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CABINET MINISTER SWAMI PRASAD MAURYA QUILTS BJP IN UP BATTLE GETS FIERCE

MORE RESIGNATIONS ROLL OUT IN BJP

Lucknow: Resignations are rolling out in the BJP in Uttar Pradesh with an alarming frequency, days ahead of the state goes to the polls in seven phases between February 10 and March 7. After Swami Prasad Maurya and Roshan Lal Varma, yet another BJP MLA - Brijesh Prajapati from Tindwari in Banda - has said that he has submitted his resignation from the saffron party. Varma, Prajapati and a host of other OBC MLAs met Swami Prasad Maurya to discuss the political situation. The MLAs, including Bhagwati Sharan Sagar from Bilhaur, said that the Yogi Adityanath government is not catering to the interests of the farmers, OBCs and other weaker sections of the society. "We will go wherever Swami Prasad Maurya goes. We came with him from BSP to BJP and our future journey will continue with him," said the legislators. Another minister, Dharam Singh Salni, is also believed to be ready to quit, but there is no confirmation of the same yet.

Team Absolute | Lucknow
In a major jolt to the BJP in Uttar Pradesh ahead of the Assembly elections, Cabinet Minister Swami Prasad Maurya resigned from office on Tuesday. His daughter Sanghmitra Maurya is a



NCP to ally with SP for UP polls; contest in Goa, Manipur, Pawar

"Of the five states going to the polls, we shall be contesting in three states. We plan to work out alliances with like-minded parties. We are in talks with the Congress and the Trinamool Congress in Goa. The stage is set for a change" from the current rule by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The masses want 'parivartan', and UP is all set for a change (of power). People there are not happy with the BJP's communal style of politics. Polarisation on communal lines is being done in UP ahead of the elections, and the voters will give a befitting reply to this. Swami Prasad Maurya's resignation is just a beginning and the BJP will get many more such jolts in the run-up to the elections."

BJP MP from Badaun. Sources said that Swami Prasad Maurya was likely to join Samajwadi Party. In his resignation letter, he said that he was upset at the sidelining of Dalits and weaker sections of society. He had been upset because his son Utkarsh Maurya had not been "suitably accommodated" in the Yogi Adityanath government. Swami Prasad Maurya, once one of the senior-most leaders in the

NO TALKS WITH TMC ON ALLIANCE: GOA CONGRESS

Panaji: The Congress in Goa has denied reports of talks with the Trinamool Congress over a possible alliance for the upcoming Assembly elections scheduled to be held on February 14. Speculation of an alliance between the two parties was triggered after Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) supremo Sharad Pawar told reporters in Mumbai that his party is in talks with the Congress and the Trinamool Congress for a pre-poll alliance for the upcoming elections in the coastal state. "We discussed coming together in Goa and the discussions are still on. No decision has been made yet. Goa needs a change and the BJP government needs to go," Pawar was quoted as saying on Tuesday. When asked for his reaction, the AICC in-charge of Goa, Dinesh Gundu Rao, said that Sharad Pawar would be in a best position to comment on the development.

Chandigarh: To position himself as the chief ministerial candidate of the Congress in Punjab, state unit chief Navjot Singh Sidhu on Tuesday said it is the people who will choose the next Chief Minister of the state. Unveiling the first set of plans in his Punjab Model with focus on resurrection of Punjab, Sidhu, in the absence of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and his Cabinet colleagues, told the media here: "Punjab Model is people's model, an effort to give a roadmap to return power to people."

Third Covid wave in India: Omicron or Delta?

India on Tuesday recorded 1,68,063 new Covid cases, taking the total tally to 8,21,446. Although the fresh infections were 6.4 per cent less than Monday when the country logged 1,79,723, the weekly positivity rate has climbed to 8.85 per cent and the daily positivity rate has declined to 10.64 per cent. On the other hand, 4,461 Omicron cases were recorded from 28 states.

DELHI ORDERS PRIVATE OFFICES TO WORK FROM HOME

New Delhi: In the wake of spike in Covid-19 cases, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) has directed all private offices, barring those under exempted categories in the national capital, to send their employees to work from home. "All private offices, except those which are falling under the 'Exempted Category' as prescribed in DDMA's GRAP order dated 08.08.21. The practice of work from home shall be followed," the order read. The exempted categories include healthcare workers, those involved in essential services, media persons, judges and judicial officers, staff in the offices of diplomats of various countries. Government offices in the national capital are already working with 50 per cent capacity.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

While the recent surge in Covid cases seen in India is largely due to Omicron, it does not mean that Delta has weakened, experts contended on Tuesday. So can we say this is an Omicron wave? While it is relatively easy to test for Covid-19 through a RT-PCR or RAT test, figuring out which variant is responsible requires genome sequencing. Data sent to the open access GISAID genomic surveillance showed that more than 30 per cent of the sequenced samples from India were Omicron during the month of December. Health experts noted that going by the trend, the majority of the positive cases are likely to be Omicron but confirmation is pending.



LATA MANGESHKAR TESTS COVID POSITIVE, ADMITTED TO ICU

Mumbai: Veteran playback singer and Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar has tested positive and has been admitted to a Mumbai hospital, her family members said here on Tuesday. The 92-year old has been admitted to the ICU of the Breach Candy Hospital, close to her home in south Mumbai. She has mild symptoms and her condition is described as stable, with a team of senior doctors attending to her.

'MOLNUP RAVIR TO BE GIVEN TO SENIOR CITIZENS'
Molnupiravir, which prevents hospitalization and ICU admissions, can be given to senior citizens, particularly those with comorbidities, Dr NK Arora, Chairman of COVID-19 Working Group of NTAGI, told news agency. However, it should not be given to people of the reproductive age, he further pointed out. Last month, Indian drug regulator Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) approved the anti-viral drug Molnupiravir for restricted emergency use against coronavirus.

DEADLINE FOR FILING INCOME TAX RETURN EXTENDED TILL MARCH 15

New Delhi: The Centre on Tuesday extended the deadlines for several compliances, including the filing of Income Tax Return (ITR) for the assessment year 2021-22. The due date of furnishing of returns of income for the assessment year 2021-22 has now been extended to March 15, 2022. In a statement, the Ministry of Finance said the decision has been taken after considering difficulties reported by the taxpayers and other stakeholders due to the Covid situation and in electronic filing of various reports of audit under the provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961. Notably, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has decided to further extend the due dates of furnishing audit report under any provision of the Act for the previous year (2020-21) to February 15, 2022.

PM SECURITY BREACH IN PUNJAB

SC QUESTIONS CENTRE'S MOVE

Team Absolute | New Delhi
The Supreme Court on Wednesday will announce the name of the retired top court judge who will head the committee to investigate Prime Minister Narendra Modi's security breach in Punjab last week. On Monday, after a detailed hearing in the matter, a bench, headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli, said the court will set up a committee headed by a retired top court judge to probe the PM's security breach and asked both the Centre and Punjab govern-



ment to not move ahead with their respective inquiries into the matter. The bench said: "We are taking the PM's security breach very seriously." It added that it will ask the committee to submit its report to it within a short span.

Advocate General D.S. Patwalia, representing the Punjab government, complained against show-cause notices to its Chief Secretary and the DGP. He urged the top court to form an independent committee to probe the matter. "Hang me if I am guilty... but don't condemn me unheard," submitted Patwalia. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, defended the show-cause notices issued by the Central government. However, the top court expressed its displeasure at Centre's stand, questioning what is the point of asking the court to examine the matter if the Centre wanted to go ahead on its own?

SC TO HEAR PIL FOR HATE SPEECHES ON WED

New Delhi: The Supreme Court will, on Wednesday, hear a PIL seeking probe against the hate speeches targeting Muslim community delivered between December 17-19, last year, at the Haridwar Dharam Sansad and in Delhi by an organisation called Hindu Yuva Vahini. A bench, headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli will hear the plea filed by Qurban Ali and former Patna High Court judge Anjana Prakash, seeking directions for an independent, impartial and credible probe into the matter by an SIT. On Monday, the top court had agreed to hear the petition.

DRDO FLIGHT TESTS MAN PORTABLE ANTI-TANK GUIDED MISSILE

Team Absolute | New Delhi
The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Tuesday successfully flight tested the final deliverable configuration of Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM), officials said. The indigenously developed anti-tank missile is a low weight, fire and forget missile, and is launched from a man portable launcher, integrated with thermal sight. The missile impacted the designated target and destroyed it. The final impact event was captured on camera and the test has validated the minimum range success- fully. An official said the present test was to prove the consistent performance for the minimum range, and all the mission objectives were met. The missile has miniaturised infrared imaging seeker and advanced avionics for on-board control and guidance. The missile performance has been proven for the maximum range in earlier test trials.

In a first, India allows US pork import

Team Absolute | New Delhi
For the first time, India will allow the import of pork from the US, a decision taken at the US-India Trade Policy Forum held in New Delhi last November. US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced that the government of India has agreed to allow the import of American pork and pork products, removing a longstanding barrier in agricultural trade. Taking to Twitter on Monday night, Tai said that she and Vilsack "are very happy with India's agreement to allow US pork imports for the first time. This is great news for our producers as we continue to strengthen our trade relationship with India." Thank you (Union Minister of Consumer Affairs) Piyush Goyal for facilitating this important development. In fiscal year 2021, the US exported more than \$1.6 billion of agricultural products to India.



► Temperatures of the last 30 years (1991-2020) were close to 0.9 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level.
► Regions with most above average temperatures include from the west coast of the US and Canada to north-eastern Canada and Greenland, as well as large parts of central and northern Africa and the Middle East.
► The most below-average temperatures were found in western and easternmost Siberia, Alaska, over the central and eastern Pacific - concurrent with La Nina conditions at the beginning and the end of the year - as well as in most of Australia and in parts of Antarctica.

Last seven years were hottest years on record: EU's Copernicus

The annual average temperature was 0.3 degrees Celsius above the temperature of the 1991-2020 reference period, and 1.1-1.2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level of 1850-1900, the C3S data showed.

Brussels | Agencies
Last seven years were the seven warmest on record worldwide, according to the annual findings released by the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S). The findings showed that 2021 was the fifth warmest, followed closely by 2015 and 2018. Europe experienced its warmest summer on record in 2021. It also marked a number of extreme weather events including a heatwave in the Mediterranean and deadly flooding in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and beyond. The other previous warmest summers in the continent were in 2010 and 2018. Globally, the first five months of 2021 experienced relatively low temperatures compared to the recent very warm years. From June until



October, however, monthly temperatures were consistently at least amongst the fourth warmest on record. Further, the C3S also reported that atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations continued to rise during 2021, with carbon dioxide (CO2) levels reaching an annual global column-averaged record of approximately 414 ppm, and methane (CH4) an annual record of approximately 1,876 ppb. Carbon emissions from wildfires worldwide amounted overall to 1,750 megatonnes, especially fuelled by fires in Siberia. This was slightly higher than last year (1,750 megatonnes of carbon emissions), although the trend since 2003 is declining, the data showed.



DEMANDING MONEY FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A HOUSE 'DOWRY DEMAND', RULES SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday observed that demand of money for the purpose of construction of a house is a dowry demand, which is punishable under Section 304-B of the Indian Penal Code. A bench, headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and Hima Kohli, said: "In the facts of the instant case, we are of the opinion that the trial court has correctly interpreted the demand for money raised by the respondents on the deceased for construction of a house as falling within the definition of the word 'dowry'."

Justice Kohli, who authored the judgment on behalf of the bench, noted that it cannot be lost sight of that the accused had been constantly tormenting the woman, who had set herself afire in April 2002 and died, and asking her to approach her family members for money to build a house and it was only on their per-



sistence and insistence that she was compelled to ask them to contribute some amount for the construction.

She further added that in this context, the word "dowry" ought to be ascribed an expansive meaning so as to encompass any demand made on a woman, whether in respect of a property or a valuable security of any nature. In this matter, the trial court

convicted husband Jogendra and father-in-law Badri Prasad of the deceased under Sections 304-B, 306 (abatement of suicide) and 498-A of the IPC. The accused challenged their conviction in the Madhya Pradesh High Court, which held that the demand of money for construction of a house cannot be treated as a demand for dowry and set aside

the conviction of the accused for abatement of suicide and 304-B.

The state government challenged this order in the top court.

The top court said: "The High Court fell in an error in drawing an inference that since the deceased had herself joined her husband and father-in-law, respondents herein and asked her mother or uncle to contribute money to construct a house, such demand cannot be treated as a dowry demand." Justice Kohli said it was not a case of complicity but a case of sheer helplessness faced by the deceased in such adverse circumstances. "Accordingly, the judgment of conviction and sentence passed by the trial court in respect of both the respondents under Section 304-B and Section 498-A IPC, is restored. However, the sentence imposed on them by the trial court of RI for life is reduced to RI for seven years, which is the minimum term prescribed for an offence under Section 304-B IPC," the verdict said.

MAYAWATI NOT TO CONTEST ASSEMBLY POLLS

LUCKNOW | Agencies

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati and party MP Satish Chandra Mishra will not contest the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh.

Satish Chandra Mishra told reporters here that the BSP chief will ensure the party's victory in the five poll-bound states while he will also focus on the party's campaign and strategy for elections.

Mishra, however, exuded confidence that the party will form the next government in Uttar Pradesh. "Former Chief Minister Mayawati and I will not contest the Assembly elections. If Samajwadi Party does not have 400 candidates, how will they win 400 seats? Neither SP nor BJP is going to power, BSP is going to form the govt in Uttar Pradesh," he said.



Gold worth Rs 72 lakh seized from three women at Hyderabad Airport

Hyderabad | Agencies

Customs officials at Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport on Tuesday seized 1.48 kg gold, valued at Rs 72.80 lakh, from three women passengers who arrived from Dubai. The gold was seized in three separate cases, Customs officials said. Two of the passengers had hid the gold inside their undergarments while the third had concealed the gold in the rectum. The Custom officials registered three cases of gold smuggling against the women, who had arrived by different flights. Further investigation is in progress, they said. This is the latest in a series of incidents of gold smuggling detected at the airport during the last couple of days.

The officials on Sunday recovered gold in paste form from a passenger who had concealed it in the bandages tied to calves of both



the legs.

They seized 970 grams of gold valued at Rs 47.55 lakh from a male passenger who arrived from Sharjah.

They recovered 442.6 grams of gold valued at Rs 21.7 lakh from a passenger who arrived from Dubai on Monday. The gold, in paste form, was concealed inside a specially stitched pocket of the underwear.

DHANKHAR AGAIN SUMMONS CS, DGP TO RAJ BHAWAN ON WEDNESDAY

Kolkata | Agencies

Expressing his displeasure over Chief Secretary Hari Krishna Dwivedi and DGP Manoj Malviya 'skipping' a meeting scheduled with him at 5 pm on Monday, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday asked the two top state government officials to be present at the Raj Bhawan at 11 am on Wednesday.

Dhankhar had summoned the two top officials of the state government to brief him about an incident involving BJP Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari, who was allegedly stopped from entering Netaji village under Binpur block in Jhargram district on Friday.

However, the two officials sent identical messages to Dhankhar that read: "I have been directed to inform you that most of the senior officers are currently down with Corona and their family members are affected, while the remaining are engaged with Gangasagar duty and management of Covid situation. In view of the above, it is



requested to reschedule the meeting with senior officers after this current spate of Corona cases is being sent." On Tuesday, Dhankhar again sent a letter to them, saying: "Surely, this is serious dereliction of duty. There is no reason for them not to respond to the pointed issues raised. Both CS and DGP are to be present in the meeting tomorrow at 11 am and if both continue to be 'in isolation', they should ensure presence of ACS Home and police officials next to the DGP in the meeting, fully updated on the issue already flagged."

Surprised at the 'lackadaisical attitude' of the two top officials, the Governor had earlier wrote: "The content and tenor could not have been more farcical or bereft of fact content. Their action ridicules and affronts the office of Governor, apart from being in outrage of their conduct legal regime. Boycotting a meeting of the Constitutional head, on such flimsy premise, is antithetical to governance in accordance with constitution and law."

DOCTORS GO ON STRIKE, HARYANA ENFORCES ESMA

Chandigarh: Government doctors across Haryana went on strike on Tuesday over their demands and Health Minister Anil Vij subsequently enforced the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA). According to one of their key demands, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar also pitched in by giving in-principle approval to the creation of specialist cadre post for MD or MS doctors. Also, the doctors will not be given any administrative work. An official statement said the government would create a special sub cadre for specialists who will be designated as consultant or senior consultants. Earlier, a doctor with MBBS qualification and MD/MS qualification used to be in the same cadre. However, with the creation of specialist cadre post, these doctors will be able to focus on their work which will definitely protect their interest, it said. Moreover, the specialist cadre doctors will now be posted in big and renowned hospitals, rather than in Primary Health Centres, which will ensure their swift promotions thereby nurturing their talent, it said.



Coldwave conditions likely over north India: IMD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday forecast coldwave conditions as very likely over Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh during January 13 to 15 and over northeast Rajasthan during January 12 to 14.

"Cold day conditions in isolated pockets very likely over Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh, west Uttar Pradesh, north Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat during the next two days," the forecast read. Besides, dense fog in some/isolated pockets in night and morning hours is very likely over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh during next 4-5

days, and over north Rajasthan and north Madhya Pradesh during next two days.

"Two fresh Western Disturbances very likely to affect northwest India, the 1st from January 16 and likely to cause isolated to scattered precipitation on January 16 and 17, the 2nd from January 18 and likely to cause light/moderate scattered to fairly widespread precipitation over Western Himalayan Region and light isolated to scattered rainfall over adjoining plains for subsequent 2-3 days," the IMD said.

Isolated light/moderate rainfall/snowfall is very likely over Western Himalayan Region on 11th and dry weather for subsequent 4-5

days, it added.

"Scattered to fairly widespread light/moderate rainfall is very likely over Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha West Bengal & Sikkim, Telangana and coastal Andhra Pradesh during January 11 to 14. Isolated heavy rainfall is very likely over south Chhattisgarh on January 11, over Odisha on January 11 and 13, and over Telangana during January 11 to 13." "Isolated thunderstorms with lightning/hail very likely over Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar & Gangetic West Bengal on January 11, over Odisha on January 11 and 13, and over sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim on January 12," the IMD forecast said.

ALLIANCE WITH AKALI DAL IN PUNJAB COST BJP HEAVILY: HARDEEP PURI

New Delhi: Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday said that he "personally" feels that alliance with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in Punjab had cost the BJP heavily.

Puri, the BJP election co-ordinator for Punjab, said: "It is my personal view that our alliance in the past had cost us heavily in many ways. Today with the people who are joining us, we will take Punjab on a fast path of development." He said that earlier in the 117-member Punjab Assembly, the BJP used to contest 22-23 seats and won three seats in last Assembly polls but now the party has left with just two MLA and five per cent vote share. He claimed that a new political situation is developing in Punjab and in this, with new alliance partners and people joining the party, the BJP will go up and up.



DELHI GOVT WILL NOT IMPOSE LOCKDOWN: CM

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday reiterated that the Delhi government is fully prepared to deal with any kind of problem posed by the Covid-19 situation. However, it will not impose a lockdown.

"We are fully prepared. We have the ability to extend up to 37,000 beds if necessary. Our 37,000-bed capacity has yet to be utilised. If necessary, we may prepare 10000-11000 ICUs in Delhi by preparing 37,000 beds. However, there isn't much of a need for that right now,"



the CM said in a statement after reviewing the Covid preparedness at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital on Tuesday afternoon.

He added: "Today, I held a meeting with Dr Suresh Kumar, Director, LNJP and the entire team at LNJP Hospital. I came here to take stock of the Covid preparations. It treated the highest

number of patients successfully. More than 22,000 patients have returned home after receiving treatment at this facility."

Speaking on the Covid-19 restrictions, he said, "I would like to convey to them that these restrictions were imposed under compulsion. I understand that we have to maintain a very delicate balance at this time. On the one hand, it concerns the employment of people, and if restrictions are imposed, people's jobs will be jeopardised. On the other hand, if we do not impose limitations, your health and life will be jeopardised."

80-YR-OLD WOMAN SENTENCED FOR CRUELTY TO DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

▶ THE SUPREME COURT ON TUESDAY OBSERVED THAT A WOMAN METING OUT CRUELTY ON ANOTHER WOMAN BECOMES A MORE SERIOUS OFFENCE, AS IT UPHELD THE CONVICTION OF THE (NOW) 80-YEAR-OLD MOTHER-IN-LAW OF THE DECEASED, UNDER THE IPC'S SECTION 498A, AND SENTENCED HER TO THREE MONTHS IMPRISONMENT.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A bench, of Justices M.R. Shah and B.V. Nagarathna, said: "Being a lady, the appellant, who was the mother-in-law, ought to have been more sensitive vis-a-vis her daughter-in-law. When an offence has been committed by a woman by meting out cruelty to another woman, i.e., the daughter-in-law, it becomes a more serious offence. If a lady, i.e., the mother-in-law herein does not protect another lady, the other lady,

i.e., daughter-in-law would become vulnerable."

Finding the mother-in-law guilty of committing cruelty on daughter-in-law while her husband was abroad, the bench, emphasising that no leniency is required to be shown on mother-in-law, said: "The victim was staying all alone with her in-laws. Therefore, it was the duty of the appellant (mother-in-law), being the mother-in-law and her family to take care of her daughter-in-law, rather than harassing and/or torturing and/or meting out

cruelty to her daughter-in-law regarding jewels or on other issues."

Convicting the woman, the bench said instead of one year imprisonment for the offence under Section 498A IPC, the appellant Meera is directed to undergo imprisonment of three months with fine and the default sentence, as imposed by the trial court. The bench also cancelled the bail bonds of the 80-year-old woman and asked her to surrender before the appropriate court within a period of four weeks.

Calcutta HC revises its order on Gangasagar Mela

Kolkata | Agencies

In a revised order by the Calcutta High Court on Gangasagar Mela, the division bench of Chief Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Justice Kesong Doma Bhutia dropped leader of the opposition Suvednu Adhikari from a three-member committee formed by the court on January 7 to monitor compliance of Covid restrictions at Gangasagar Mela in Sagar Island.

The court has instead reconstituted it to a two-member committee comprising former Justice Samapti Chatterjee and the member secretary of the West Bengal Legal Services Authority.

The Trinamool Congress without naming Suvednu Adhikari had objected to the presence of any political personality because that might create problem in taking the right decision. With the High Court order, the ruling Trinamool Congress is



considering it to be its moral victory.

Earlier in its order the court had asked the state government to issue notification declaring the Sagar Island as "Notified area" within a period of 24 hours from the time of judgment.

The order also asked the Home Secretary of the State of West Bengal to ensure that restrictions issued by the State are duly implemented without any lapse in Gangasagar Island during the Mela period.

The Home Secretary has also been asked to issue advertisements in the daily newspapers having wide circulation in the state and also through the electronic media, making the public aware of the risk of visiting Gangasagar Island between January 8 and 16, 2022 in large gathering and will make an appeal to them to stay safe and desist from visiting the Gangasagar Island during this period.



SAVING LIVES OF PEOPLE FROM CORONA IS PARAMOUNT: CM



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan while reviewing the corona control in Mantralaya said that the safety of the lives of the people is paramount. We will leave no stone unturned for this. Chouhan said that corona tests should be done properly. Based on the assessment of the arrangements, a strategy should be made to deal with Covid. At present, schools are being opened with 50 percent capacity. Night curfew is in force. A decision regarding closing classes of 1 to 8 will be taken later. Chief Minister said that the Covid Care Centres should work actively. Chouhan said that on January 16, vaccination report of cent percent children of 15-18 year should be given. Improve the percentage where the situa-

tion is not good.

Chouhan said that cases are increasing day by day in the state. At present, the positivity rate of 3.04 percent is coming in the state. About 650 cases are coming daily in Indore, 450 in Bhopal, 25 in Gwalior, 30 in Jabalpur and 32 in Ujjain. Senior citizens are facing problems. Chouhan discussed other arrangements including oxygen supported beds, home isolation in the state. There are 305 patients in isolation beds in the state and a total of 450 are admitted, 8606 are active cases. It was told in the meeting that there are 92 patients in the Covid Care Centre in Indore, 8 patients are in Covid Care Centre in Bhopal. There are 6 in Gwalior, 33 are in home isolation in Jabalpur, 2 patients in Ujjain and 5 in Sagar are in Covid Care Centre. There are 34 active cases in Rewa. All the

patients are in home isolation. There are 91 cases in Shahdol. All the patients are in home isolation. Out of 68 positives in Morena, 3 are in the hospital. There are 47 active cases in Hoshangabad.

Chouhan instructed that in home isolation, the conversation should continue with the patients, twice a day. The system should be under control. Guide patients. Give advice on what to take and what not to take.

Indore Collector said that the number will increase. Nothing to worry about. Similarly, Bhopal Collector said that patients will increase further in Bhopal. Currently 1442 are in home isolation. There has been a significant increase due to the sudden arrival of 291 cases in Gwalior. There are 644 active cases in Jabalpur. 20-25 cases are increasing daily in Sagar. Chouhan said that there will be no big fairs, festivals, programmes.

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for School Education, Inder Singh Parmar suggested to conduct online classes from 1st to 8th in schools.

Chouhan said that dignified programmes while following the rules of Covid. Better publicity of the programme should be done in print, electronic and social media also in the districts. The programme should be organised with full publicity. Chouhan said that he would also interact with the beneficiaries. Beneficiaries from 5-6 districts will participate in this.

CM PLANTED SAPLINGS WITH THE FUNCTIONARIES OF SAMAJIK NYAY PARISHAD



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Bija and Saptaparni saplings along with the functionaries of the Samajik Nyay Parishad at Smart Park at Shyamala Hills on Tuesday. Chouhan also offered Shramdaan.

Chief Minister received information about the activities of the organisation from the functionaries of the Samajik Nyay Parishad, Amir, Faiz and Pooja Prajapati. The organisation is working in the field of environment and education. The organisation also conducts various activities to control the use of polythene. Pooja Prajapati is also a skilled painter. Pooja presented a colourful portrait of Chief Minister Chouhan to him.

Saptaparni, an evergreen medicinal tree, has great importance in Ayurveda. It is used in the manufacture of various medicines.

The Bija tree is rich in medicinal properties along with being environmentally important. Its wood is used for making furniture.

Severe cold in parts of MP, light shower may continue

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Severe cold condition prevailed in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday after rain along with thunderstorm and hailstorm lashed several areas.

According to the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) regional office Bhopal, districts such as Ratlam, Dhar and Shajapur recorded lowest temperatures of 7.2 degrees Celsius, 7.8 degrees, 7.9 degrees respectively. The minimum temperature in the capital city - Bhopal was recorded at 9 degree Celsius and Indore recorded 8.1 degrees at 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday.

The Met department has predicted light rain with thunderstorms and lightning in districts - Rewa, Sidhi, Singrauli, Shahdol, Anuppur, Amarkantak, Dindori, Seoni, Balaghat and Mandla etc.

As per the IMD reports, there was no heavy rain in the state in the past 24



hours. However, light shower with thunderstorm were reported in several parts. Seoni district recorded highest (2.6 mm) rain in last 24 hours. Overall, the state has recorded around 37.7 rain fall since January 10 (8.30 a.m.). The average maximum temperature in the state was recorded at 19 degree Celsius, 5.4

notches below normal, while the minimum was recorded at 9 degree Celsius, below 1.9 from normal, in the last 24 hours. Heavy rain and hailstorm over the last few days has resulted damage of crops in many districts. The state government has started an assessment of damage.

If the Body Is Healthy Then the Mind and Thinking Will Also Be Healthy: Deora



Team Absolute | Bhopal

On the occasion of Swami Vivekananda Jayanti, the two-day 'First Jeenagar Premier League' cricket tournament was inaugurated on Tuesday at Ankur Maidan in Shivaji Nagar, capital Bhopal. On the inauguration of the Premier League, the Chief Guest, Finance, Commercial Taxes, Planning, Economics and Statistics Minister Jagdish Deora was introduced with the players of all the teams. Deora said that sports are

not only fun, but they also make the body healthy and mutual harmony increases among the youth. He said that if the body is healthy, then the mind and thinking will also be healthy. Deora described the Premier League as a unique initiative launched by the Jeenagar Sports Group. He said that the State Government is also taking several steps to encourage sports talent. Recently, the players of the state have brought laurels to the national and interna-

tional level by winning medals in the Olympics. He wished all the 8 teams and players in the Premier League all the best.

Inaugurating the cricket tournament, Deora also tried his hand at batting and hit brilliant shots all around the field. The organising committee presented a memento to the Deora. Prem Panwar, Gajendra Panwar, Rajkumar Sankalle, Sonu Panwar of the organising committee welcomed the minister and Murlis Ramswaroop Dabi expressed gratitude.

State Level Programme in Bhopal More Than 5 Lakh Youths Will Get Employment-Programmes Will Be Held in All Districts

- ▶ CM TO DISTRIBUTE SANCTION LETTERS AND COMMUNICATE WITH YOUTHS
- ▶ MUKHYAMANTRI UDYAM KRANTI YOJANA WILL ALSO BE LAUNCHED

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The ambitious campaign to connect 5 lakh 26 thousand youths of the state with employment will be launched on January 12 on Vivekananda Jayanti with employment fairs. In the state level function, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will distribute loan sanction letters to the beneficiaries of self-employment schemes on Employment Day at Kushabhau Thakre Hall, Bhopal. Chouhan will also launch Mukhyamantri Udyam Kranti Yojana in this function to be held from 1 pm. Chief Minister will also interact with the youth beneficiaries of Balaghat, Neemuch, Jhabua, Rewa, Tikamgarh and Gwalior districts. The ceremony will be broadcast live through electronic and social media.

On the occasion of Swami Vivekananda Jayanti, employment fairs will also be organised at all district headquarters, where loan sanction letters will be provided to the beneficiaries of the schemes of various departments of the government and Central government for employment to the youths.



In the employment fair, youths will be benefitted under Pradhan Mantri Swanidhi Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Srijan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, National Rural Livelihood Mission, National Urban Livelihood Mission and Mukhyamantri Gramin Path Vikreta Yojana.

The implementation of Mukhyamantri Udyam Kranti Yojana to be launched by Chouhan will be done by the Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Under the scheme, loans will be made available to the youths of the state through financial institutions at concessional interest rates. The guarantee fee will also be borne by the state government. Secretary MSME P Narhari informed that in view of the immense possibilities of self-

employment in Madhya Pradesh, many self-employment schemes are being operated through various departments and banks. In order to encourage self-employment, the ambitious Mukhyamantri Udyam Kranti Yojana has been started by the state government, in which a large number of youth will be linked to self-employment. Government agencies, financial institutions, beneficiaries, training institutes and entrepreneurship centres are working together for the successful implementation of all self-employment schemes. The objective of the employment fairs is to make the youth employable by connecting them with self-employment.

Approval letters will be given to the beneficiaries in the district level employment fairs. The persons desirous of self-employment will be introduced to the experienced people who have already established self-employment, so that the youths can get the benefit of their experiences. Along with the exhibition of materials produced by successful and established beneficiaries of self-employment schemes, counselling and guidance will be provided to the youths by subject-experts regarding self-employment. Stalls of various departments, banking institutions etc. will be set up in the fair, where the youth will get information about employment schemes, self-employment possibilities, banking facilities etc. Narhari informed that 100 beneficiaries have been invited in the district level fair in view of Covid, where adherence to local Covid guidelines will be ensured by the administration.

1,500 Attend Monkey's Funeral Feast In Madhya Pradesh Amid Covid Spike

Visuals show a funeral procession with hymns being chanted as people carry the bier to the cremation site. A youth Hari Singh also shaved his head

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Two people have been arrested for allegedly flouting Covid protocols after a crowd of about 1,500 gathered for the funeral of a monkey at a village in Madhya Pradesh.

Pained by the monkey's death on December 29, residents of Dalupura village in Rajgarh district organised last rites. Visuals show a funeral procession with hymns being chanted as people carry the bier to the cremation site. A



youth named Hari Singh also shaved his head in keeping with Hindu rituals. The monkey was not a pet, but frequented the village. In several parts of the country, monkeys are considered sacred for their association with Lord Hanuman.

Following the last rites, villagers collected money and organised a feast for more than 1,500 people. Cards were printed and distributed, inviting villagers to the feast. A video of the feast

showed hundreds of people seated in rows under a massive pandal. Women and children are seen eating as a group of men go around serving food. The gatherings took place at a time when the state is in the throes of Covid surge powered by the new fast-spreading Omicron strain and large public gatherings are banned under Section 144 of the CrPC.

Police have registered a case for violation of Covid protocols and arrested two people as many other villagers are hiding away fearing action.

Madhya Pradesh yesterday reported 2,317 fresh Covid cases and one death due to the infection over the past 24 hours. The case count was nearly 300 more than the tally of 2,039 the previous day. Five districts - Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior, Jabalpur and Sagar reported three-digit spikes in cases.

CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO FORMER PM SHASTRI



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid homage to former Prime Minister Late Lal Bahadur Shastri on his 56th death anniversary. Chouhan remembered his contribution by offering flowers on the portrait of Late Shastri in the auditorium of his residence.

Schools with 50% in-person students to continue in MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In-person classes in schools for students of all classes with 50 per cent capacity will continue in Madhya Pradesh till the state government reviews the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the coming days, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Monday.

The Chief Minister's statement came after he chaired a review meeting on rapidly increasing daily Covid cases and to take stock of the preparations in the districts reporting over 75 per cent of the total daily cases, which include Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur,

Ujjain and Gwalior, among others.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister also directed officials in the state secretariat and districts supervising the Covid protection management in view of the third wave of the pandemic to ensure that daily Covid related data are collected, prepared and updated on a daily basis. "Daily Covid cases are increasing fast in Madhya Pradesh. However, we are monitoring the situation carefully and further decisions on putting more restrictions will be taken according to the situation in the coming days. Increasing number of cases in Bhopal, Indore and other dis-

tricts is obviously a big concern for us, but the overall Covid situation in the state is under control. Schools with 50 per cent seating capacity will be allowed to continue till the next decision is taken after reviewing the situation," Chouhan said.

The state registered 2,317 new Covid cases in the last 24 hours, pushing the number of active cases to 8,599, according to the health bulletin issued by the state government on Monday evening. Out the 2,317 new cases, Indore and Bhopal reported 645 cases each, followed by Gwalior (291), Jabalpur (190), Sagar (121) and Ujjain (93), among others.

Expand the Swamitva Yojana in the Districts: Chief Minister Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that commendable work has been done in the state in the work of digitization of land records. Madhya Pradesh has been considered as the best among all the states in the Swamitva Yojana by the Government of India. Prime Minister Modi had praised the work done in Harda. Madhya Pradesh is also moving ahead in the use of drone technology. Continuously expanding drone technology, 60 drones will be made available by the end of the year. A target of 50 thousand villages has been set for drone flying and 42 thousand villages for creation of rights records. All the districts of the state should be benefitted by expanding the Swamitva Yojana. This achievement of Madhya Pradesh was also discussed in the Varanasi Conclave last month. Concrete initiative will also be taken to make citizens aware of other positive works of the department.

Chouhan was reviewing the activities of Revenue Department in Mantralaya on Tuesday. Chief Minister gave

instructions for maximum use of information technology and various useful portals in the revenue department.

The work of publishing rights records has been completed in 4971 villages in the state under the Swamitva Yojana. In the state, 8 thousand 331 maps were prepared using drone technology. At present the number of drone flying villages in the state is 13 thousand 765. After revision, 6 thousand 307 maps were finalized. 2.71 lakh rights records of 3500 villages of the state have been distributed ceremonially. PM Modi had distributed them virtually to the beneficiaries of the state on 06 October 2021. Madhya Pradesh has been considered at the forefront by the Government of India by providing 11 marks out of 11.



ing negligent employees. Ease of doing should be increased in the revenue department. In Madhya Pradesh, 8500 patwaris have been provided with laptops. Chouhan said that after natural calamities, it is very impor-

Mizoram, Haryana, Sikkim, Daman Diu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are among the states scoring 8 to 10 marks in this task. Chouhan said that the revenue department in villages is identified with Patwari. If the Patwari is available to the general public for at least two days in a week, then it will be a big relief to the general public. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that those who are excellent in performing their duties in departmental work should be rewarded and also should not lag behind in punishing negligent employees. Ease of doing should be increased in the revenue department. In Madhya Pradesh, 8500 patwaris have been provided with laptops. Chouhan said that after natural calamities, it is very impor-

tant that the actual affected persons get relief. For this it is necessary that the damage assessment is accurate. Scientific measures should be implemented in this direction. There may be some flaws in the method of damage assessment at present. To overcome these defects, a model should be developed using new technology and innovative methods. Complete this work by coordinating agriculture and revenue departments. Chouhan directed that the work of giving land to the eligible people under Mukhyamantri Awasiya Bhu-Adhikar Yojna should be done. At present, one lakh applications have been received under the scheme in the state. Chief Minister instructed that this is a scheme implemented in the larger interest. Chouhan appreciated the efforts made to simplify the procedures related to revenue works and said that information about such important decisions should be made available to the general public through various publicity mediums. Workshops should be held at district and tehsil level to make the general public aware of departmental innovations. An initiative has been taken to build a module for online settlement of land acquisition cases.



EDITOR'S SPECS

EXODUS FROM BJP

In the first major jolt to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Uttar Pradesh, senior minister and prominent leader from the backward community Swami Prasad Maurya has left the party to join the opposition ranks. The resignation has brought cheer to the opposition camps, especially in Uttar Pradesh, Goa and Uttarakhand, where many BJP legislators have resigned to join the opposition. Since these developments, the Opposition has got a major boost as the Congress is the principal opposition party in Uttarakhand and Goa. In the hill state, the party has already poached a few MLAs, and a few others are due to join the party, though the names have not been disclosed by the Congress. The Samajwadi Party which was feeling the heat after the BJP took early leads in the campaigning has also got some boost in the form of Swami Prasad Maurya who is considered to have influence in the eastern and central Uttar Pradesh. In Uttar Pradesh after Maurya, Roshan Lal Varma, another BJP MLA -- Brijesh Prajapati from Tindwari in Banda -- has said that he has submitted his resignation from the saffron party and more to come. Varma, Prajapati and a host of other OBC MLAs met Swami Prasad Maurya to discuss the political situation. The MLAs, including Bhagwati Sharan Sagar from Bilhaur, said that the Yogi Adityanath government is not safeguarding the interests of the farmers, OBCs and other weaker sections of the society. Another minister, Dharam Singh Saini, is also believed to be ready to quit, but there has been no confirmation yet. The resignation in Uttar Pradesh followed days after Goa Minister in the BJP-led government, Michael Lobo, resigned as Minister, and another MLA Pravin Zantye, also quit the party. Earlier on Monday, Lobo had said that he was quitting as Minister and from the BJP, accusing party leaders of sidelining the grassroots workers. Yashpal Arya and his MLA son had also joined the Congress after leaving the BJP.

JHARKHAND'S COAL WORKERS STARE AT DARKNESS AS 'MUSCLEMEN' TAKEOVER MINES

Praduman Choubey

Bachchan Nonia (45) died by suicide in November last year in Kusunda, Dhanbad. An employee at Godhar Colliery, managed by Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCL), he was duped by a local moneylender, according to his son Vikas Nonia. "Earlier this year, my father had taken a loan of Rs 2 lakh from Mahesh Chauhan, a local moneylender. But Chauhan tricked him into signing a receipt for Rs 10 lakh and was forcing him to repay this amount. Unable to take the pressure, he killed himself."

"In the post-nationalisation era, the oppression of miners continues as exploiters have now taken on the garb of money lenders in their colonies and trade union leaders at the workplace," said R.C. Paswan, an employee of Bastacola Colliery.

Jharkhand, with more than 200 coal mines, holds 27 per cent of the country's coking coal reserves estimated at 19.4 billion tonnes and fuels India's thermal power. However, the families of more than five lakh workers, particularly those in unorganised jobs in the Jharia coalfields region, continue to be victims of exploitation. Government apathy in addition to profiteering private operators with scant regard for worker welfare and safety have forced local coal workers into extreme penury, battling a myriad of health hazards and facing threats of subsidence (sinking of the ground because of underground material movement). Rinku Rawani (32) lives in Mohriabandh locality in Jharia, where an underground coal fire has been raging for decades. One August, four years ago, her neighbour's home sank into the ground and not even the kitchen utensils were spared. Rawani, a loading worker at Golakdih Colliery, continues to live here with this fear hanging over her even as her family are forced to inhale the poisonous gases coming out of cracks in the ground.

She has nowhere else to go and the promised government rehabilitation hasn't reached her yet. She can't help but rue over the lost home from her childhood, once a lush green land, now utterly uninhabitable. "In the past 20 years, because of unscientific and unsystematic mining, especially by private operators, pollution has drastically increased and the threat of subsidence has aggravated."



SEASONS CHANGE BUT EXPLOITATION IS CONSTANT

The British monopoly on coal mining in Jharia was challenged by Gujarati traders at the turn of the 20th Century and soon other private players followed, making Jharia one of the richest princely estates in the Calcutta Presidency thanks to the huge royalties on mining leases. But local workers got the raw end of the deal, working in harsh conditions for a pittance. The nationalisation of coal mines by Indra Gandhi in the 70s improved working conditions at the PSUs but in the early 2000s, private entities (owned by local business houses, politicians and even local musclemen) once again entered the field as contractors employed for coal extraction, transportation and removal of mines overburden (sand, dust and rock covering the coal). And with that came the return of the unscientific and unethical mining practices pioneered by profit-minded private players.

Consequently, state-owned subsidiaries like BCCL operating in Dhanbad, Central Coalfields Limited (ECL) operating in Bokaro, Ramgarh, Chatra and Ranchi and Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) operating in Dhanbad and Godda posted fewer and fewer vacancies, opting to outsource the work to contractual employees until the number of permanent employees are now outnumbered by cheap and disposable contact workers.

A.K. Jha, the national general secretary of

Congress-affiliated trade union Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), said, "The employees of these private companies are not provided benefits such as health insurance, gratuity, provident fund and medical reimbursements. Many companies do not provide them with even identity cards and safety gear such as helmets, forcing them to work in unsafe conditions."

Nasir Iqbal, a Jharia-based general physician said, "Continuous exposure to coal dust in the air causes diseases such as allergic rhinitis, asthma, bronchitis and tuberculosis to people living and working in these mining areas."

GREATER GOVT REGULATION IS THE NEED OF THE HOUR, NOT RAMPANT PRIVATISATION

Apart from these contractual workers, musclemen who double as union leaders also engage many labourers from the surrounding areas, mostly women, for Rs 200 per day for loading raw coal and Rs 300 per day for loading prime coal on trucks. Violent clashes between groups engaged by different musclemen over the allotment of work are common at mining sites. Police had to apply brute force to neutralise the situation in Godhar colliery area of BCCL on July 9 this year when two groups started pelting stones at each other. One of

these groups was supported by Janta Mazdoor Sangh, a trade union affiliated to the Hind Mazdoor Sabha.

Aasha Devi, who participated in a protest by the residents of Gondudih area of Katras in Dhanbad on December 7 demanding more work allotment, said, "We are allotted work only for 15 to 20 days in a month, that too, for Rs 200 to Rs 300 per day. It is difficult to afford a living with this income and we can't even shift to agriculture because we don't own any land."

A resident of Jharia's Mohriabandh locality and the central secretary of Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union, Rajendra Paswan, said, "The private operators are responsible for the recent shortage in the supply of coal to powerhouses. They collude with PSUs to falsify paperwork on meeting coal extraction targets. Before their entry into this sector, the PSUs were under pressure to meet their coal excavation targets, and hence, such crisis did not occur."

Paswan said the government should ensure that contractual workers get fair wages, medical facilities, safety gear and uniforms. "We also want the government to force mining companies to increase their allocation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds to improve infrastructure in mining areas by constructing roads, opening schools, ensuring drinking water provisions and taking more steps to control pollution," he said.

"The privatisation in coal mining and amendments in labour laws in favour of private companies by restricting the rights of labourers to protest have aggravated the problems faced by workers," said the area secretary of Central Industrial Trade Union (CITU).

Another threat around the corner for these workers is the green push to combat climate change. Pramod Pathak, a Dhanbad-based management consultant and former faculty at IIT-Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad said, "The focus on green energy technology in the coming days will lead to job losses as unlike the labour-intensive coal mining operations, green energy is technology-centric."

(The author is a Jharkhand-based freelance journalist and a member of 101reporters, a pan-India network of grassroots reporters.)

international

'FASTER US MONETARY TIGHTENING COULD TRIGGER CAPITAL OUTFLOWS, CURRENCY DEPRECIATION'

Washington | Agencies

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned that a faster tightening of the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy could lead to capital outflows and currency depreciation in emerging markets.

"While the global recovery is projected to continue this year and next, risks to growth remain elevated by the stubbornly resurgent pandemic. Given the risk that this could coincide with faster Fed tightening, emerging economies should prepare for potential bouts of economic turbulence," Stephan Danninger, chief of the IMF's Macro Policies Division in the Strategy Policy and Review Department, said in a blog with his colleagues.

"Faster Fed rate increases in response could rattle financial markets and tighten financial conditions globally. These developments could come with a slowing of US demand and trade and may lead to capital outflows and currency depreciation in emerging markets," the IMF officials said.

The warning came as Federal Reserve officials have anticipated earlier and faster interest rate hikes than previously expected amid elevated inflation, according to the minutes of the Fed's latest policy meeting released last week. "Participants



generally noted that, given their individual outlooks for the economy, the labour market, and inflation, it may become warranted to increase the

federal funds rate sooner or at a faster pace than participants had earlier anticipated," the Fed said in the minutes of its December 14-15, 2021 meeting.

The median respondent's projected timing for the first increase in the target range for the federal funds rate moved earlier from the first quarter of 2023 to June 2022, according to the minutes.

Meanwhile, most Fed officials expected the central bank to raise interest rates three times in 2022 from its current record-low level of near zero, up from just one rate hike projected in September.

In response to tighter funding conditions, emerging markets should tailor their response based on their circumstances and vulnerabilities, the IMF officials noted.

"Those with policy credibility on containing inflation can tighten monetary policy more gradually, while others with stronger inflation pressures or weaker institutions must act swiftly and comprehensively," the IMF official said.

In either case, responses should include letting currencies depreciate and raising benchmark interest rates. In addition, countries with high levels of debt denominated in foreign currencies should look to reduce those mismatches and hedge their exposures where feasible, they added.

Afghanistan's future hinges on its relation with Pakistan: USIP

Islamabad | Agencies

The US Institute of Peace (USIP), a Washington-based federal institution, has stated that the future of Afghanistan hinges on its relations with Pakistan and funding by America and other nations.

The USIP report stated that Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban regime will pave the way towards shaping the future of Afghanistan. The report's assessment banks on various studies it conducted during 2021 on Afghanistan.

"Humanitarian aid alone cannot prevent an economic collapse in Afghanistan. Positive relationship with Islamabad could help foster stability, development," the report read. Pakistan's role holds importance because of the extent of support the Taliban receive from Islamabad in the past, which is considered as a deciding factor in determining Afghanistan's future under the Taliban regime.

"The aid given by the US and partner nations to the Afghan government from now onwards would shape the country's future. The extent of support the Taliban receive from external sources, mainly Pakistan, would also be a deciding factor in determining Afghanistan's future," said Elizabeth Threlkeld, the author of the USIP report. While the importance of aid and relationship remains important for a better future of Afghanistan, the report also warns that the longstanding issues, grievances and conflicts between Pakistan and Afghanistan, hints towards a negative and an



opposite outcome, which the report states, is a much likelier forecast. "Afghanistan and Pakistan stand the best chance of building on their cross-border ties for the benefit of regional stability and the well-being of their citizens," states Threlkeld.

Keeping the Durand Line dispute as one of the more sensitive point of disagreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan; the report highlights that recent clashes between Pakistani border security forces and the Taliban fighters, signifies that like previous Afghan governments, Taliban are not willing to recognise the international border fencing. On the other hand, Pakistan is intended towards building a fence along the border to stop cross-border terrorism and movement of the terrorists. The USIP report highlights that factors, which would become the main point of contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan are sovereignty concerns, security interests, geopolitical dynamics, cross-border ties and connectivity and Trade. "Together, these dynamics will shape future prospects of stability in Afghanistan and the broader region."

Tropical cyclone Cody causes huge infrastructure damage in Fiji

Suva | Agencies

Fiji has suffered huge infrastructure damages due to tropical cyclone Cody, especially in the western side of Viti Levu, the country's main island, and some parts of the central division causing power blackouts. Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) Chief Executive Hasumukh Patel said on Tuesday that the cyclone has brought continuous heavy rain and floods, thus causing infrastructure damages, reports Xinhua news agency. Patel said some power lines are still down and Fijians are urged to stay away from them and alert the EFL as soon as possible to avoid accidents and death. According to the Ministry of Education, schools will remain closed until they receive clearance from the National Disaster Management Office that it was safe to reopen, as 58 schools are being used as



evacuation centres and will need to be decontaminated once the weather has improved and the situation was cleared by the Ministry of Health. Some parts of Labasa in Vanua Levu, the second largest island in Fiji, remain flooded as a result of the heavy rain. The National Weather Office has forecasted occasional heavy rain for the northern side as the threat of further flooding still remains. Meanwhile, the majority of shops in Nadi, Fiji's third-largest city on the western side of Viti Levu, remained closed on Tuesday. Nadi's Chamber of Commerce

President Ram Raju said a few shop owners that are in town are cleaning mud and debris. Teams from the National Disaster Management Office are continuing their visits to flood-affected areas, said Minister for Disaster Management Inia Seruiratu. With no figure on the damage, Seruiratu said they will visit areas impacted by the cyclone this week to assess the level of assistance required. Motorists are also urged to be aware of possible falling rocks, landslides and debris on the roadway amidst heavy rain, and people are advised not to swim, drive or walk in floodwaters. The Category 1 storm left one person dead, caused widespread flooding which forced about 2,000 people to flee their homes and seek shelter at 110 evacuation centres activated across Fiji at the height of the storm. The cyclone season in Fiji is between November to April every year.

KAZAKHSTAN GARNERS SUPPORT FOR RESTORING PEACE AFTER UNREST

Nur-Sultan | Agencies

Several countries and groups have voiced support for Kazakhstan in cracking down on riots and bringing back normal life as an externally-stoked "terrorist attack" has caused great losses to the Central Asian country. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a Moscow-led military alliance, held an extraordinary session via video link on Monday, when leaders of the member states showed solidarity with the Kazakh authorities, reports xinhua news agency.

According to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the CSTO has deployed 2,030 peacekeeping troops with 250 pieces of equipment to Kazakhstan to protect key facilities in the country. During the CSTO meeting, Russian President Vladimir Putin praised the peacekeeping forces for their effective work, saying that they will operate in Kazakhstan as long as Kazakh president deems it necessary and will be entirely withdrawn from the country after the mission is completed. "Russia intends to further prioritize strengthening the strategic alliance with all the CSTO member states. I am confident, of course, that



the leaders and people of Kazakhstan will be able to handle this situation and respond to these serious challenges with honour," Putin said.

Tokayev virtually met European Council President Charles Michel on Monday to brief him on the details of the riots and the government's responses. Michel underlined the

importance of obtaining reliable information against the backdrop of various interpretations of what is happening in Kazakhstan.

"We support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of your country. We are ready to further strengthen cooperation with Kazakhstan," he was quoted by the Kazakh presiden-

tial website as saying.

During the meeting with Michel, Tokayev called the unrest "a terrorist attack" with the participation of foreign fighters, mainly from central Asian countries, including Afghanistan, as well as from the Middle East. The President said that the "unprecedented act of aggression and encroachment on Kazakhstan's statehood" has led to great losses: 16 members of law enforcement and the military were killed and over 1,300 wounded. In the riots, 164 people were killed and over 7,900 were arrested, according to the Kazakh Health Ministry and Interior Ministry.

Over 1,270 businesses were affected nationwide, with more than 100 shopping centres and banks looted and about 500 police vehicles damaged or burnt, Tokayev said, adding that the economic damage could amount to \$2 billion-\$3 billion.

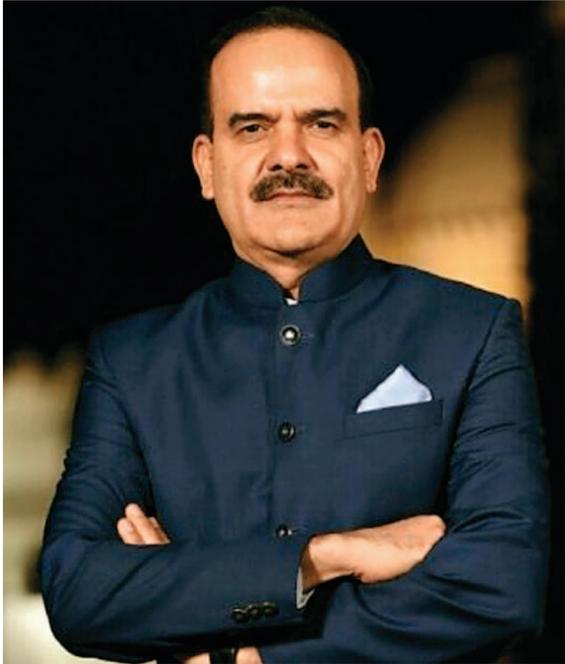
At the CSTO session, Putin also noted that well-organised groups of militants, who were trained in terrorist camps abroad, were used to attack Kazakhstan. He urged the CSTO to take measures to jointly counter "destructive external interference" in case of emergency in the organization's member states.



CBI TO SC: MAHA MAKING JOB TOUGH IN PROBE AGAINST AMIT DESHMUKH

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said that it is a "very disturbing scenario" in Maharashtra, where former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, has no faith in the police force, which he headed recently, and the state government has no faith in CBI. Also, the CBI informed the top court that the state is creating several stumbling blocks in its probe against former Home Minister (HM) Anil Deshmukh. Senior advocate Puneet Bali, representing Singh, submitted that his client is being targeted and added that the matter was handed over to the CBI, but the state government has tried to scuttle the proceedings of the CBI. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the CBI, said this is a matter of chain of events. Senior advocate Darius Khambata, representing the Maharashtra government, contended that the top court will have to see this matter. A bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and M.M. Sundresh said: "This is the same police force that you headed. Now, the head of the police force has no trust in the police force. The administration has no trust... This is a disturbing scenario." The bench queried whether there is a possibility to resolve this matter peacefully? Mehta submitted the state is creat-



ing several stumbling blocks in its probe against Deshmukh and making CBI's job difficult. Bali added that the Maharashtra government has started departmental action against his client in the same cases where FIR has been registered. After hearing arguments in the matter, the top court extended the

protection from arrest granted to Singh in the cases and scheduled the matter for further hearing on January 27. The CBI, in an affidavit, has told the Supreme Court, "It prima facie appears that there is clearly an attempt to meddle in the court entrusted investigation carried on by the CBI and further, an attempt to jeopardise the same. It is submitted that in such circumstances, it is requested that this honourable court may exercise powers vested with it in order to ensure that such attempts by various quarters are thwarted once and for all." The CBI has also cited the chat transcript of Maharashtra DGP Sanjay Pandey given by Param Bir Singh. Singh had moved the top court challenging the Bombay High Court order dated September 16, which dismissed his plea against the two preliminary enquiries initiated by the Maharashtra government. He had also sought transfer of cases filed against him to the CBI. In his petition in the high court, Singh had claimed that inquiries were initiated against him after he accused Deshmukh of ordering arrested police officer Sachin Vaze to collect money from bars and restaurants to the tune of Rs 100 crore. Singh claimed the home department resorted to a witch hunt after he refused to withdraw his letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, where he had made corruption allegations.

NCP to ally with SP for UP polls; contest in Goa, Manipur: Pawar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a significant political development, Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar announced on Tuesday that his party would contest the upcoming Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Goa and Manipur. Stating that the party will join hands with the Samajwadi Party-led front coming up in Uttar Pradesh, Pawar said that he would attend a meeting convened next week to discuss and finalise alliances and poll strategies for the northern state, which will go to the polls in seven phases between February 10 and March 7. "Of the five states going to the polls, we shall be contesting in three states. We plan to work out alliances with like-minded parties," Pawar told media-persons here. While the NCP would be joining the SP-led alliance in Uttar Pradesh, in Manipur, the party is cobbling up an understanding with the Congress, with which it shares power in Maharashtra's Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. "We are in talks with the Congress and the Trinamool Congress in Goa," Pawar added while disclosing

NCP's programme to contest in three of the five states going to the polls in February-March, barring in Punjab and Uttarakhand. Elaborating on Uttar Pradesh, the 81-year-old leader said that "the stage is set for a change" from the current rule by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "The masses want 'parivartan', and UP is all set for a change (of power). People there are not happy with the BJP's communal style of politics. Polarisation on communal lines is being done in UP ahead of the elections, and the voters will give a befitting reply to this," Pawar said. Referring to the abrupt exit of Uttar Pradesh Cabinet minister Swami Prasad Maurya, who resigned from his office on Tuesday with sources claiming that he is likely to join the Samajwadi Party soon, Pawar said that "this is just the beginning" and the BJP will get many more such jolts in the run-up to the elections. Hoping that the Samajwadi Party-led alliance will sweep to power in the ensuing elections, Pawar hinted that at least a dozen more MLAs from various other political parties in Uttar Pradesh are likely to walk over to Samajwadi Party soon. In Manipur,

where the NCP has four legislators, it will be a tie-up with the Congress to contest five seats, while negotiations are underway with Shiv Sena-Congress to repeat Maharashtra's MVA experiment in Goa and ensure BJP's defeat. For Goa, NCP MP Praful Patel, Sena MP Sanjay Raut and Goa Congress leaders are negotiating to hammer out an alliance on the lines of MVA. Pawar declared that he would attend a meeting convened by SP President Akhilesh Yadav to discuss the election strategy, saying that the voters will not support BJP's plans to contest elections on communal lines. The NCP supremo also slammed Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's recent '80:20' statement (80 per cent people are with BJP, 20 per cent are against), saying that it was not befitting of him (Adityanath) to seek to divide the people on religious lines and hurting the sentiments of the minority community there. Speaking of Punjab, Pawar surmised that the incumbent Congress will return to power, but with the recent turn of events, even the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has become a contender.

New Covid curbs: Amusement parks see gloomy prospects, ask Maha to ease controls

Team Absolute | Mumbai

For the third time in less than 23 months, the amusement parks industry again finds itself in doldrums with at least 4 states imposing total curbs and one state slapping weekend restrictions on people as the Covid-19 third wave sets in, top players said here on Tuesday. Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi and Haryana states have imposed closure orders while Karnataka has clamped weekend curbs which have hit the amusement industry encompassing open-to-sky theme parks, water parks, adventure parks and a few indoor centres. The Indian Association of Amusement Parks & Industries (IAAPI) Chairman Rajeev Jalnapurkar recalled how the amusement industry was the first to shut down when the pandemic lockdown was imposed in March 2020 and the last to reopen during the series of phased unlockdowns in the country. "We were permitted to reopen on October 22, 2021 after the second wave last year and since then, it has been barely three months and we are being closed down again" rued Jalnapurkar, who is also Director of the famed Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad in Telangana. He warned that this could prove to be a fatal blow for the entire industry as huge investments and manpower planning had been undertaken to restart parks that were closed for over a year.



Other officials here said that the Maharashtra government's move would particularly hurt as there are 37 amusement parks here, compared with 8 in West Bengal, 6 in Delhi and 5 in Haryana, totalling to some 56 venues in the four states which comprise major metros like Mumbai, New Delhi and Kolkata. In the past 23 months, most parks have remained totally shut for an average of 16-17 months owing to the lockdown and other reasons, taking a huge toll on their financial health. "IAAPI has requested the Maharashtra government to permit our industry also to operate on 50 per cent capacity, as allowed for other indoor venues like malls, cinemas, restaurants, gyms, saloons, etc, to ensure our survival and retain the employment opportunities," urged Jalnapurkar. He point-

ed out that the entry to amusement parks is strictly regulated with highly-priced based on the rides, themes or other attractions, besides registrations to avoid crowds at the entry gates, unlike the other unregulated ones like tourist spots, zoos, museums, forts which are either free or have very low ticket rates. Moreover, the IAAPI's 160-plus members have been stringently adhering to all the norms of the Centre and different states' health and tourism departments, and have prepared their own SOPs for the benefit of the industry members. On an average, the amusement park industry directly employs over 80,000 persons and indirectly another 320,000, and for Maharashtra the figures are 13,000 and 52,000 respectively, and hence need governmental support in these critical times, said IAAPI.

'Worse than expulsion': SC on Maha BJP MLAs' one year suspension

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday orally observed that suspension of 12 BJP MLAs from Maharashtra Assembly in July, for a year, for misbehaving with the presiding officer in the chair, both inside and outside the Assembly, was "worse than expulsion." A bench, headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar was hearing a petition filed by MLAs challenging their suspension. On December 14, last year, the top court had issued notice to the Maharashtra Assembly through its Secretary. The bench, also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and C.T. Rajkumar, expressed an inclination to interfere with the resolution passed by the Assembly suspending the BJP MLAs, on July 5, last year. During the hearing, the bench orally observed that the suspension for one year was "worse than expulsion" as the constituency would remain unrepresented in the House. It added that one-year suspension will amount to a punishment on the constituency of these elected representatives. Citing constitutional provisions, the bench said a constituency cannot go unrepresented for beyond six months. Citing relevant rules, the top court pointed out that the Assembly lacks power to suspend a member beyond 60 days. It referred to Article 190(4) of the Constitution which says a seat will be deemed to have become vacant if a member remains absent in the House without its permission for a period of 60 days. A battery of senior advocates -- Mahesh Jethmalani, Mukul Rohatgi, Neeraj Kishan Kaul, and Siddharth Bhatnagar - argued for the suspended legislators. They were assisted by advocates Siddharth Dharmadhikari and Abhikal Pratap Singh. Jethmalani argued that Rajya Sabha recently suspended 12 members for disorderly behaviour, and the suspension was operated only for the duration of the session. It was argued in the top court that the principle of natural justice was violated by the House by suspending MLAs for a year. One of the lawyers argued that the suspension



cannot exceed 6 months and it allows the government to manipulate the strength in the House to secure majority votes on important matters. The 12 suspended members are Sanjay Kute, Ashish Shelar, Abhimanyu Pawar, Girish Mahajan, Atul Bhatkalkar, Parag Alavani, Harish Pimpale, Yogesh Sagar, Jay Kumar Rawat, Narayan Kuche, Ram Satpute, and Bunty Bhangdia. The MLAs have termed their suspension as politically motivated to whittle down the number of the opposition party. The bench noted that after MLAs' suspension, there is nobody to represent the respective constituencies in the House. "This is not punishing the member but punishing the constituency as a whole," it said. The top court did not entertain an argument made by senior advocate C.A.

Sundaram, representing the Maharashtra government, that the court cannot examine the quantum of punishment imposed by an Assembly. After a detailed hearing in the matter, the bench posted the matter for further hearing on January 18. The plea said: "The impugned resolution has been passed in abject violation of Article 14 of the Constitution of India in as much as no opportunity of hearing or at least furnishing their written explanation was given to the petitioners. Further, a perusal of the impugned resolution shows that there has been utter non-application of mind in as much there was no material available for identifying the 12 MLAs from a large crowd of people." It urged the top court to pass a direction to quash the resolution for the suspension of the MLAs.

Maharashtra SEC waits for outcome of SC hearing before next move

Officials from the State Election Commission said they are carrying out the internal exercise of delimitation of ward boundaries of the local bodies in the state that will go to polls in the next few months.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

With the Other Backward Classes reservation issue pending in the Supreme Court (SC), the Maharashtra State Election Commission (SEC) on Monday said it was waiting for the outcome of the apex court hearing on January 17 before deciding on further course of action for holding elections to various local bodies, including the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. Officials from the State Election Commission said

they are carrying out the internal exercise of delimitation of ward boundaries of the local bodies in the state that will go to polls in the next few months. "We are carrying out our internal exercise and one round of submission of the draft ward boundaries has been completed. At the same time, we are also waiting to see the outcome of the hearing before the SC on January 17 and the petitions filed before the Bombay High Court. By that time, we may complete our internal exercise on draft ward boundaries. Subsequently, we will take a review of things and will decide on it," Kiran Kurundkar, secretary of SEC, said. OBC reservation will be a key issue in the election to the 14 municipal corporations and the 26 zilla parishads that are likely to be held in the next

few months. Officials from the SEC said that apart from the OBC reservation issue, the Bombay High Court is also hearing petitions that have challenged the increase in the number of municipal wards in Mumbai and the multi-member ward system introduced in municipal corporations except for Mumbai. "There will be clarity on these petitions soon. Meantime, the local bodies will submit another draft of ward boundaries this week and it will be evaluated by the commission," said an official. The official further said after, ward boundaries are approved, it will be put before the public for suggestions and objections before being finalised. In March last year, the Supreme Court had stayed elections on OBC seats in Maharashtra, and asked the government to fulfil the triple

test before notifying the seats reserved for the OBC category. The SC's triple test includes setting up a dedicated commission for collecting empirical data on the OBC population, specifying the proportion of reservation and ensuring that the cumulative share of reserved seats does not breach 50 per cent of total seats. While the state government set up the dedicated commission for OBC data and gave up to 27 per cent reservation through an ordinance promulgated in September, eventually passing the bill in the assembly last month, the Supreme Court had stayed civic polls to 27 per cent OBC seats in December, observing that the 27% OBC reservation could not have been implemented without setting up a commission and without collecting data regarding the inadequacy of representation in local bodies.

IMD issues yellow alert for seven districts of Maharashtra

The weather office has issued the warning predicting thunderstorm with lightning and light to moderate rainfall

Team Absolute | Pune

IMD weather updates: A yellow warning has been issued for parts of Maharashtra's Vidarbha region in the next two days. The IMD today issued the alert predicting thunderstorm with lightning and light to moderate rainfall. Several districts in east Vidarbha, including Nagpur, witnessed rainfall during the day. The regional meteorological centre has issued a yellow warning for Nagpur, Wardha, Chandrapur, Yavatmal, Gondia, Bhandara and Gadchiroli districts of Vidarbha till Thursday, an official told PTI. The weather forecasting agency has warned of thunderstorm with lightning and light to moderate rainfall very likely to continue at few places over Nagpur, Wardha, Bhandara,



Gondia and thunderstorm and hail at few places in Chandrapur, Gadchiroli and Yavatmal districts. Ballarpur in Chandrapur district recorded 90 mm rainfall, followed by Chamorshi in Gadchiroli with 66 mm, Deoli in Wardha with 10.7 mm and 0.5mm rainfall in isolated

places of Nagpur district, till 8.30 am on Tuesday. IMD Nagpur deputy director general ML Sahu told the news agency that the rainfall in Vidarbha was caused due to an induced upper air cyclonic circulation lying over Haryana and north Madhya Pradesh.



Hit series 'Emily in Paris' gets two-season extension

Los Angeles | Agencies

Darren Star's Emmy-nominated romantic comedy series, 'Emily in Paris', has been renewed by Netflix for a third and fourth season, reports 'Variety'.

Season 2 was released on December 22, debuting in the Global Netflix Top 10 and topping the list across 94



countries, which include India, garnering 107.6 million viewer hours from December 22 to 26.

Season 1, which opened in October 2020, also made the Global Top 10, re-emerging on the list across 53 nations. The escapist show, 'Variety' reports, was an immediate sensation, luring more than 58 million households in its first 28 days on the streaming platform.

The showrunner, Darren Star, has previ-

ously made hit series such as 'Sex and the City', 'Beverly Hills, 90210' and 'Melrose Place', and is now wrapping up the shoot of his new show 'Uncoupled' -- also for Netflix -- later this month.

'Emily in Paris' follows Emily (Lily Collins), an ambitious twenty-something marketing executive from Chicago, who unexpectedly lands a job in Paris when her company

acquires a French luxury marketing company. Emily is tasked with revamping their social media strategy, and embarks upon a new life in Paris filled with adventures and challenges, as she juggles winning over her work colleagues, making friends, and navigating new romances, according to 'Variety'. Season 2 sees Emily travel from Paris to the French Riviera, including Saint-Tropez.

'I HAVE TO RUSH OFF AND EXPEL GUNK I'M COUGHING UP'

Love Island's Priya Gopaldas reveals chronic lung condition makes dating 'complicated'

London | Agencies

Love Island star Priya Gopaldas has spoken candidly about suffering from non-CF bronchiectasis - a condition that occurs when the lung's airways are damaged and inflamed by large quantities of mucus - and how it affects her romantic life. Trainee doctor Priya, 23, was diagnosed with the chronic lung condition at the age of 15 after being hospitalised with pneumonia a year earlier and the diagnosis inspired her to become a medical practitioner.

However, in a new interview, the

media personality admitted her condition makes romantic relationships 'complicated' and explained: 'I have to explain the cough which is constant and pretty uncontrollable. Then there's the fact I have to rush off and expel the gunk I'm coughing up which isn't great in a romantic scenario, reports dailymail.co.uk.

Priya now manages her condition through diet and exercise, telling the paper that she runs between '10 and 20k five times a week'.



Technical issue denies 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' a BAFTA nod

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Spider-Man: No Way Home' may be shattering one box-office record after another and generating a healthy Oscar buzz, but there's one award that the Tom Holland-starrer definitely won't be picking up this awards season: a BAFTA, reports 'Variety'.

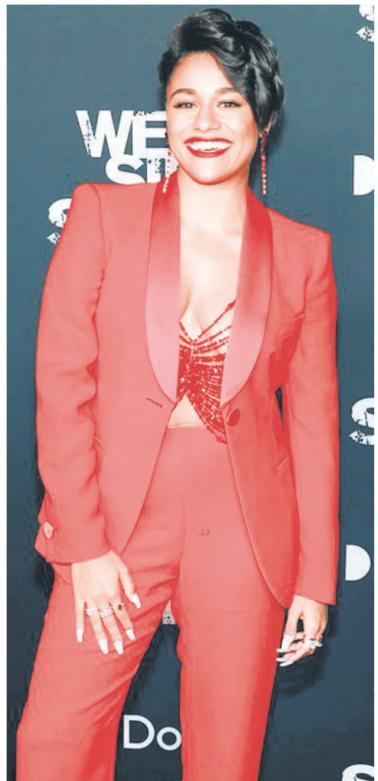
The British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) has announced that the movie won't be considered for any awards after failing to meet 'eligibility criteria'. A spokesperson for BAFTA said: "'Spider-Man: No Way Home' did not meet the eligibility criteria for the EE British

Academy Film Awards 2022 and therefore did not qualify for entry.

"As outlined in our rulebook, all films must be made available to voting members on BAFTA View prior to Round One voting closing to ensure fairness and parity for all titles and the film was not made available by the distributor."

Round One closed on January 3. On BAFTA View, there is a 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' page for members' consideration, with a description of the film; however, 'Variety' understands that the film itself was never made available to view. When members click on the page, they can access only a trailer for the movie.

ARIANA DEBOSE TO HOST MAIDEN 'SNL' OF 2022



Los Angeles | Agencies

'West Side Story' star Ariana DeBose will make her 'Saturday Night Live' hosting debut on January 15, the NBC sketch show's first instalment of the new year.

DeBose, who plays Anita in Steven Spielberg's adaptation of the classic movie, takes the Studio 8H stage as emcee in a little over a week, she will be joined by Roddy Ricch, who will appear on 'Saturday Night Live' for the first time as musical guest, reports variety.com.

Multi-platinum artist Ricch will be promoting his sophomore album "Live Life Fast," which debuted at No.1 on the Billboard Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart.

SNL's is expected to bring back its studio audience set-up for the January 15 episode, but there is a chance that plans could change before the airdate, an individual with knowledge tells Variety.

The final episode of 2021, which was hosted by Paul Rudd, had to cut its audience and a good chunk of its cast members at the last minute out of an "abundance of caution" amid the surge in the omicron variant of Covid. The December 18 episode's planned musical guest Charli XCX did not perform.

All the audience members are required to show proof of vaccination and wear a mask at all times during taping.

'Saturday Night Live' will air new shows on January 22 and January 29, with hosts and musical guests for those episodes to be announced at a later date.



Los Angeles | Agencies

'Call My Agent!', the hit French show set at a Parisian talent agency (also adapted for India, though not with the best results, by Netflix), is set for seven international remakes this year.

These are in the works at top streamers and broadcasters in South Korea, Indonesia, the Middle East, Philippines, Malaysia and Poland.

Co-represented by France Televisions Distribution and Newen Connect's TF1 Studio, the comedic show has been adapted for the Indian, Canadian and Turkish markets, according to 'Variety'. A UK remake with BAFTA award-winner John Morton as head writer and director of the first two episodes will soon launch on Amazon UK and Sundance Now in the US. In Italy, the remake is being produced by Mediawan-owned Palomar for Sky with German filmmaker Oliver Hirschbiegel on board. In Indonesia, the show is being adapted by Erik Matti, the critically acclaimed director of 'On The Job', who will serve as director and showrunner. Ordered by Disney+ Hotstar, the series will be

'Call My Agent!' set for seven international remakes in 2022

headlined by Angel Locsin ('The General's Daughter') and Edu Manzano ('Marry Me, Marry You'), a local star involved in acting, sports and politics. The eight-part show will kick off production in April or May, reports 'Variety'. Other topnotch partners for local remakes include NBC in the Middle East, HBO Go in the Philippines, Astro in Malaysia and TVN in Poland. A South Korean partner will be unveiled at a later stage.

Ruffalo, Laurie join cast of World War II drama 'All the Light We Cannot See'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Mark Ruffalo and Hugh Laurie have joined the cast of Netflix's 'All the Light We Cannot See' limited series based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the same name by Anthony Doerr.

Ruffalo and Laurie, according to 'Variety', will star in the bestselling novel's four-part TV adaptation alongside newcomer Aria Mia Loberti, a visually impaired actress who was previously announced as playing the leading role of Marie-Laure, the blind teenager at the heart of the story.

In 'All the Light We Cannot See', Marie-Laure's path collides with Werner, a German soldier, as they both try to survive the devastation of World War II in occupied France.



Ruffalo will play Marie-Laure's father, Daniel LeBlanc, the principal locksmith at the Museum of Natural History in Paris. Principally and clever, he's determined to give his blind daughter as much independence as he can while also protecting her -- and the secret gem they carry -- from Nazi occupation.

Laurie has been cast as Etienne LeBlanc, an eccentric and reclusive World War I hero suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A nervous shut-in, LeBlanc records clandestine radio broadcasts as part of the French Resistance.

The Netflix series is written by Steven Knight ('Peaky Blinders') and directed by Shawn Levy ('Stranger Things', 'Free Guy' and 'Shadow and Bone'). The novel on which the series is based was on the 'New York Times' Bestseller list for 200 weeks.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Adriana Lima



3rd Test, Day 1

BOWLERS PUT SOUTH AFRICA ON TOP DESPITE KOHLI'S GRITTY KNOCK

Cape Town | Agencies

A brilliant bowling performance by Kagiso Rabada (4/73) and Marco Jansen (3/55) put South Africa on top against India on a fast-moving Day 1 of the third and final Test of the three-match series, despite Virat Kohli's gritty knock, here on Tuesday.

Aiden Markram (8 not out) and Keshav Maharaj (6 not out) were at the crease when stumps were called as South Africa finished an engrossing opening day at 17/1 in their first innings, trailing India by 206 runs at Newlands.

The hosts lost the only wicket of their skipper, Dean Elgar, before the close of play, which will definitely give India a glimmer of hope after they were bowled out for 223 in their first innings.

Skipper Kohli's masterclass was the batting highlight of the day and if not for his efforts, the visitors could have landed in a much deeper hole.



Earlier in the day, India won the toss and opted to bat first as openers KL Rahul and Mayank Agarwal gave the visitors a decent start. South Africa bowled with tight lines and lengths but Rahul and Mayank Agarwal did well to negotiate it and hit occasional boundaries to keep

the scoreboard ticking. The disciplined bowling and consistent pressure resulted in Rahul's (12) downfall, who played a tentative shot on a ball that was just outside off.

In the very next over, Mayank Agarwal (15) also got out and India were in trouble. Thereafter, Both

Kohli and Pujara looked solid in their approach, leaving well and hitting regular boundaries as well. Pujara showed great intent and made full use of the scoring opportunities on offer whereas Kohli looked determined at the crease and played a couple of lovely drives.

They took India to 75/2 at lunch. In the second session, Jansen dismissed Pujara and gave South Africa, the much-needed breakthrough to break the gritty 3rd wicket stand. Ajinkya Rahane, who came to bat next, got off the mark with a cheeky boundary off Jansen. On the other hand, Kohli looked in solid touch and helped India cross the 100-run mark in the 39th over by picking a double off Rabada. The Indian skipper also hit the first maximum of the ongoing third Test and his signature cover drive in different overs bowled by Rabada and Jansen respectively to keep the scoreboard ticking.

It was Rabada, who brought the Proteas team back in the game by dismissing Rahane (9). The pair of Pant and Kohli mixed caution with aggression and guided India safely through to the Tea break, battling hard for a little over 12 overs. But as soon as play resumed after Tea, Pant played an unnecessary stroke to get out.

Tata to replace Vivo as IPL title sponsor from this season



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Chinese mobile manufacturer Vivo has pulled out as Indian Premier League's title sponsor from this year and the BCCI will replace it with Tata, the cash-rich league's governing council decided in a meeting on Tuesday.

Following the governing council meeting, IPL chairman Brijesh Patel confirmed that the Tata Group, one of India's largest business conglomerates has come on board. "Vivo has exited and the Tatas will be title sponsors," Patel told Cricbuzz.

Notably, Vivo has a couple of years left in its sponsorship deal with the league and dur-

ing this period, Tata will remain the main sponsor. The league will now be called Tata IPL. Vivo had a deal of Rs 2200 crore for title sponsorship rights from 2018-2022. However, the Chinese smartphone makers had paused the deal for a year in 2020 in the backdrop of the Galwan Valley military face-off between the Indian and Chinese Army soldiers, when the rights were transferred to Dream 11. However, Vivo were back as IPL title sponsor in 2021 and the original five-year deal got extended till 2023 because of the one-year break. Following Tuesday's GC decision, the Tata Group will step in and remain the title sponsor for the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

INDIA OPEN 2022

Sindhu, Srikanth and Loh Kean advance into second round

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu, World Championship silver medallist and men's top seed Kidambi Srikanth and World champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore advanced into the second round of the India Open 2022, here on Tuesday.

Sindhu defeated compatriot Sri Krishna Priya Kudaravalli 21-5, 21-16 in just 27 minutes to win the opener. In the second round, she will face either Ira Sharma or Egypt's Doha Hany. World Championship silver medallist Kidambi Srikanth triumphed over Siril Verma 21-17, 21-10 in the first round.

The 24-year-old Loh Kean Yew of Singapore survived an early scare to beat Canada's Sheng Xiaodong 16-21, 21-4, 21-13 in his opening round men's singles match. Now ranked a career-high world No. 15 following his monumental BWF World Championships triumph in Huelva, Spain,



last month, Loh Kean took 50 minutes to get going as he lost the opening set against his 69th-ranked opponent. However, the Singaporean stepped up a gear in the second set, winning 10 consecutive points, before comfortably putting Sheng away in the third. This was his first competitive match since his world championship gold. Earlier, Ashmita Chaliha caused an upset by overcoming fifth-seeded and world number 28 Evgeniya Kosetskaya of Russia 24-22, 21-16 in the opening round in just 31 minutes.

JAMIESON, WAGNER GUIDE NEW ZEALAND TO INNINGS VICTORY OVER BANGLADESH

Christchurch | Agencies

New Zealand came roaring back into the second Test, crushing Bangladesh by an innings and 117 runs as the hosts levelled the two-Test series 1-1 at the Hagley Oval here on Tuesday. Despite a brilliant century from Litton Das, who smashed 102 off 114 deliveries laced with 14 boundaries and a six, the tourists could only manage 278 in 79.3 overs as tall pace bowler Kyle Jamieson (4/82) and Neil Wagner (3/77) ran through the Bangladesh side to avenge the eight-wicket first-Test defeat. On an emotional day when batting stalwart Ross Taylor ended his Test career on a winning note, Bangladesh openers Shadman Islam (21) and Mohammad Naim (24) ensured their team did not lose any early wickets to Tim Southee (1/54) and Trent Boult (0/42).

It was Kyle Jamieson who got the first breakthrough for New Zealand as Islam clipped the ball behind to Tom Blundell. Najmul Hossain Shanto walked out to bat next and showed



intent throughout his innings, including a top edge six over fine leg. Shanto raced to 29 off 36 deliveries before Wagner got the final word and picked up his first wicket of the Test match. After lunch, Mohammad Naim was removed courtesy of a breath-taking catch from New Zealand captain Tom Latham, who dived to his left with his hand stretched out. The closing stage of the second session was all about Wagner. He continued his fine spell picking up captain Mominul Haque (37), who edged one into Ross Taylor's



safe hands at first slip. He finished the spell by luring Yasir Ali (2) into a simple catch for Latham, ensuring New Zealand were in total control heading into tea. Litton Das (102) and Nurul Hasan (36) steadied the ship for the visitors after the break as Das brought up his 12th Test fifty in a Boult over that saw 16 runs conceded, including four boundaries. After a 101-run partnership for the sixth wicket, Nurul Hasan was caught by Wagner at mid-off handing Daryl Mitchell (1/18) his first wicket of the match. The next to

go was Mahedi Hasan (3), thanks to another catch from Latham off a Jamieson delivery. Meanwhile, Das displayed great resilience at the other end and was rewarded as he brought up his second Test career century before being trapped LBW by Jamieson for 102. The ninth wicket also fell to Jamieson as Shoriful Islam went for a duck after lofting the ball into Southee's hands. New Zealand's comprehensive victory was even sweeter when Ross Taylor bagged a wicket on the final ball of his Test career, levelling the series 1-1 and earning the hosts 12 important points in their quest for the World Test Championship.

Brief scores

New Zealand 521/6 declared (Tom Latham 252, Devon Conway 109, Tom Blundell 57 not out) beat Bangladesh 126 and f/o 278 in 79.3 overs (Litton Das 102; Kyle Jamieson 4/82, Neil Wagner 3/77) by an innings and 117 runs.

DJOKOVIC SAGA HAS BEEN DAMAGING ON ALL FRONTS, SAYS ATP

New York: The Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) -- the governing body of the men's professional tennis circuits -- has said that the Novak Djokovic court saga has "been damaging on all fronts", including for the world No. 1 tennis player's well-being and preparation for the Australian Open. The reigning Australian Open champion on Monday won the legal battle in his bid to remain in Australia, with a court ordering his immediate release from immigration detention. The judge hearing the Serbian player's case ordered Djokovic be released and his passport and other travel documents returned to him, rekindling his chance to win a record 21st Grand Slam title at the upcoming Australian Open. On Tuesday (IST), ATP issued a statement saying that the tennis body "continues to strongly recommend vaccination for all players on the ATP Tour", in a clear indication that it wants all the players to take the COVID-19 vaccine. Djokovic has not revealed his vaccination status and has stated that he has been granted medical exemption by Tennis Australia to compete in the opening Grand Slam of the year.



RYBAKINA DISMANTLES RADUCANU IN SYDNEY CLASSIC OPENER

Sydney | Agencies

Ninth seed Elena Rybakina continued her strong start to 2022 by beating U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu in the first round of the Sydney Tennis Classic tournament, here on Tuesday. The 22-year-old Rybakina, who reached her eighth career final in Adelaide last week, needed just 55 minutes to storm past Raducanu 6-0, 6-1 in the first round. Raducanu, who tested positive for Covid-19 last month and withdrew from the Melbourne Summer Set last week due to needing more preparation time, was still competing in just her eighth WTA-level main draw. The result is the Briton's first loss to a Top 20 player in three meetings, and the heaviest of her professional career by the scoreline. The 19-year-old started positively with a pair of one-two punches. But three double faults followed in the same game, and she never regained any momentum after that opening loss of serve. She



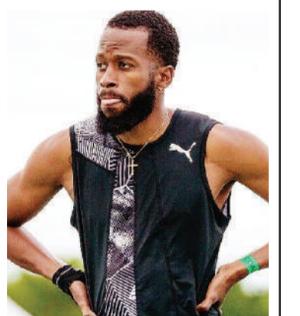
committed six double faults in total, and did not reach the game point again until the fourth game of the second set -- converted as Rybakina sent a backhand long. World No 13 Rybakina played within herself, for the most part, repeatedly jamming Raducanu with heavy,



deep returns and getting her opponent on the back foot straight away. The 22-year-old's finest passage of play was the start of the second set: rattling off the first seven points, and 12 of the first 15, tightened her grip on the match and shut off any route for a Raducanu come.

OLYMPIC AND WORLD MEDALLIST SPRINTER LENDORE DIES IN CAR CRASH

Kingston: Trinidad and Tobago's Olympic and world 4x400m medallist Deon Lendore has died at the age of 29, World Athletics, the sport's governing body informed on Tuesday. Lendore, according to reports, died in a car crash in Texas, USA, late on Monday. The news of his death first appeared on social media in the United States and the Caribbean and was later confirmed by the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee. The three-time Olympian, who anchored his nation to relay bronze at the 2012 Olympic Games in London, also claimed two world indoor 400m bronze medals and a 4x400m medal of the same colour.



AFC Women's Asian Cup: India announce 23-member squad



Kochi | Agencies

Indian Women's Team head coach Thomas Dennerby on Tuesday announced the 23-member squad for the upcoming AFC Women's Asian Cup which is set to take place in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, and Pune from January 20 to February 6. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has not named anyone as a captain of the team, but it is believed that experienced Ashalata Devi is likely to lead the side.

The players and support staff, who have already been camping in Kochi, Kerala since the team's return from Brazil, will fly out to Mumbai on Thursday, January 13, 2021.

THE SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Aditi Chauhan (1), Maibam Linthoingambi Devi (23), Sowmiya Narayanasamy (19). Defenders: Dalima Chhibber (17), Sweety Devi Ngangbam (2), Ritu Rani (21), Loitongbam Ashalata Devi (4), Manisa Panna (3), Hemam Shilky Devi (5), Sanju Yadav (8). Midfielders: Yumnam Kamala Devi (6), Anju Tamang (9), Karthika Angamuthu (20), Nongmeithem Ratanbala Devi (7), Naorem Priyangka Devi (14), Indumathi Kathiresan (12). Forwards: Manisha Kalyan (16), Grace Dangmei (11), Pyari Xaxa (10), Renu (15), Sumati Kumari (22), Sandhiya Ranganathan (13), Mariyammal Balamurugan (18). Following are India's fixtures in Group A of the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022: January 20: India vs Iran. January 23: Chinese Taipei vs India. January 26: India vs China PR.

CHRIS MORRIS RETIRES FROM ALL FORMS OF CRICKET



Cape Town: South African all-rounder Chris Morris brought the curtains down on his cricketing career on Tuesday, with the 34-year-old announcing he was retiring from all forms of cricket. Morris, who was hampered by fitness issues later in his career, added that he would next be seen in a coaching role with South African domestic side Titans. Morris played four Tests, 42 One-day Internationals and 23 T20 Internationals besides donning the Chennai Super Kings, Delhi Daredevils (now Delhi Capitals), Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bangalore jerseys in the IPL. He last represented South Africa in the ODI World Cup in England in 2019. He was the costliest buy at the IPL auction, being bought for Rs. 16.25 crores by Rajasthan Royals in the IPL 2021 auction.

ICC U-19 WORLD CUP

Sri Lanka, UAE, Scotland record big wins in warm-up

Guyana (West Indies) | Agencies

Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates and Scotland recorded impressive wins as the warm-up matches for the 2022 ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup continued in the West Indies on Tuesday (IST).

In Guyana, Sri Lanka notched a 128-run win over Ireland and Scotland triumphed by 107 runs over Uganda, while the biggest win of the day came in St Kitts for UAE, as they defeated Papua New Guinea by 250 runs. The World Cup starts on January 14.

- ▶ SRI LANKA U-19 233/7 IN 43 OVERS (SHEVON DANIEL 75 RETIRED NOT OUT, RANUDA SOMARATHNE 33; NATHAN MCGUIRE 2/40, DANIEL FORKIN 1/21) BT IRELAND 104 IN 31.4 OVERS (JOSHUA COX 45 NOT OUT; WANUJA SAHAN 3/5, CHAMIDU WICKRAMASINGHE 2/7) BY 128 RUNS.
- ▶ UAE U-19 321/5 IN 50 OVERS (KAI SMITH 145, DHRUV PARASHAR 52, PUNYA MEHRA 41) BT PNG 71 ALL OUT IN 28 OVERS (AAYAN KHAN 3/10, ADIHYA SHETTY 2/10, NILANSH KESWANI 2/16) BY 250 RUNS.
- ▶ SCOTLAND U-19 219/9 IN 50 OVERS (CHARLIE TEAR 50, JACK JARVIS 33; EDWIN NUWAGABA 3/29, JUMA MIYAJI 2/30) BT UGANDA 112 IN 31.2 OVERS (OLIVER DAVIDSON 3/14, JAMIE CAIRNS 3/15) BY 107 RUNS.



AMRITA TANGANIYA DELIGHTED TO MAKE HER BOLLYWOOD DEBUT

Team Absolute | Mumbai



'Kumkum Bhagya' actress Amrita Tanganiya is delighted about her Bollywood debut. She will be seen as a nomad in upcoming thriller 'Dreamy Singh' which also features Kashmiri Shah and Ashmit Patel and is directed by Sameer Bhatnagar. Revealing about her role she says: "I will be seen portraying the character of Mrudula, who is a 'banjaran' (nomad). It is something very creative and interesting role I'm enjoying acting for. My audience will get to see me in a completely new role. We are currently shooting in Haridwar for the same." The actress who was last seen playing a Naagin in the show, 'Phir Laut Aayi Naagin' dreams to make her name in Bollywood and wishes to work with superstars. She adds: "After acting in television and web shows, finally I'm enjoying working for a Bollywood movie. I'm delighted to feature on the big screen and looking forward to exploring it more with time. I hope to work with popular actors like Ayushmann Khurrana, Salman Khan, Ajay Devgan, among others. Hope my hard work and dedication will make my dreams come true."

Ranveer Singh likes to turn challenges into canvas for his characters



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Ranveer Singh derives inspiration from challenges that push him to do better. Whenever he gets offered a daunting character, he does get rattled and nervous but the actor doesn't let himself get bogged down by the challenge.

Instead, he uses the nervous energy to sketch characters that connect with the audience at large.

Commenting on the same, the actor says, "I like daunting challenges. I feel daunted when they are pitched or presented to me. When Sanjay Leela Bhansali comes with Alauddin Khilji or Kabir Khan comes with Kapil Dev or Rohit Shetty with a full blown masala character like 'Simmba', initially, I do get rattled, I do get daunted and feel nervous."

He continues, "But it's nervous energy. I learnt from Kris Srikkanth, who I have had the good fortune to spend time with during the '83' movie promotions. He told me its energy - it cannot be created or destroyed, it can be transmitted, transformed. So, I take this nervousness and I channel it into the energy that I use to pursue this path of transformation. It's those challenges that excite me and I embrace them fully."

He further says, "Kapil Dev has such a distinctive persona, body language, way of talking, it's a huge challenge but I was up to it and was excited about it. I was like this is a new challenge, this is something I haven't done before." He adds, "There

are other instances of villainous characters or these characters - they've not got a living reference. It's a different kind of challenge where you have to create from your imagination. But here I had to become a person who was so well and widely known and recognised. It was very daunting." Ranveer is also hugely inspired by three-time Oscar winner Daniel Day-Lewis, who is known for his transformations in movies, "It's my endeavour to create characters that are distinctive and different from each other because growing up as an aspiring actor I felt most fascinated with those actors who are able to show a wide range in their repertoire, who are able to transform themselves, who can be shapeshifters, chameleons like Daniel Day-Lewis."

He concludes, "You see one film of one person and see the other film - it's like two different people that used to blow my mind. So I endeavour to be that way, I aspire to be that way." Ranveer will be next seen in YRF's 'Jayeshbhai Jordaar', Shankar's remake of his blockbuster 'Anniyan', Rohit Shetty's 'Cirkus' and Karan Johar's 'Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani'.

FARAH KHAN RECALLS CHOREOGRAPHING SHAKIRA'S SONG 'HIPS DON'T LIE' BOLLYWOOD-STYLE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood choreographer Farah Khan recalls how she was asked to help Colombian songstress Shakira to shake a leg on her hit chartbuster 'Hips Don't Lie' in typical Bollywood style.

She revealed the same when she appeared on 'The Kapil Sharma Show' with Raveena Tandon as a celebrity guest and obliged in answering host Kapil Sharma's question about this incident.

In conversation with Farah, Kapil Sharma shared that he likes Shakira and asked Farah to elaborate on her experience choreographing for her. Farah Khan said: "I was called to New York because she wanted to perform the song in Bollywood style. Thus, I went there and I choreographed 'Hips Don't Lie' for her."

Further into the conversation, Farah then confesses that she would like to see Kapil Sharma and Archana Puran Singh dance together on a romantic song. The duo later dance together on the song 'Pehla Nasha' with Farah Khan giving directional cues.

'The Kapil Sharma Show' airs on Sony Entertainment Television.



Nawazuddin: Realistic performance in comfort zone is very easy to pull off

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui, who is known for bringing realism into a film's narrative through his portrayal of characters, feels that giving a realistic performance within the comfort level is an easy job.

Talking about the same Nawazuddin, who will be seen in 5 titles in 2022,

shared, "We can just give it a try on versatility. I always try to make sure that I don't want to be in the comfort zone. Comfort zone is very easy and doing a realistic performance in a comfort zone is very easy. But being realistic while being in character and catching up with the ease of it is very difficult."

He adds, "If I repeat myself, that will be very easy

for me because I am in my comfort zone, and I can give you the impression of being realistic, being realistic while being in a character and bringing the ease is very difficult."

Nawaz is going to have a busy year with 'No Land's Man', 'Adbhut', 'Tiku Weds Shiru', 'Jogira Sara Ra Ra' and 'Heropanti 2', all of which belong to different genres.

'RANJISH HI SAHI' WILL APPEAL TO THOSE WHO KNOW MAHESH BHATT AND PARVEEN BABI'S HISTORY



BY TROY RIBEIRO

'Ranjish Hi Sahi' (Streaming on Voot Select)

Direction: Pushpdeep Bhardwaj

Cast: Tahir Raj Bhasin, Amala Paul, Amrita Puri, Zarina Wahab, Paras Priyadarshan, Naina Sareen, Madan Deodhar, Saurabh Sachdeva

Duration: Average 36 minutes per episode

Ratings: * * * (three stars)

Though it is not blatantly spelt out, 'Ranjish Hi Sahi' which means, 'out of resentment', is a fictionalised, biopic slice of director Mahesh Bhatt's life which details his relationship with late actress Parveen Babi.

With a timespan ranging from 1959 to 2005, this eight-episode series is narrated in a non-linear manner, through the maverick film director Shankar Vats' point of view. It starts on a literally and figuratively hazy note.

The 28-minute pilot episode begins in 1976 in Pune with Shankar Vats walking out of Ajnadhham Dharamshala. Later in conversation with actor Vinod Kumar in his car, we are given an insight into Shankar Vats' obstinate personality.

Vinod cajoles Shankar to return to the ashram but is soon physically thrown out from there. After some reflection, Shankar returns to Bombay, and soon the episode sketchily encapsulates what you will see in the series.



Thus, the series boasts many repetitive scenes, but these scenes do not bog down the viewing experience. Through the episodes, we learn how Shankar after delivering three flops in succession, is struggling to keep his family afloat while trying to raise funds for his fourth film. We also get to know how he met ace actress Amna Parvez and developed a bond with her, Amna's ruined relationship with actor Zubair, her mood swings, and her interaction with Shankar's wife Anju.

Practically everyone knows about Mahesh Bhatt's association with Parveen Babi, and thus it is the curiosity factor of how things panned out between them that would hold the viewer's interest, and the series offers this in ample measure. Also, there are scenes in the series which you can associate with Mahesh Bhatt's films, especially 'Zakhm'.

The character of the "Watch Man - who repairs watches" is metaphorically and artfully used to depict conscience.

The series is mounted skillfully with ace production values. The era is brilliantly captured, with kids playing with marbles, the bioscopewalla (the travelling hand-cranked cinema) on the cycle, dated advertisements in the inte-

rior of the buses, costumes, period telephones, typewriters, and locks.

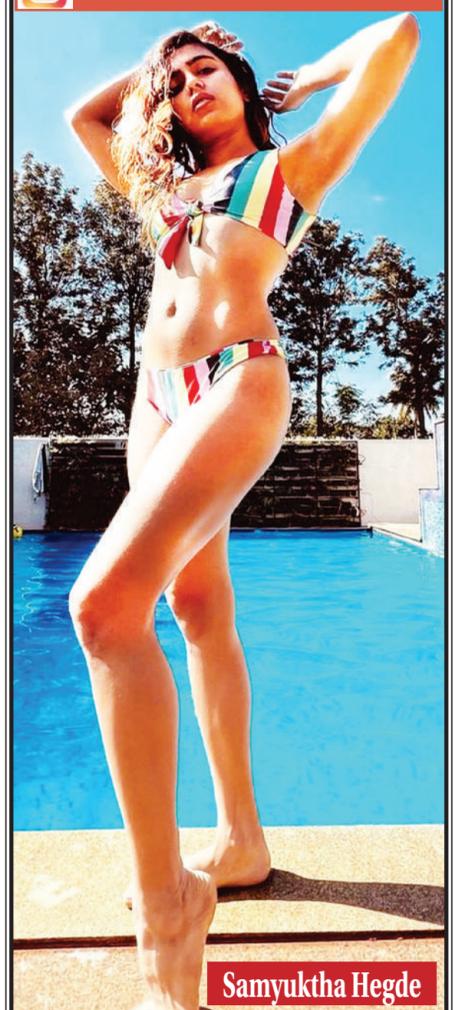
Also, the music transports you to the time. The songs, 'O Berahem Zindagi', 'Tham Sa Gaya', and the Sufi number in the eighth episode, along with the background score, are situationally effective.

Consider it as the perfect casting or good acting, Tahir Raj Bhasin in a hideous wig - slips into the shoes of the self-deprecating Shankar Vats with ease. He nails his character to the tee, playing the kind, considerate and honourable husband, friend, father, and son with kind fervour and abject honesty. Amala Paul plays Amna Parvez with equal passion and conviction. So does Paras Priyadarshan as Shankar's brother Ganesh, Amrita Puri as Anju, Zarina Wahab as Shankar's mother Zubair, Naina Sareen as Amna's aide Mary, Madan Deodhar as Amna's driver Abdul, and Saurabh Sachdeva as the industry mogul Jagmohan Seth. They all shine in their roles effortlessly.

Rajat Kaul as Zubair depicting Kabir Bedi is perfunctory in his histrionics and demeanour.

Overall, this series may appeal only to Hindi film fans who know Mahesh Bhatt and Parveen Babi's history.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Samyuktha Hegde