rajya Sabha member and close aide of Congress President Sonia Gandhi to Punjab has raised doubts among leaders in the state who were fighting a faction war. Soni can be considered the high command's choice if the Congress returns to power as a consensus candidate. Sources say that sensing the move of the

Congress high command, the warring factions have united and they do not even want to give a negative signal to the leadership. Sidhu, who has criticized the Punjab Chief Minister, has drawn praise after the state government approached the Supreme Court on the issue of BSF's jurisdiction. After Amarinder's withdrawal, the Congress in Punjab had to appoint Harish Chowdhary as the new in-charge of the state in place of Harish Rawat, and several meetings were held to resolve differences between the two leaders. However, this exercise did not deter Sidhu from speaking out against his own government. On 6 December, Sonia Gandhi appointed Ambika Soni as the chairperson of the coordination committee and another angry leader Sunil Jakhar as the campaign committee chairman and Pratap Singh Bajwa as the manifesto committee chairman. Navjot Singh Sidhu has been appointed as the chairman of

Cold wave conditions over northwest India till Dec 20

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Cold wave conditions are very likely over Punjab till December 20, and over Haryana, Chandigarh, and north Rajasthan from December 18 till 20, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted.

The IMD has also predicted light/moderate isolated to scattered rainfall/snowfall over western Himalayan region during next three days and light isolated rainfall over adjoining plains on Thursday. Under the influence of 'Western Disturbance' seen as a cyclonic circulation over Jammu and the neighbourhood, and a fresh 'Western Disturbance' as a cyclonic circulation that lies over Afghanistan and the neighbourhood, light to moderate rainfall/snowfall at isolated places very likely over



Jammu, Kashmir-Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh during next three days and over Uttarakhand during December 16-17. Isolated rainfall is likely over northern parts of Punjab, Haryana, and west Uttar Pradesh on Thursday, IMD said. There will be no significant change in minimum temperatures over northwest and adjoining central India over next two days with likely fall by 2-3 degrees Celsius thereafter. The IMD also said there will be light to moderate rainfall at isolated/scattered places very likely over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and isolated rainfall over Kerala-Mahe and during next five days.

AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF FASTAG, TOLL COLLECTION IS INCREASING: NITIN GADKARI

Team Absolute | New Delhi



After the introduction of FASTag, toll collection in the country is increasing continuously. Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari gave this information while giving a written reply to a question asked in Rajya Sabha. In a written reply given in Rajya Sabha, Nitin Gadkari explained how the collection at toll plazas of National Highways Authority of India - NHAI has been increasing since the introduction of FASTag in 2016-17. The Union Minister said that in 2016-17 (the year when FASTag was launched), a collection of Rs 17,942.14 crore was made, which increased to Rs 21,948.13 crore in the next year 2017-18. It kept increasing year

MYANMAR ARMY HANDED OVER 5 MILITANTS TO MANIPUR POLICE

Imphal | Agencies

The Myanmar Army on Wednesday handed over five hardline cadres of the outlawed Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) outfit to the Manipur Police, an affiliate of the banned People's Liberation Army (PLA). A police official, speaking on condition of anonymity, revealed that a special plane carrying five RPF militants from Manipur landed at the Imphal airport on Wednesday morning and the extremists were later handed over to the state police.

The police immediately took the RPF guerrillas to an undisclosed location. Senior officials are questioning him. Police are yet to confirm whether these insurgents were involved in any incident.

Sources said five RPF cadres, including their leader Dewani, were



admitted to a Myanmar hospital due to some ailments after they were captured by the Myanmar Army at Moniva in north-western Myanmar's Sagaing region in

August last year.

On November 13, in the deadliest joint terror attack by the PLA and the Manipur Naga People's Front, Colonel Biplob Tripathi and four

Assam Rifles personnel were killed in Churachandpur district bordering Myanmar. Colonel Tripathi's wife and 9-year-old son also died in the attack.

9 killed as RTC bus falls into river in Andhra Pradesh

Amaravati | Agencies

Nine people were killed and 12 others were injured when a bus fell into a drain in Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district. The accident took place at Jaluru in Jangareddygudem mandal, about 55 km from Eluru, the district headquarters.

According to police, the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation bus rammed into the railing of a bridge and fell into the river when the driver was trying to avoid hitting a lorry coming from the opposite direction.

The dead included the bus driver and five women. Eight people died on the spot, while one injured succumbed to his injuries at a hospital in Jangareddygudem.

The bus with 47 passengers was on its way to Jangareddygudem from Velurupadu. About a dozen passengers were injured, who have been admitted to the hospital.

Immediately after the accident, the local people started the rescue operation. Some passengers managed to get out of the bus through the windows and rescuers deployed boats to get them out.

Senior police and revenue officials reached the spot and took stock of the rescue work.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy



expressed grief over the bus accident.

He expressed condolences to the families of the victims. Reddy has also announced an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh each to the families of those killed. The Chief Minister has also directed the officials to ensure better treatment of the injured.

Transport Minister Perni Nani has ordered an inquiry into the accident. He has asked senior officials to conduct a thorough investigation and submit a report.

HIZBUL MUJAHIDEEN'S TOP TERRORIST KILLED IN KASHMIR ENCOUNTER

Srinagar | Agencies

A terrorist of the 'A+' category of banned terror outfit Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) was killed in an encounter with security forces in south Kashmir's Pulwama district on Wednesday. He was involved in several terror crimes, including an attack on policemen guarding a minority housing camp in Shopian's Zainpora in 2018, in which four policemen were martyred.

The police said that during the intervening night of December 14/15, acting on a specific input regarding the presence of a terrorist in Ujrampathri village of Pulwama, one by Jammu and Kashmir Police, Army's 44 RR and CRPF's 182 Battalion. A joint siege and search operation was launched.

Police said, "During the search operation, as soon as the presence of the terrorist was detected, he was given repeated opportunities to surrender. However, he opened fire indiscriminately on the joint search party, in retaliation, triggering an encounter."

In this encounter, one terrorist of banned terrorist organization HM was killed and his body has been recovered from the encounter site.



He has been identified as Firoz Ahmed Dar, a resident of Hef-Srimal Shopian. Police said, "As per police records, the terrorist killed was of A+ category. He was part of security forces and groups involved in several terrorist crimes including civil atrocities. The terrorist killed was active since 2017 and was a minority in Zainpora in December 2018. He was involved in several terror crime cases including attack on guard. According

to the police, "He was also involved in the murder of a girl named Ishrat Munir, daughter of Munir Ahmed Bhat, a resident of Dungarpura Pulwama, in February 2019. He was also involved in the murder of Charanjit, son Hans Raj, a non-local labourer, who was originally a resident of Punjab. He had also injured other people in the developments of October 2019, when they were loading boxes of apples in a

vehicle in Zainpora area of Shopian. Also, he had nabbed youths into terrorist ranks, was also instrumental in enticing to join." Incriminating material, arms and ammunition, three magazines including one AK rifle have also been recovered from his possession. Police said that all the recovered materials have been taken on the case record for further investigation. Police have registered a case and started investigation.

WELFARE SCHEMES IMPLEMENTED WITH PUBLIC COORDINATION: CM

► ALL WELFARE SCHEMES OF THE CENTRE AND THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED ENSURING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE OF MADHYA PRADESH, CHIEF MINISTER SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUPAHAN SAID ON WEDNESDAY.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chouhan was giving a presentation about innovations and implementation of schemes in his state at the Chief Ministers'clave convened by Prime Minister Modi in Varanasi on Tuesday.

The Centre's public welfare schemes such as - PM Swarnabhumi Yojna, Ayushman Bharat Yojna, Housing Scheme and Swamitva Yojana etc were implemented to provide benefit to the beneficiaries across the state and these schemes could be



implemented due to the cooperation of the people.

Presenting the development reports of the state in the meeting, Chouhan stated that the Madhya Pradesh government has introduced several welfare schemes considering the different categories of beneficiaries and all schemes have been framed on the basis of suggestions or recommendations received from the ground level (gram panchayat).

"Several welfare schemes such as -

Ladli Laxmi, Sambal Yojana, Mukhyamantri Teerth Darshan Yojana are the outcomes of Panchayats. The plans were made based on the suggestions received from the people," the chief minister's office said in a statement to the press. As per the statement, Chouhan also informed that during pandemic 30,600 crisis management groups were formed at the district level, development block, gram panchayat and ward level for the management of the pandemic and

vaccination, which included religious leaders, public representatives, citizens, doctors and representatives of sanitation organisations. "If other states have considered these works done in Madhya Pradesh as a model, then the main role behind it is the cooperation of the common people as well as the guidance received from Prime Minister Modi", the official statement further read. Meanwhile, Chouhan also focused on the creative activities of the 'Anand Department', which the Madhya Pradesh government had started a couple of years back aiming to keep the common people happy by keeping them away from depression. The Anand Department or Rajya Anand Sansthan were established in different parts of the state and more than 60,000 volunteers have so far registered as Anandaks. "More than 10 lakh college students were trained for vaccination and Covid friendly behaviour to protect against Covid-19 pandemic. Around 94 per cent eligible people of the state have got the first dose and 77 per cent have got the second dose," added.

"Will Hang You:" District Collector warns staff on Camera

Gwalior district collector Kaushlendra Vikram Singh, during a meeting of employees of Bhitarwar tehsil on Tuesday, came to know that the COVID-19 vaccination target was not achieved.

Team Absolute | Gwalior

Angry over a missed COVID-19 vaccination target, Gwalior district collector in Madhya Pradesh told employees that they will be "hanged" if they fail to take enough efforts to complete the process.

Collector Kaushlendra Vikram Singh, during a meeting of employees of Bhitarwar tehsil of the Gwalior district on Tuesday, came to know that the COVID-19 vaccination target was not achieved. He said, "There shouldn't be a delay of even a single day (in vaccination). If it happens, 'phasi pe tang dunga' (will hang you). No one should be left out of vaccination coverage. Go and request people, go to agricultural fields, prostrate before people, sit in their houses for



24 hours, urge them. I don't bother, I want full vaccination," he said.

A video clip of the meeting has been widely shared on the internet. When reporters asked the collector about his remarks, Mr Singh said he had warned officials of suspension and termination of services if the vaccination target is not

completed within two days.

The Madhya Pradesh government, like the centre, has set the target of vaccinating the eligible population till December-end. A total of 9,50,21,120 COVID-19 vaccine doses had been administered so far in MP, including 2,39,624 on Tuesday, as per an official release.

GUJARAT-BASED FIRM TO FACE POLICE ACTION AFTER TWO STAFFERS DIE IN SEWAGE MANHOLE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday ordered an FIR against a Gujarat-based private firm that was awarded a sewage work contract, a couple of days after two of its employees died of suffocation in a sewage manhole here.

An enquiry report of the Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) said that the incident occurred due to lack of safety standard by the construction company. The BMC had submitted its enquiry report to the state

development department late on Tuesday. Subsequently, State Urban Development Minister Bhupendra Singh on Wednesday ordered for registration of an FIR against officials of a Gujarat-based private construction firm after its two staffers, including a minor. Meanwhile, the minister has also ordered a compensation of Rs 10 lakh each to the relatives of the two and to impose a penalty on the company, the statement said.

The minister wrote a letter to Bhopal police commissioner to register an FIR against officials of the Ankita

CM EXPRESSES GRIEF OVER DEMISE OF SENIOR JOURNALIST SHRI KAPOOR

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed deep grief on the demise of senior journalist Shrikumar Kapoor. Chouhan has said that Kapoor has established new dimensions in the field of journalism. Chouhan has prayed to God to grant peace to the departed soul and strength to the family to bear this loss. Shrikumar Kapoor, Editor-in-Chief of 'Satna Tiger' newspaper, passed away this morning at the age of 78 due to cardiac arrest.

PEOPLE ELECT NEW PANCHAYAT HEAD THROUGH BIDDING BEFORE VOTING

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The schedule for the three-tier panchayat (Gram panchayat, Janpad panchayat and Zila panchayat) elections in Madhya Pradesh was announced last week and the nomination process for the three-phase polls began on December 13, but the people of a village in the state have reportedly already elected the new gram panchayat head (Sarpanch).

As per information, people of Bhatauli village in Ashok Nagar district, which falls under Gwalior division in Madhya Pradesh, have declared a new gram panchayat head on the basis of bidding. On Tuesday, people gathered at a temple located in Bhatauli village and an announcement was made that whoever announces the highest bid, will be elected the new Sarpanch of the village.

Four persons participated in the bidding and each participant had to deposit Rs 5000 as security money. The bidding process began at Rs 21 lakh and ended at Rs 44 lakh. The person who won the bidding was identified as Saubhag Singh Yadav and the villagers unanimously decided to elect him their new Sarpanch.

As per the state election commission's schedule, the elections in Ashok Nagar district will be held in the third phase and for that the nomination process will begin on January 7, after the nomination process for the first two phases is concluded. After the bidding process was over, the villagers decided that no one would file the nomination for the panchayat election against Saubhag Singh Yadav and he would be elected unopposed. Yadav has been asked to pay Rs 44 lakh by Wednesday evening and if he

fails to do so, he will be replaced by the second highest bidder. As per information, the money will be spent on renovation of the temple.

An official in the Ashok Nagar district collector's office said that they have come to know about it through the news only but its authenticity was yet to be ascertained.

A senior official in the Ashok Nagar zilla panchayat (district), talking to IANS said, "This is completely against the rules and the matter will be investigated. If such things were allowed, people will begin a new process to elect their representatives on the basis of paying money."

Voting for the panchayat elections will be held January 6 for the first phase, on January 28 for the second phase, and February 16 for the third phase from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

CM PLANTED SAPLING IN KASHI



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a sapling of Navalshree at Company Bagh in Varanasi on Wednesday. The wife of the Chief Minister, Sadhna Singh was with him. Chouhan said that the joy of planting saplings amidst Vedic chanting in Varanasi was wonderful. Chouhan while praying to Lord Vishwanath ji to maintain his grace said that it is our wish that all of us continue to fulfil our duty towards environmental protection by planting saplings. It is noteworthy that Chouhan plants saplings every day as part of his resolve.

CM REMEMBERS SARDAR PATEL ON HIS DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has paid homage to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on his death anniversary. Referring to Sardar Patel's statement "Trust is futile in the absence of power. Faith and strength, both are necessary to do any great work," Chouhan tweeted "Humble tributes to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel ji, who laid the foundation of a strong, prosperous, and stunning nation by merging 562 princely states of India, on his death anniversary." "The incomparable participation of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the first Home Minister of independent India in the making of modern India will be remembered for ages. Bharat Ratna, Iron Man, revered Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel ji's brilliant and intense thoughts will always continue to inspire us Indians to protect the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the country."

CM CONDOLES THE DEATH OF BHAGWAT SHARAN MATHUR

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has condoled the death of Bhagwat Sharan Mathur. Chouhan has tweeted that "Today we all have lost a priceless gem in the form of ascetic, revered Bhagwat Sharan Mathur ji, who has dedicated his entire life for the service and upliftment of the nation and society. He will always remain in our heart through his holy thoughts and deeds." Chouhan has prayed to God to give place to the virtuous soul in his feet and give strength to the family members to bear this deep sorrow. Bhagwat Sharan Mathur was a senior campaigner of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and former organization general secretary of BJP.

CM CONDOLES THE DEATH OF GROUP CAPTAIN VARUN SINGH

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has condoled the death of Group Captain Varun Singh, who was injured in a helicopter crash near Coonoor, Tamil Nadu. Paying tribute, Chouhan tweeted - "Captain Varun Singh was the sole survivor in this helicopter crash who was fighting for life till now. The Captain, who was awarded the Shaurya Chakra, spent every moment of his life like a warrior and he also lived the last moments like a warrior. He will always be in the memories of the country."

CM thanks PM Modi and Union Minister Gadkari:

Center approves Rs 1814 crore for construction of 600 km roads

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has thanked the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari for sanctioning Rs.1814 crore for the construction of 23 roads of 600 km length. Chouhan had requested Gadkari for the approval of these roads. As a result of this, the approval of 500-600 crores received under this head in the earlier years has been increased three times to Rs 1814 crores.

Public Works Minister Gopal Bhargava informed that Chief Minister Chouhan had urged Gadkari on 16 September 2021 in Indore for acceptance of the proposal of Rs 4080 crore sent by the Public Works Department under the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund. Bhargava also gave a presentation of the utility and need of the projects in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. Shri Bhargava

informed that in this fund, the entire amount is given by the Central Government for the construction of roads. The cost of land acquisition, electricity poles and shifting of other assets is borne by the state.

The 23 roads approved by the Centre include 30 km long Chanda-Bhirai Baleh-Dhangaur-Bansa Kala road, 53 kms long Shahpur-Charan-Chanoa-Jamghat-Patar-Rangir-Jwarp road, Bahi-Balaguda-Ambabh-Kanghatti-Ugram road, 32.80 kms long Sammapur-Bajrag road, 22.80 kms long Mhow joint to Gulawata-Dhamanda-Khujner road, 18.30 kms long Barotha-Semaliya-Chow road, 23 kms long Kundam-Niwas road, 14.73 kms long Kalwana Canal to Pratappur-Bardha Road, 32.80 kms Chinara-Karhia to Bhitarwar road, 11.60 kms. long Chitoli to Rani Ghati road, 4.70 km long Dabra-Pichhor road to Katare Baba ki Madi to Sarnagat Badera road, 16.80 kms. long Devtalab to Naigari Major District Road, 47.80 kms. long Bhadwamata-Sarwanji Maharaj-

Jawra Thana-Dhani-Saroda-Chandol road, 43 kms long Bandol-Banki-Sagar-Chandori-Margodi-Jamkanaraon-Kohka road, 17 kms long Javsiyapanth-Fatehabad-Chandratvanganj road, 45 kms. long Beohari-Model Village-New Sapta Marg Road, 8 kms long road to the left side of old National Highway 118/2 to 194/6 and 208/10 to 210/10, 6.50 km long four lane elevated Swarnrekha Nala Gwalior to ITIM Maharan Laxmibai Statue road, 2.70 kms. long Elevated Corridor Bairagarh Bhopal Road, upgradation of 55 kms long Bakhtara-Bharkhach road to Dehri Bamhori-Somalwada-Nanbhant Nander-Khairi Silegana-Jauntala-Jait-Sardarnagar-Hathnaura-Sandania Baneta to Shahganj road, upgradation of 50 kms. long Bakhtara-Siyaganj-Sagpur-Richoda-Khoba-Kwada-Satramahau-Bodra-Gwadia-Neemton-Dungaria road, construction of 800 meters long third pillar of flyover at Sirmaur Chouraha in Rewa city and 38.40 km long Panna Pahadi Kheda road.

Career counselling is necessary to broaden the students thinking and guidance

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Career counselling has been included in the National Education Policy 2020. The state government is making full efforts to implement it well. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan intends that the state should be a leader in the implementation of this policy. Principal Secretary School Education Rashmi Arun Shami was addressing the career counselling and guidance programme "Orientation Workshop" for the students of Excellent and Model schools of the state in the National Education Policy 2020. This workshop was held under the aegis of Directorate of Public Instruction and Institute of Career Studies (ICCS) Lucknow in Swarna Jayanti Hall of Academy of Administration. ICCS Career App was launched in collaboration with ICS at the inauguration of the workshop. This app will guide the students in the right direction by providing career counselling.

Shami said that career counselling has special importance in student life. The thinking of the student is confined to a limited range, career counselling will prove beneficial in broadening it and giving the right guidance. Career counselling will prove to be helpful in

finding opportunities ahead of the child's thinking.

Shami said that it has an important role in deciding the direction of the students and taking them to the heights. It is necessary for the children to know about the facility of scholarship and loan etc. for higher education to move forward. Many institutes are providing free education through scholarship. He said that it is very important to give proper and positive encouragement to the students. In the workshop, there was an in-depth discussion on CM Rise School exam results, board exam preparation etc. All the principals were instructed to inform their subordinate staff and students about the brainstorming done in the workshop. Shami thanked the School Education Department and other staff including the principals of the schools and said

that everyone did a good job by adopting the online method first during the Covid period.

Commissioner Public Instruction Abhay Verma informed that ICS will conduct career counselling of students in Madhya Pradesh free of cost. The principals of the schools should pass on the information received in the workshop to their subordinates. Director State Education Centre Dhanraju said that many works have been done in Madhya Pradesh under the National Education Policy. He said that in view of this, a seminar is also being organised on 16th and 17th December. Students will get guidance about choosing their future career in this workshop. Amrita Das of ICS said that there are countless careers available today, but there is a lack of information among the students about them. For this purpose the organisation is working. She said that if students work with determination, then they will surely get success. Apart from the workshop, seminars/webinars etc. will be done in other activities, which will prove helpful in setting goals for the children. He said that there have been many changes in the new education policy, it is necessary for the students and parents to be aware of the students and parents to be aware of the

24.10.2015 (Clause 13 & 21 of the Fertiliser Control Order, 1985) issued by Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India, Goyal Chemical Industries, Dhanaura Distt.

Amroha, U.P. 244231 hereby notifies that it intends to introduce the following grades of 100% Water Soluble Mixtures of Fertilisers to be manufactured or imported Into

| S.N | Brand | Name of Fertilizer | N | P ₂ O ₅ | K ₂ O | Total |
|------|------------------|--------------------|----|-------------------------------|------------------|-------|
| 1 | Basfoliar | NPK 13:40:13 | 13 | 40 | 13 | 66 |
| | Agricare Trip 13 | NPK 13:40:13 | 13 | 40 | 13 | 66 |
| 2 | Agricare Tri 20 | NPK 20:20:20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 60 |
| 3 | Agricare Tri 18 | NPK 18:18:18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 54 |
| 4 | Novatec Solub | NP 14:48 | 14 | 48 | | 62 |
| 5 | Novatec Solub | NPK 14:08:30 | 14 | 8 | 30 | 52 |
| 6 | Novatec Solub | NK 09:43 | 9 | | 43 | 52 |
| 7 | Agricare Trip 16 | NPK 16:08:24 | 16 | 8 | 24 | 48 |
| 8 | Agricare Trip 20 | NPK 20:10:10 | 20 | 10 | 10 | 40 |
| 9 | Agricare Trip 10 | NPK 10:36:10 | 10 | 36 | 10 | 56 |
| 10 | Agricare Trip 5 | NPK 05:15:30 | 5 | 15 | 30 | 50 |
| 11 | Agricare Duo 28 | NP 28:28 | 28 | 28 | | 56 |
| 12 | Agricare Trip 6 | NPK 06:12:36 | 6 | 12 | 36 | 54 |
| 13 | Agricare Trip 26 | NPK 13:05:26 | 13 | 5 | 26 | 44 |
| 14</ | | | | | | |

50 YEARS OF BANGLADESH

Bangladesh will celebrate its 50th Victory Day on December 16 (Thursday) with a renewed pledge to resist the anti-liberation forces, terrorism and fundamentalism, and to build Bangladesh on the spirit of Liberation War. On December 16 in 1971, the Pakistani marauding forces surrendered, following a reign of terror and anarchy unleashed by them for nine months. The surrender resulted in the emergence of free, independent and sovereign Bangladesh. Different political parties, socio cultural organisations and educational institutions will also observe the day with elaborate programmes to pay deep homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives to free the country from Pakistani clutches. Independence of Bangladesh was achieved on December 16, 1971 through supreme sacrifices of countless freedom fighters. Pakistani occupation committed the most horrendous and heinous crimes that left over three million people killed and over a quarter million women sexually assaulted resulting in birth of more than 40,000 war babies, let alone the planned elimination of the best Bengali brains of the soil on December 14, 1971, the day known as Martyred Intellectuals Day. Time magazine of the US reported on the girls who had been kidnapped and kept in military camps turned into brothels. People were bewildered; they were in dismay and shuddered to think of their future; but the nation was ready to wage all-out war against the fascist Pakistani leaders. Before daybreaks corpses littered the streets. Instant resistances were built up across the country in response to the Bangabandhu's proclamation of independence before his arrest. Numerous historical documents suggest that the slogan "Kill Bengalis and Hindus" was routinely and purposefully used during the period. 'Bengali' was the term used to mean the freedom fighters. Nothing could be further from truth and more ridiculous than Pakistan's claim that it was not involved in the atrocities perpetrated on the people of Bangladesh in 1971.

absolute edit



1971 WAR IN RETROSPECT

SOME BLOW TRUMPETS; OTHERS FOLLOW THE DRUM

Vishnu Makhijani

Some wars never get over, especially those where people build up a narrative that is based on half-truths to build up personalities. Kargil in 1999 was a classic case, where it took more than a decade for the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) and other assorted courts to rule that 70 Infantry Brigade under Brigadier Devinder Singh were indeed the 'real heroes' of the fighting in Batalik. That one of the most noteworthy performances of the war should have been subject to the indignity of having to 'prove' its case in court, just because of petty politics, is a sad commentary on our system.

Since Independence, starting with the 1947-48 Ops in Jammu & Kashmir, there are instances of people who have stood up and been counted when the chips were down, who have then been ruthlessly pushed aside and in some cases even victimised.

As India celebrates the Golden Jubilee of the 1971 Bangladesh War of Liberation, the story of one battalion needs telling which like the afore mentioned cases, never got its due. The story needs to be told, especially since one of the main villains in the case, is now being projected as a shining hero.

The Bangladesh war was fought by every Indian soldier, airman and sailor with the unquestioning belief that God was on our side, regardless of which religion you followed. The genocide unleashed by the Pakistan army and the paramilitary 'razakars' perhaps has few parallel in the history of the human race. Three million Bengalis were butchered -- women were raped and had their breasts cut off while men were mutilated and their privates stuffed in their mouths -- while another 10 million escaped into India. The Indian intervention, when it finally came in December 1971, was swift and lethal. In two weeks, the Indian Armed Forces along with the 'Mukti Yodhas', had delivered not just to India, but to the world, swift retribution that resulted in 93,000 Pakistani soldiers becoming POWs and East Pakistan becoming Bangladesh. This was in many ways, India's finest hour -- but it was tainted by three individuals, who were all senior officers. Two of them are not relevant to our immediate narrative, but the name of Brigadier R.N. Mishra, the commander of 311 Brigade, needs to be remembered. For herein lies a story that needs to be told, and not swept under the carpet, which we time



and again are wont to do. Even though there had been some half-hearted contingency plans drawn up for the occupation of Dacca, the city was never the objective in either General (later Field Marshal) Sam Manekshaw or Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Arora's war plans.

While formations attacking from the west (2 Corps) and the north (33 Corps and 101 Communication Zone) were to tie down the Pakistani defenders, Lieutenant General Sagat Singh's 4 Corp was to capture as much territory as it could on the east bank of the Meghna River. An integral part of Lt Gen Sagat Singh's command was 57 Mountain Division that was being commanded by Major General Ben Gonsalves. The key brigade group that was to lead the main thrust by first capturing Akhaura and then Ashuganj was 311 Brigade, which comprised of 18 Rajput, 10 Bihar and 4 Guards (formerly 1 Rajput). Fate sometimes deals a strange hand. Brig Mishra, then a Lieutenant Colonel, had been commanding 9 Punjab in 1962 and the battalion was a key element of Brigadier John Dalvi's ill-fated 7 Brigade that had been deployed on the Namka Chu in the Tawang district of NEFA (North East Frontier Agency, now Arunachal Pradesh) on October 20, 1962. When the Chinese attack had developed against the positions held by 2 Rajput on his left (resulting in 282 men being killed and the rest wounded and taken prisoner), Lt Col Mishra had quietly, along with the com-

manding officer of the battalion on his right, upped and fled. Subsequent evidence suggests the move was pre-planned the previous night when it became obvious the PLA were building up to launch an attack. Not only did Lt Col Mishra flee, he also abandoned his own men, many of whom froze to death waiting in vain for their 'CO Saab' to come and take them home. In the post debacle scenario, the Defence Minister, Yashwantrao Balwantrao Chavan, in an attempt to protect Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, decreed that no one would be held responsible and even the Henderson Brooks-Bhagat report was put away in a manner that even the keys of time have proved ineffective in opening it. Lt Col Mishra survived... and again in 1965, fate smiled on him, for as the commanding officer of 9 Punjab in the Chhamb-Jaurian sector, he was awarded a VrC despite his unit having a limited role in holding the heights above. In 1971, Brig Mishra knew that the Commanding Officer of 18 Rajput, Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) Ashok Kalyan Verma, was aware of the events nine years previous. The Rajputs were then asked to lead the assault on Akhaura on December 5 supported by 10 Bihar, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel P.C. Sawhney, for, as per all appreciations, heavy casualties were expected. Both battalions performed exceptionally well and took the objective with hardly any

EUROPE ROLLS OUT COVID VACCINE FOR KIDS AGED 5-11

London | Agencies

Even as the Omicron variant continues to spread, European nations including Germany, Hungary, Greece, and Spain have started vaccinating children as young as five and up to 11 years of age, against Covid-19 from Wednesday. The vaccine administered will be of lower dose than the Pfizer jab for over-12s. It also comes in a paediatric vial with an orange cap to distinguish it from the purple-capped vials for older ages, the Daily Mail reported. The European Union's medicines watchdog European Medicines Agency, last month, approved the Pfizer-BioNTech shot for five to 11-year-olds. Denmark and Austria began inoculating younger kids in November.

The US was the first country to start vaccinating small kids, and it has inoculated more than five million children aged five to 11. "As soon as we offered the vaccine appointments, they were pretty much all snapped up," Jakob Maske, a Berlin-based doctor and spokesman for Germany's association of paediatricians, was quoted as saying. While Germany's STIKO vaccine commission officially recommended the jab only for children with pre-existing conditions, even healthy children will be inoculated if the parents request it, the report said. In Germany, officials plan to administer kids' jabs in museums and zoos, while others are mulling mobile vaccination teams outside schools. Meanwhile, in Greece, more than



20,000 parents have booked vaccine appointments for their kids from Wednesday. Spain, which has one of Europe's highest Covid-19 vaccination rates, said it was launching its immunisation campaign for five to 11-year-olds with the goal of breaking the chain of infection "in family settings, schools and the community". The country has around 3.3 million children within that age group. In a bid to spur vaccine take-up, the Spanish government has also released a television commercial

showing kids getting the shot so they can "help end the virus and protect the elderly", the report said. Other European countries including Italy, Portugal, Poland, the Baltic states and the Czech Republic are also set to launch similar vaccination drives in the coming days. In France, vaccination has only been approved for five to 11-year-olds at risk of developing serious illness, but the government has said it is considering extending it to all children on a voluntary basis. Belgium is awaiting the recommendation of its national health body, with a rollout likely around the new year, while Switzerland's medical agency has given green light for kids' vaccines. The country is set to start the campaign in early January. Further, British health regulators are also assessing whether to approve jabs for the 5-11 age group, and a decision is likely before Christmas. The UK's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) is reportedly "urgently" reviewing data on Covid jabs for children. As a result, medics in England have been told to start preparing for the mass vaccination of children as young as five years old, leaked documents have revealed, the report said. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday said that Omicron is expected to be the dominant Covid variant in the 27-nation bloc by mid-January, the report said. With 66.6 per cent of the European population now fully vaccinated against Covid, the bloc is well prepared to fight Omicron, she added.

BRITISH 3-STAR GENERAL NAMED DEPUTY CHIEF OF UN COMMAND

Seoul: A British three-star Army general has been named the new deputy commander of the US-led UN Command (UNC) headquartered in South Korea, its official said on Wednesday. Lt. Gen. Andrew Harrison will succeed Australian Vice Adm. Stuart C. Mayer who concluded his UNC mission on Wednesday after nearly 2 1/2 years of service at the command headquartered in Pyeongtaek, some 70 kilometres south of Seoul. However, when Harrison will officially take office has yet to be announced, Yonhap news agency reported. Earlier in the day, the command bid farewell to Mayer at a ceremony attended by Gen. Paul LaCamera, who leads the UNC, the South Korea-US Combined Forces Command and the US Forces Korea. LaCamera applauded Mayer's efforts to reinforce the UNC.

"Vice Adm. Mayer brought with him 35 years of military experience. His strategic vision and his mastery of diplomatic inter-agency skills made lasting positive impacts," the commander was quoted by his office as saying. Mayer pledged to continue to advocate for the command.

"When we look to the future and consider UNC, we can look ahead with the same mixture of pride and confidence, pride in 70 years after we first committed to the endeavour of restoring peace and security to the peninsula," Mayer said. The UNC serves as a key enforcer of the armistice agreement that halted the 1950-53 Korean War.

Iranian envoy urges US, EU to return to full compliance with JCPOA

United Nations | Agencies

The US and the European Union (EU) must return to a full compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iranian ambassador to the UN told reporters at its headquarters in New York.

"Now it is time for the US and the EU to live up to their responsibilities and return to the full compliance with the JCPOA. The choice is theirs. We hope they seize this opportunity," Majid Takht Ravanchi said on Tuesday.

The ambassador made the remarks after the UN Security Council's biannual meeting on the JCPOA, or the Iranian deal, and Resolution 2231, which was adopted by the Security Council on July 20, 2015 endorsing the JCPOA on Iran's nuclear programme,

Xinhua news agency reported. "We heard strong messages of support for the JCPOA's restoration," the envoy said. "To refresh our memory about the underlying causes of the current situation, the truth is that it was the US that withdrew unlawfully from the JCPOA; no more, no less -- as we have stated time and again." "Obviously, Iran

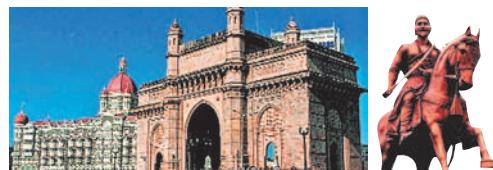
must be assured that all sanctions will be lifted; the US will not withdraw from the accord again, and it will not abuse the procedures set out in the JCPOA and Resolution 2231," said Ravanchi. The Iranian team at the Vienna talks "is serious and well-prepared to engage meaningfully and constructively with the other sides and hopes to see the same approach from them," the ambassador said, adding that the Vienna talks can succeed only through genuine political will and good faith negotiations. "Engaging in blame game or showing artificial impatience is not constructive," he noted. "While the Vienna talks are moving forward, we must all work together to come to an acceptable and good agreement in Vienna as soon as possible," said the ambassador.

CAMBODIA TO APPOINT FOREIGN MINISTER AS ASEAN CHAIR'S NEW ENVOY TO MYANMAR

Phnom Penh: Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen said on Wednesday that he would name the country's Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn as the ASEAN chair's new special envoy to Myanmar.

Cambodia will be the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for 2022, Xinhua news agency reported. Sokhonn will succeed the bloc's current ASEAN special envoy, Brunei's Second Foreign Minister Erywan bin Pehin Yusof. "I'd like to confirm that I will appoint Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn as the ASEAN chair's special envoy," Hun Sen said in a speech during the inauguration ceremony of a luxury hotel in Phnom Penh. The special envoy has been assigned to enforce the implementation of the five-point Myanmar consensus which was decided in April by ASEAN leaders, to facilitate mediation of the dialogue process, and to provide humanitarian aid to Myanmar. Meanwhile, Hun Sen said he will visit Myanmar on January 7 and 8. He said as the ASEAN chair in 2022, Cambodia will do its best to promote ASEAN as a united family. ASEAN groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.





MAHA LOCAL BODY POLLS

SC DIRECTS RE-NOTIFICATION OF 27% OBC SEATS AS GENERAL CATEGORY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In another jolt to the Maharashtra government, the Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered the State Election Commission (SEC) and the state government to convert 27 per cent reserved seats for OBC into general category for zilla parishad and panchayat samitis and issue a fresh notification. On December 6, the Supreme Court stayed the Maharashtra government decision to grant 27 per cent reservation for the OBC, which was brought by an ordinance, in the local body elections until further orders.

A bench headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar directed the SEC to renotify the OBC seats as general category, so that polls for those seats can take place as per law along with elections for remaining 73 per cent.

The bench also comprising Justice CT Ravikumar said the SEC must issue fresh notification for the remaining 27 per cent seats reserved for OBC as general category and commence election process for them along with the remaining 73 per cent, and declare the results for both polls simultaneously. The top court



has scheduled the matter for further hearing in the third week of January.

The top court declined to entertain requests by the Maharashtra government and a few intervenors seeking modification in the December 6 order. Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, representing one of the intervenors, emphasised that the Backward Classes cannot be forced to suffer due to the inaction of the state government or the Centre. The Maharashtra government counsel urged the court to put on hold the entire election, and in the mean-

while, it can direct the SEC to fast-track the process of data collection and review the matter after three months.

On December 6, the top court had observed that 27 per cent OBC reservation could not be implemented without setting up a commission and also without collating data for inadequacy of representation in the local government. The top court also made it clear that SEC cannot allow notification of OBC seats in any state without any empirical data, in compliance with the triple test require-

ment laid down by the top court. "This is applicable for all future polls," said the bench. "Without setting up the Commission and collating contemporaneous empirical data to ascertain the extent of reservation required to be provided local body-wise, it is not open for the State Election Commission to provide reservation for OBC category despite the statutory provision in that regard," said the bench in its order. The bench said the first step of collating empirical data has not been completed so far. Senior advocate Shekhar Naphade, counsel appearing for the Maharashtra government, had argued that the provision inserted vide impugned Ordinance is in conformity with the decision of the top court. He added that it is for providing reservation to the category of Backward Class citizens up to 27 per cent only. In March this year, the apex court had struck down Maharashtra's move to introduce 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in zilla parishads and panchayat samitis. The top court had then said it was violative of the 50 per cent cap laid down in the top court's Indra Sawhney judgement.

Rapid RT-PCR test to cost Rs 1,975 at Mumbai airport

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) said on Wednesday that a rapid RT-PCR test at CSMIA will cost Rs 1,975.

According to a CSMIA spokesperson, the move is in line with the latest direction issued by the Maharashtra government. "The standard RT-PCR test will continue to cost Rs 500. CSMIA will continue to provide comprehensive testing infrastructure for the convenience and ease of our passengers. CSMIA follows all mandatory Covid-19 pro-



tocols and is committed to passenger health, safety and well-being," the spokesperson said. The Centre has made it mandatory for international passengers arriving in India to pre-book their RT-PCR test. International passengers arriving at six major Indian airports would be required

to pre-book their tests. As per the Ministry of Civil Aviation, to stabilise the system and to ensure that the passengers do not face any problem in pre-booking, the new rule will be implemented in six Metro cities in the first phase, namely Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

SC junks Maha govt plea seeking direction to Centre to share raw caste Census data

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday junked a petition by Maharashtra government seeking a direction to the Centre to provide Socio-Economic Caste Census on Other Backward Classes (OBCs), after taking into consideration Centre's contention that data collected is flawed. The Maharashtra government sought raw data collected in the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) held in 2011.

The Centre told the apex court that the SECC was resorted to by way of separate decision by Cabinet, which was not an OBC survey but to ascertain caste status of all households in the country. A bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar noted that as per Union of India the information collated in the exercise is unusable. The top court recorded



Centre's contention that the data is fraught with mistakes and the information collated during Census was specific to SC and ST only. The Maharashtra government sought the raw Census data for implementing reservation for OBC in the local body elections.

The bench also comprising Justice C.T. Ravikumar dismissed the petition filed by the Maharashtra government, after con-

sidering Centre's submission that SECC-2011 was not an exercise to enumerate the data of backward classes. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta represented the Centre in the matter. Mehta submitted that SECC-2011 was not a Census exercise undertaken under the Census Act 1948, rather it was done on the basis of executive instructions of the concerned ministry to enumerate the caste status of households in the

country for delivery of targeted benefits. After hearing detailed arguments in the matter, the top court said it cannot issue a direction to the Centre to share the raw caste data of SECC-2011 with Maharashtra, as it will further create confusion.

In the order, the top court said: "The fact remains that the affidavit filed before this court by the Union of India emphatically states that data which is collated is not accurate and not usable." The bench added that if that is the stand taken by the government, then "we fail to understand how mandamus can be issued to the respondent to permit the State of Maharashtra to use the data for any purpose". Dismissing the Maharashtra government petition, the bench added, "Such direction will lead to confusion and uncertainty, cannot be countenanced."

Political chemistry needed for winning polls, not arithmetic: Fadnavis

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Political chemistry is needed for winning elections and not arithmetic, asserted former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis while slamming the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government for the loss the three-party coalition suffered on Tuesday in the elections for the Members of Legislative Council. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won four out of six seats on Tuesday.

With the grand victory of former state Energy Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule and other BJP candidates elsewhere in the state, the saffron party has set the winning trend for the next Assembly elections, Fadnavis told the



media. He said under the leadership of Maharashtra BJP President Chandrakant Patil, the saffron party is winning elections in the state. The former Chief Minister claimed that BJP candidates secured MVA votes and thanked those voters. The victory of Bawankule is thus laying a roadmap for future wins of the BJP, he said.

Fadnavis, who along with Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, led the election campaign, said the BJP

will retain its rule in the elections to the Nagpur Municipal Corporation due early next year. He expressed hope that the BJP will regain number one in Maharashtra in the days to come.

Bawankule, who was denied Assembly ticket in 2019, re-enters the Legislature with a huge victory. He polled 362 votes while Congress-supported Mangesh Deshmukh could secure 186 votes, while five votes were found invalid. In a dramatic twist on the eve of polling, the Congress replaced its nominee Ravindra Bhojwani with independent candidate Deshmukh. Earlier, Bhojwani had quit the BJP after four terms. Thereafter, he moved the Bombay High Court claiming that he was

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued notice to Maharashtra government on a petition filed by businessman Raj Kundra seeking anticipatory bail. The top court granted him four weeks protection from arrest in one of the cases related to porn film racket. In November, the Bombay High Court had declined to entertain the anticipatory bail application filed by Kundra in connection with an FIR registered against him by the Mumbai Police in the porn film racket case. Kundra approached the top court after high court refused relief.

Kundra, who is married to actor Shilpa Shetty, first sought anticipatory bail from the session court, which refused to grant him any relief.

Thereafter, he moved the Bombay High Court claiming that he was

Porn film racket case: SC relief for Raj Kundra, grants him protection from arrest

allegedly framed. A bench comprising Justices Vineet Saran and Aniruddha Bose after hearing arguments in the matter granted protection of arrest to Kundra and scheduled the matter for further hearing after four weeks. In the top court, Kundra was represented by advocate-on-record Shakti Pandey and advocate Prashant Patil. The cyber cell of the Mumbai Police filed a case against Kundra under sections of the Indian Penal Code, Indecent Representation of Women (Prevention) Act, and Information Technology Act for allegedly distributing sexually explicit videos. Kundra claimed he was not connected to content creation, publication or transmission of alleged illegal videos. He was arrested by the Mumbai Police, in July this year, in another case where he was accused of distributing porn films through an app. In September, Kundra was granted bail.

For 2nd year, Mumbai to have no parties, big gatherings during Xmas-New Year Eve



Team Absolute | Mumbai

For the second year straight, the Maharashtra government will not permit parties or big gatherings during the Christmas-New Year Eve week in the country's commercial capital owing to the spread of Omicron variant of coronavirus, Mumbai Guardian Minister Aslam Shaikh said on Wednesday. However, all religious activities pertaining to festival shall be allowed in Churches as usual, and detailed guidelines in the matter shall follow shortly, he said. Hours after the Minister's statement, Mumbai Police's Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations) S. Chaitanya issued wide-ranging prohibitory orders starting midnight on Wednesday (December 15-16) till December 31. Under this, all activities-events in open or closed spaces shall be permitted at 50 per cent capacity and the disaster management authority must of intimated of any gathering attracting over 1,000 people. Justifying the

proposed move, the minister added that it is being done to avoid overcrowding during the festival and prevent any further spread of the Covid-19 variant Omicron in the city, now - along with Pune - having the highest number of 12 cases, of the state's 28.

Moreover, many international flight passengers land here daily from international flights increasing the risks of the spread of the disease, he averred. Last year, for Christmas (2020) and New Year Eve (2021), there were strict restrictions imposed as a precaution though the first Covid wave was on the wane. The second and more severe Covid-19 wave

started around February this year and the situation has now become complex with the emergence of the Omicron variant since December 4 in the state in Thane. Shaikh's latest diktat, followed by the Mumbai Police's restrictions, will dampen the New Year Eve spirit especially in posh restaurants and luxury hotels which usually host big-ticket mega-parties with Indian and foreign celebs.

Besides, it could hit the exclusive private bashes organised at homes or farmhouses and other select venues by Bollywood or business bigwigs in and around Mumbai, and most may be compelled to ring in 2022 on a subdued note.

in the MMR region, other cities and the Mumbai Police CID, the CBI and the FBI were on the lookout for him in the past nearly 15 years.

Going by aliases like Suresh Pai, he and his associates had allegedly made extortion-cum-threat calls to several top builders, contractors, and glamour world celebs in the early 2000s, organised or ordered gangland killings, etc. The businessmen, liquor shop owners of Mumbai and South India were on his radar. He used to make extortion calls. He had also threatened a few politicians," said an IB official,

requesting anonymity. "Most of the time Suresh Pujari would open fire at the house of his target, though he wouldn't hurt anybody. Later, he used to drop threat letters demanding money. He did this in Ulhasnagar, Kalyan, Dombivali, and Thane areas of Mumbai. His victims were too terrified to approach the police, but a few had reported the matter to the police," said a source.

Bombay HC: Aryan Khan need not attend NCB office on Fridays

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Granting relief, the Bombay High Court modified the bail condition of Aryan Khan, son of Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan, requiring him to compulsorily mark attendance with the Narcotics Control Bureau office here, every Friday.

Justice Nitin Sambre said while he need not go to the NCB headquarters here on Fridays, Aryan Khan must remain present before the NCB Special Investigation Team of Delhi whenever required, subject to a 72-hour advance notice given to him. On Aryan Khan's plea for travelling outside Mumbai, the court said he must submit his itinerary to the investigation officer in advance. His lawyer, Senior



by the SIT. In a sensation, the Mumbai NCB Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede and his team raided the luxury ship, Cordelia Cruise on October 1 and detained Aryan Khan, along with others. The following day (October 2), he and seven others were arrested sparking off a massive furore with allegations and counter-allegations from various quarters vis-a-vis Wankhede's action. Though no drugs were recovered from him, Aryan Khan spent almost four weeks in NCB and judicial custody till he was granted bail on October 28, and later the case was handed over to the agency's SIT Delhi for further probe.

During the subsequent NCB investigations, a total of 20 persons were arrested in the same case and a majority are now enlarged on bail.





TOM SIZEMORE JOINS THE CAST OF 'THE LEGEND OF JACK AND DIANE'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Tom Sizemore is all set to star in the female revenge thriller 'The Legend of Jack and Diane' alongside Robert LaSardo, Alvaro Orlando, Lydia Zelmac and David Tomilson.

The film will be directed by Bruce Bellocchi, who wrote the screenplay with Rick Geller and Zelmac.

The film, which was originally supposed to be an HBO series but got reworked by Bellocchi and Geller following the pandemic, will go on floors in Los Angeles next month, reports Deadline.

Talking about coming on board for the film, Tom said, "I found Bruce's script an intense, gripping page-turner and I'm looking forward to working with him to bring this brazen, bold character - Detective Parker."

Commenting on Sizemore joining the cast, Bellocchi said, "Tom Sizemore is a phenomenal actor and we feel blessed to have him join our cast as this brooding bad guy cop who you can't keep



your eyes off of. This project is about redemption - story-wise on-screen and in many ways, for several of us, behind the scenes."

Talking about the inspiration for the movie, the director said, "I've long been

inspired by great revenge thrillers, and in particular, those that feature iconic badass female characters from 'Natural Born Killers' Mallory Knox to 'Kill Bill's Beatrix Kiddo to the Riley North character in 'Peppermint'".

Ben Affleck would 'probably still be drinking' if marriage to Jennifer Garner continued

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Ben Affleck says that if he and his former actress wife Jennifer Garner had not divorced in 2018, he would feel "trapped".

Affleck said: "We probably would've ended up at each other's throats. I'd probably still be drinking. It's part of why I started drinking ... because I was trapped. I was like 'I can't leave 'cause of my kids, but I'm not happy, what do I do?' What I did was drink a bottle of scotch and fall asleep on the couch, which turned out not to be the solution." The 'Argo' star, who reunited with former flame Jennifer Lopez in 2021, went on to share that he and Garner "tried" to make things work, but called it a day for the children before noting that tabloid speculation about their



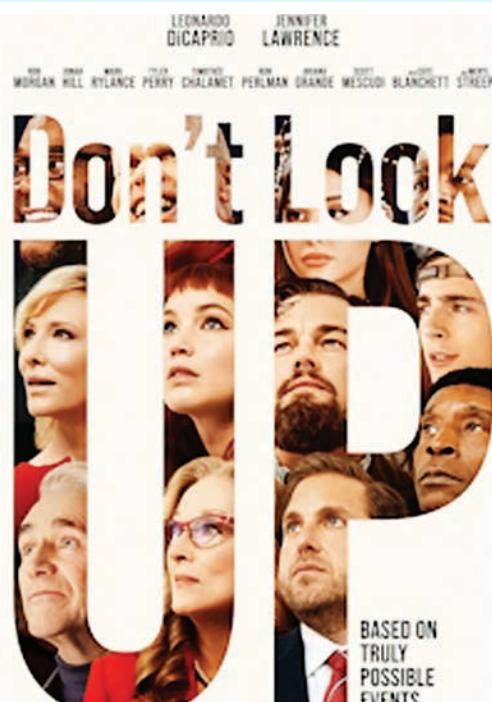
split was "bullsh***," reports femalefirst.co.uk. Speaking on 'The Howard Stern Show', he added: "Ultimately, we tried, we tried, we tried

because we had kids, but both of us felt like we didn't want this to be the model that our kids see of marriage.

"Everything you read (in the news about the divorce) was bulls**. The truth was we took our time, we made our decision a We grew apart. We had a marriage that didn't work. This happens. She's somebody I love and respect, but to whom I shouldn't be married any longer."

Affleck added: "We did it amicably. We did our best. Did we have moments of tension? Did we have disagreements over custody? Was stuff difficult for us? Did we get angry? Yes, but fundamentally it was always underpinned with respect."

"I knew she was a good mom. I always hoped she knew I was a good dad. I knew I was."



'Don't Look Up' director Adam McKay on what inspired him to make the film

Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker Adam McKay, who is gearing up for the release of his satirical science fiction comedy 'Don't Look Up', says a few drafts of the movie weren't comedic to start with.

Talking about the film, McKay said: "Surprisingly, the first few drafts of 'Don't Look Up' weren't comedic! I played with the idea at first of making a straightforward drama or a small, intimate character study, but at a certain point I knew I needed to make a comedy, because I felt like after these last few years, we really, really needed to laugh."

He added: "I'd say the one thing that comedy has to have in order to work in the way you describe is - you need some kind of distance and perspective. You can't laugh about a monkey if you're currently being attacked by one, right? But back up 300 feet and watch a monkey behave for a while and you're probably going to laugh or smile." So, in writing this movie, and eventually making it after a pause, there was this sense of everyone collectively exhaling in relief that we could finally laugh after the insanity of the last 2 (or 20) years." Sharing his inspiration for the film, the filmmaker said that for a funny movie, the origins are pretty serious. "I read a book in 2019 called 'The Uninhabitable



'FAST & FURIOUS 10' MOVES RELEASE DATE TO MAY 2023

Los Angeles | Agencies

The next tenth installment of 'Fast & Furious' saga will take a little detour before reaching its final destination as it is now scheduled to hit the theaters in May 2023.

The 10th chapter in the long-running ode to fast cars, physics-defying stunts and family will hit theaters on May 19, 2023, reports variety.com. That's a little more than a month after its previously scheduled debut of April 7, 2023 and moves the 'Fast & Furious' sequel firmly into the summer blockbuster season.

Universal Pictures is taking advantage of the space left by Dom Toretto and company and will slot an untitled animated film into that berth. It moves from the previously announced March 24, 2023 slot.

No details yet on that one beyond that it's from the studio behind 'Shrek' and that it promises to be an event.

The most recent 'Fast & Furious' film, 'F9' opened in theaters last summer. It grossed \$726 million globally, an impressive figure that was less than other films in the series primarily because Covid has depressed ticket sales.

Justin Lin, the director of the ninth film in the series as well as several previous installments, returns behind the camera. The tenth entry will bring back Vin Diesel, Sung Kang, Nathalie Emmanuel, Michelle Rodriguez, Ludacris and other long-standing members of the 'Fast' family.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Keanu Reeves, who is gearing up for his upcoming sci-fi 'The Matrix Resurrections', would love to star in the sequel of 'Constantine'.

Although the film based on DC comic's character 'Hellblazer', didn't have an exceptional performance at the box office but, over the years it has become a cult classic, more so for the fans of Reeves.

The actor recently visited comedian Stephen Colbert to promote 'The Matrix Resurrections'. The video of the chat is on YouTube, where Reeves is seen talking about the film.

When the host asked him about one character which he would like to

return to and which is not in the works, the actor discussed his interest to star in the sequel for which he even tried on his part but nothing materialized for the film.

The actor played the titular character of John Constantine, a chain-smoking, bad boy detective in the 2005 comic book film, whose rights are secured by Warner Brothers. In recent years, there has been a lot of noise over the film's sequel but its box office collections back in the day, are known for years.

Keanu Reeves expresses his interest to star in 'Constantine' sequel

the reason that Warner Brothers are not confident enough to bankroll the project.

Earth' that I couldn't get out of my head. It depicts the ways in which global warming will wreak havoc on the planet if nothing is done to combat the climate crisis. And, it all boiled down to this idea I just couldn't shake: We all know how to react when there is a killer with an ax, or when your house is on fire, but what the author David Wallace-Wells was writing about was a million times worse. "How do we get people to realize this is a clear and present danger? How close does that danger have to be for us to have the proper response? I felt like I needed to write this script." He added that then over the course of the next few weeks, this great little analogy kept popping up in all his conversations, including one with David Sirota, a journalist he has known for years.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Maya Jama

'Avatar 2' needs to make money amid Covid, OTT: James Cameron

New York | Agencies

Filmmaker James Cameron has opened up on the highly anticipated follow-up to his 2009 blockbuster 'Avatar', which is set to hit cinemas in 2022, and said there is a lot of pressure on big-budget movies following the impact of the pandemic and streaming.

He told Entertainment Weekly: "The big issue is: Are we going to make any damn money? Big, expensive films have got to make a lot of money. We're in a new world post-Covid, post-streaming. Maybe those numbers will never be seen again. Who knows? It's all a big roll of the dice."

Cameron noted how the upcoming film which stars the likes of Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Stephen Lang, Sigourney Weaver, Kate Winslet, Edie Falco and more - will allow him to bring together his "two greatest loves", including directing and "ocean exploration", reports femalefirst.co.uk. He added: "It sounds kind of nuts, the process I mean, if 'Avatar' hadn't made so much damn money, we'd never do this - because it's kind of crazy... I do the



ocean thing when I'm not making movies. So if I could combine my two greatest loves - one of which is ocean exploration; the other,

feature filmmaking - why wouldn't I?"

For 'Avatar 2', the film will mostly take place underwater, which saw the cast and

crew taking extensive diving lessons while there was new technology developed to improve underwater motion capture.


CAME TO KNOW ABOUT CAPTAINCY REMOVAL HOURS BEFORE SELECTION MEETING

AVAILABLE FOR ODI'S, NO PROBLEM WITH ROHIT SHARMA: VIRAT KOHLI


Team Absolute | Mumbai

India Test skipper Virat Kohli categorically denied a rift between him and the new white-ball captain Rohit Sharma during the pre-departure virtual press conference ahead of the three-Test series against South Africa beginning on December 26. With Rohit Sharma missing the three-Test series in South Africa due to a hamstring

injury and Virat Kohli 'reportedly planning' to skip the three One-day Internationals due to personal reasons, it had given rise to speculation that all is not well in the team. In fact, former India captain Mohammad Azharuddin had fuelled speculation of a rift in the leadership group by tweeting yesterday, 'Any action or communication from me will never be to demean the team. I'm committed to Indian cricket.'

The test captain informed that he came to know about his removal as the ODI captain during the meeting happened to discuss the Test squad for the series against South Africa. "I was contacted one-and-a-half hours before the selection meeting on the eighth (Dec 8) for the Test series. There was no prior communication to me at all since I announced the T20I captaincy decision until the 8th of December, where I got a call before the selection meeting. The chief selector discussed with me the Test team, to which we both agreed. And before ending the call, I was told the five selectors have decided I will not be the ODI captain, to which I replied, 'okay, fine', and in the selection call afterwards, we chatted about it briefly. That's what happened. There was no communication prior to that at all.'

'WASN'T TOLD NOT TO GIVE UP T20I CAPTAINCY'

"When I decided to leave the T20I captaincy and approached the BCCI about my decision, it was received well. There was no offence or hesitation. I wasn't told to reconsider it. It was received well; I was told it's progressive and it's (a step) in the right direction. Then I told them I'd like to continue in Tests and ODIs, unless the office bearers and selectors feel otherwise. My communication was clear in what I wanted to do. I gave them the option, that if they feel I shouldn't (remain captain in Tests and/or ODIs), the decision is in their hands."

BWF WORLD C'SHIPS

HS Prannoy advances to pre-quarters

Huelva (Spain) | Agencies

At the men's singles pre-quarters of the 2021 BWF World Badminton Championships after registering a straight-game win over Daren Liew of Malaysia, here on Wednesday. The unseeded Indian beat his Malaysian opponent 21-7, 21-17 in a men's singles second-round match that lasted 42 minutes. This was the sixth win for world No 32 HS Prannoy over the 36th-ranked Daren Liew from nine meetings. With this win, Prannoy joined two other Indians - Kidambi Srikanth and Lakshya Sen, in the men's singles pre-quarters of the tournament. Meanwhile, in the women's doubles, Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy beat China's 14th seeds Liu Xuanxuan and Xia Yuting 21-11, 21-13 in a 51 minute clash. However, the men's doubles pair MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila lost to the experienced Russian duo of Vladimir Ivanov and Ivan Sonozon 11-21, 16-21 in 41 minutes and were knocked out. On Tuesday, reigning



world champion PV Sindhu reached the women's singles pre-quarters with an easy 21-7, 21-9 win over Martina Repiska of Slovakia. She will face Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand in the pre-quarters. Apart from Sindhu, the doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy-Chirag Shetty also the cut for the third round.

INDIA THRASH BANGLADESH 9-0

Dhaka | Agencies

Indian Men's Hockey Team on Wednesday registered a thumping 9-0 win over hosts Bangladesh in the Asian Champions Trophy here at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium. It was Dilpreet Singh who starred in India's win with a fine hat-trick that gave India a breakthrough in the first quarter. He scored goals in the 12th, 22nd and 44th minute to put pressure on the Bangladeshi defence while Jarmanpreet Singh (31', 43'), Lalit Upadhyay (29'), Akashdeep Singh (54'), Mandeep Mor (55') and Harmanpreet Singh (57') too scored in India's first win at the prestigious Continental tournament. The match started with a resilient Bangladeshi defence disrupting their high-octane attacks of Indian forwards. As many as eight PCs earned by India in the first quarter were brilliantly defended by the hosts, particularly their first rushers doing a fine job



to keep India from taking an early lead. Dilpreet Singh, managed to break the gridlock in the 12th minute, with a good assist by Skipper Manpreet Singh was put away by the young forward to give India 1-0 lead. Dilpreet doubled India's lead in the 22nd minute and Lalit scored from a fine deflection via Harmanpreet's drag flick to take India's tally to 3-0 at half-time. During the ten-minute break, India's Chief Coach Graham Reid insisted that the team will start the third quarter afresh with a clean slate and work on improvised variations to score. The players acted upon his advice as they

showcased a much better attack and the variations in PC proved hard for the hosts to defend.

India added two more goals in the third quarter through a well executed PC attack led by Harmanpreet Singh and Jarmanpreet, he was on target scoring back-to-back goals. The duo helped in taking India's lead to a formidable 5-0 while Dilpreet scored his hat-trick in the 44th minute extending India's lead to 6-0.

The final quarter saw an array of goals scored by India which helped them seal the victory with nine goals. India dominated the match with 16 shots on goal and 25 circle entries.

BAYERN THRASH STUTTGART TO MAINTAIN TOP SPOT IN BUNDESLIGA

Berlin | Agencies

Serge Gnabry's hat-trick and a brace from Robert Lewandowski helped Bayern Munich to defend its top spot after cruising 5-0 past Stuttgart in the 16th round in the Bundesliga.

The Bavarians took the reins on the road from the starting whistle as Gnabry posed a lot of danger after coming close in the 10th minute before Stuttgart goalkeeper Florian Muller denied the German international 10 minutes later in a late Tuesday encounter.

Stuttgart tried to hold the pace but had to wait until the 25th minute before unmarked Omar Marmoush squandered a presentation chance with all time and space.

With the result, front runners Bayern Munich overwinter on the top spot after having established a nine-point advantage. Meanwhile, Stuttgart stay on the 15th spot and in touching distance to the bottom three. Elsewhere, Mainz returned to winning ways after beating Hertha Berlin on the goals from Jae-Sung Lee, Alexander Hack,



Silvan Widmer and Jean-Paul Boetius. Bottom side Arminia

Bielefeld secured its second win of the season after edging Bochum 2-

0 and Cologne came back twice to see off Wolfsburg 3-2.

LABUSCHAGNE, SHAHEEN AFRIDI MAKE BIG RANKINGS PUSH IN TEST CRICKET

Dubai | Agencies

Australian cricketer Marnus Labuschagne is the new No.2-ranked Test batter in the world in the ICC Player Rankings, overtaking his senior team-mate Steve Smith and New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson, while Travis Head's century in the first Ashes Test also sees him making massive gains.

Tall Pakistan bowler Shaheen Afridi continues to rise in rankings, with the paceman making yet another jump in the men's Test bowling rankings after a fine Mirpur performance against Bangladesh.

Afridi finished with 1/3 and 2/31 in the match, and rose two spots to third, leapfrogging Australian quick Josh Hazlewood and Black Caps pacer Tim Southee. Afridi's compatriot Hasan Ali also made a late climb into the top-10. New Australian skipper Pat Cummins kept his No.1 bowling ranking after a seven-wicket performance against



England at The Gabba in Brisbane. Below the top-10, bowlers across the two Test matches made significant leaps, most notably Sajid Khan who moved up 52 places. England

pacer Ollie Robinson's four wickets earned him a four-place jump. Labuschagne made a move after the first Ashes Test, climbing to No. 2 from the fourth spot. The perform-

ance meant the right-hander overtook Smith and Williamson who dropped down a place each.

Head's century saw him take a leap of 16 spots to jump into the top-10. He is currently tied on the 10th spot alongside South African Quinton de Kock.

The men's T20I batting rankings also witnessed some big changes with Pakistan skipper Babar Azam being dethroned from the top spot. Azam has struggled for runs in the first two T20Is against West Indies, scoring a duck and seven in the first two matches of the series. He has dropped to the third spot with England's Dawid Malan and South Africa's Aiden Markram overtaking him.

In the bowling charts, Shadab Khan has taken huge strides, jumping five spots to break into the top-10. He is currently ranked ninth in the world after performances of 3/17 and 0/22 in the two matches against the West Indies in Karachi.

India to face Pakistan in their 2022 ICC Women's WC opener

Dubai | Agencies

India will take on arch-rival Pakistan in their opening clash of the 2022 ICC Women's Cricket World Cup on March 6 at Tauranga, New Zealand.

The quadrennial event will be held from March 4 to April 3 in 2023 across six cities - Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, Tauranga and Wellington - with host New Zealand taking on the West Indies in the opener. The first set of games will also see two massive rivalries take the centre stage, with Australia taking on England at Seddon Park in Hamilton on March 5 and India facing Pakistan in Tauranga on the fol-



lowing day. Australia, England, South Africa and India qualified for the event on the basis of their position in ICC Women's Championship 2017-20 while New Zealand automatically qualified as hosts. On the basis of the ODI Team Rankings, Bangladesh,

Pakistan and West Indies were the final three teams to book their berths for the World Cup after 2021 Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier was called off due to a Covid-related uncertainty. The tournament will be played in the league format, where all eight teams will face each other once, at the end of which the top four teams will qualify for the semi-finals. The first semi-final will be played at The Basin Reserve in Wellington on March 30 while The Hagley Oval in Christchurch will host the second semi-final (March 31) and the final (April 3). Both the semi-finals and the finals will have a reserve day in place.

Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry becomes NBA's all-time 3-point leader

New York | Agencies

Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry has become the National Basketball Association's all-time 3-point leader.

Curry, in his team's match against New York Knicks late on Tuesday night at the Madison Square Garden, reached 2,974 career 3-pointers, hitting his second three of the night with seven minutes and 33 seconds remaining in the first quarter to surpass Ray Allen's career mark (2,973 threes).

Curry set the 3-point record in his 789th career regular season game, 511 contests fewer than Allen (1,300) appeared in. In addition to the all-time 3-point mark, Curry has now hit a three in 152 consecutive regular season games played,



the second-longest 3-point streak in NBA history behind only his own previous streak of 157 consecutive games.

Curry also holds the NBA record for most career 3-point field goals made in the post-season (470) and most threes in the NBA Finals (121). He owns four of the top five single-season 3-point marks and is the only

player in NBA history to hit more than 400 threes in a single campaign (402 in 2015-16). Curry previously held the NBA record for threes in a single game with 13 before being eclipsed by teammate Klay Thompson (14). After he achieved the landmark, congratulations came quickly from the basketball fraternity.

SEHER ATWAL TAKES SLENDER LEAD IN 15TH LEG OF WPGT

Kolkata | Agencies

Seher Atwal, who had a breakthrough win earlier this year, took a slender one-shot lead in the first round of the 15th and final leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour at the Royal Calcutta Golf Club.

Seher, who missed making the final Stage of the Ladies by one shot, carded 3-over 75 on the first day at the historic venue, and was one shot ahead of Neha Tripathi and two clear of last week's winner, Ridhima Dilawari.

Four players including two amateurs, Smriti Bhargav and Arima Manral, were tied for fourth at 6-over 78. The two pros in the bunch were Lakhmeher Pardesi and Trimann Saluja. Seher, winner of the fourth leg this year in Pune, overcame a double bogey and three others bogeys in her 75. Her two birdies came on the Par-5 fourth and Par-4 12th. Neha Tripathi also had two



birdies but she also dropped six bogeys in her 76, while Ridhima had just one birdie on the Par-5 15th and six bogeys on a day when the scores were modest.

Jyotsana Singh and Rhea Purvi Saravanan were tied for eighth at 79 each, while five players were together at 8-over 80 in Tied-10th place. The back nine played rather

difficult and only Seher was even for it while all others went over par for the stretch. No player birdied the 18th. This is the 15th and final leg of the 2021 calendar.



INDIA'S OFFICIAL OSCARS ENTRY 'PEBBLES' NOMINATED FOR SPIRIT AWARDS

Chennai | Agencies

Director Vinothraj's Tamil film 'Pebbles', which is India's official entry to the Oscars, has now been nominated for the prestigious Spirit Awards as well.

The nomination has thrilled its producer Vignesh Shivan, who has now expressed a desire to see his film emerge a winner at the Spirit Awards as well.

Taking to Twitter, Vignesh Shivan first congratulated his film's director Vinoth Raj. He said, 'Yaaaaaaaassssssss! We got nominated for the Spirit Awards along with some amazing films from all over the world! Well done P S Vinothraj."

He then wrote, "So so happy to see this. Thanking the Film Independent jury for nominating our film. We also want to win the same. Waiting to see Pedro Almodovar on the Red Carpet."

Along with 'Pebbles', the other films that have been nominated under the Best International Film category are 'Compartment No 6' (Finland), 'Drive My Car' (Japan), 'Parallel Mothers' (Spain), 'Petite Maman' (France) and 'Prayers for the Stolen' (Mexico).



Pointing out that 'Parasite' had won the Best Foreign Film award at the Spirit

Awards last year, Shivan said, "Proud to see our film 'Pebbles' being nominated in the

same category! wishing to win this highly respected & prestigious award."



'KBC 13': Badshah shares the story behind his stage name

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Rapper Badshah reveals the story behind his stage name on the show 'Kaun Banega Crorepati 13'. He appears as a special guest along with singer Neha Kakkar for the 'Shaandaar Shukriya' episode.

During a conversation, host Amitabh Bachchan asked Badshah whose real name is Aditya Prateek Singh Sisodia, the reason behind his stage name.

Revealing the reason behind having 'Badshah' as his stage name, the rapper said: "I initially

had a name 'Cool Equal' which was my e-mail ID, I then used it as my stage name. After that, I was looking to change the name and look for a new stage name. I am a big fan of Shah Rukh sir (Shah Rukh Khan) and around that time, his film 'Badshah' (1999) was released. From then on, my stage name, 'Badshah' was born."

Later, Big B asked Badshah that if he was a rapper, what would his stage name be? To this Badshah said: "AB Baby."

"Kaun Banega Crorepati 13" airs on Sony Entertainment Television.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The teaser of John Abraham-starrer 'Attack' has been released and it promises an action-packed saga of a supercop whose singular focus is to ward off terrorist threats on Indian soil.

The one-minute 23-second teaser starts off on a thrilling note as it shows devastation unleashed by a terrorist attack that leaves John's character in ruins.

The lead character then undergoes radical cybernetic modifications to enhance his biomechanisms in order to fight terrorism. Laced with high-voltage action, the film also stars Jacqueline Fernandez and Rakul Preet Singh.

Ahead of the teaser release, John deleted all his Instagram posts without revealing the reason. Although he removed all of his pictures and videos along with his profile image, he has not deleted his Instagram Reels.

The film written and directed by Lakshya Raj Anand is slated to hit the screens on January 26.

'ATTACK' TEASER: JOHN ABRAHAM PLAYS SUPER COP WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Sunny Leone completes shooting for Tamil horror-comedy 'Oh My Ghost'



Chennai | Agencies

Actress Sunny Leone has finished shooting for director Yuvan's Tamil historical horror-comedy 'Oh My Ghost'.

Talking to IANS, director Yuvan said, "Sunny Leone plays a queen-like character in the film. This is a fantasy film. So, the role that she plays is not representative of any region or time period."

The director explains that he was looking for a person who could look supercilious and at the same time cool and that was when he realised Sunny Leone would be perfect for the character.

The director says Sunny loved the script. "She laughed so much during the narration of the script and it was evident that she liked it," says the director.

Sunny, for her part, says, "There are some films that are able to make you chuckle at a script level. I enjoyed doing the film for just that reason."

"It's scary in parts and so funny in others. I think that's such a clever combination. It's hard to make people laugh and I did put in the extra effort in nailing the timing. Besides that, I also learnt my dialogues with my diction coach. It's a special film and I can't wait for the world to see it." The film, which will feature actors Satish, Dharsha Gupta, Mottai Rajendran, Ramesh Thilak, Arjunan and Thanga Durai, has been produced by D. Veera Sakthi and K. Sasikumar of VAU Media Entertainment and White Horse Studios.

NTR JR DUBS IN HINDI IN HIS OWN VOICE FOR FIRST TIME

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Telugu star NTR Jr has for the first time dubbed in Hindi in his own voice for filmmaker S.S. Rajamouli's magnum opus 'RRR'. NTR Jr has also dubbed in Telugu, Tamil and Kannada.

The film is his first multi-lingual pan-India film and it marks the first time he dubbed in Hindi, Kannada and Tamil. The 'Aravinda Sametha' actor made every possible effort to nail the diction, intonation and the voice modulation so that his colloquial slang doesn't sound unfamiliar in the three languages -- Hindi, Tamil and Kannada. It was Rajamouli, who wanted NTR Jr to dub in all languages.



In 'RRR', the actor will be seen essaying the role of 'Komaram Bheem', a freedom fighter and the protector of the Gond tribe. His fans wait with bated breath to watch him play a fearless hero, who locks horns with a tiger.

"RRR" marks the fourth collaboration of the filmmaker and NTR Jr. The superstar has gone to extreme lengths right from performing dangerous stunts to putting on weight in a short span of time. The forthcoming film stars the biggest names of the Indian movie industry including Ram Charan, Ajay Devgn, and Alia Bhatt.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shiva Pathania opens up on portraying Maa Kaali in the show 'Baal Shiv'. She says this role for her is like a blessing and she feels honoured to play it on screen.

Shivya says: "Playing the role of Devi Parvati is a big opportunity and responsibility but when I was told that I would also be transforming into the 'roop' of Maa Kali, I felt overwhelmed. I am a huge devotee of Maa Kali for her fierce and strong personality. The entire look has come out aesthetically and visually appealing. And I am sure the viewers will find this track quite intriguing and engaging."

The upcoming track of 'Baal Shiv' will focus on the story of Devi Parvati, who will transform into the fierce and strong Maa Kaali. Shivya shares: "It is a hectic and long process and took me more than five hours

to transform into the character of Maa Kali. However, you do not feel tired because of the energy that the character holds. I must give credit to the entire team that has worked hard to make this whole look possible."

Speaking about her challenges to get into the Kaali avatar, the actress adds: "It was a huge responsibility to portray the role of Maa Kali as it is one of the most interesting highlights in the show. In real life, I am an extremely calm person which helps me to essay the role of Devi Parvati. However, Maa Kaali's portrayal required me to showcase a lot of aggression and anger. There were various takes where I had to scream in anger. I eventually got a bad throat. But, in the end, it is all worth it because the entire track has been shot beautifully to capture the emotion and engage the viewers."

'Baal Shiv' airs on &TV.



Richa Chadha