

# absolute india

VOL. 5, ISSUE 55, NEW DELHI | WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 05, 2022 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM NEW DELHI, MUMBAI AND BHOPAL

**NATION** > 02

India, US discuss bilateral issues, Indo-Pacific, global matters...



**HOLLYWOOD** > 06

Gal Gadot drops a heart on Ali Fazal's 'Death On The Nile' post...



**SPORTS** > 07

Stokes should not be pushed into captaincy; he has enough...



## DELHI GOVT IMPOSES WEEKEND CURFEW AMID RISE IN COVID CASES

# LOCKDOWN BEGINS

During weekdays, the metros and buses will run at full seating capacity with strict adherence to Covid-19 guidelines.

Even as the Omicron variant is spreading rapidly across the world, and outpacing the previous Delta strain, several Russian and Danish experts have said that the pandemic will end up as seasonal epidemics in this year, media reports said. According to epidemiologist and Russia's former chief sanitary doctor Gennady Onishchenko, the coronavirus pandemic may be over by May given the observance of all preventive measures and the vaccination drive, TASS news agency reported.

Delhi has reported around 11,000 positive cases in the past 8-10 days. Of these, around 350 patients are in hospital, 124 need Oxygen and seven are on ventilator.

Manish Sisodia, Dy CM, Delhi



### COVID ANTIVIRAL DRUG MOLNUPIRAVIR LAUNCHED IN INDIA

New Delhi: Covid antiviral drug Molnupiravir was on Monday launched in India at Rs 1,399 for a five-day course for mild to moderate infection. Along with Molnupiravir, the CDSCO has also granted emergency use authorisation to the Serum Institute of India's Covid vaccine COVOVAX, Hyderabad based Biological E RBD Protein CORBEVAX. Molnupiravir is an antiviral medication that inhibits the replication of certain RNA viruses. It is used to treat COVID-19 in those infected by SARS-CoV-2. The recommended dose of Molnupiravir 800 mg is twice a day for five days. A patient needs to take 40 capsules containing 200 mg of medication. Over a dozen pharma companies including Torrent, Cipla, Sun Pharma, Dr Reddy's, Natco, Mylan, and Hetero are in the process to manufacture the oral pill.

### US REPORTS 1 MN DAILY COVID CASES

Washington: Amid the rapid spread of the new highly-transmissible Omicron variant, the US has reported more than one million Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, breaking previous records for single-day infection spike, according to health authorities. As of 5 a.m. on Tuesday, the country registered 1.07 million confirmed cases in the past 24 hours, which increased the country's overall infection tally to 56,191,733, according to Johns Hopkins University. The US remains the country worst hit by the pandemic, with the world's highest cases and deaths (827,749).

### NEW COVID-19 VARIANT IHU DETECTED IN FRANCE

While the world is pulling in resources to fight back against the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, scientists have detected a relatively new strain. Called the IHU variant, or B.1.640.2, it was first detected in southern France last month but has now begun catching the attention of global experts. Detected by researchers at the Marseille-based Mediterranean Infection University Hospital Institute (IHU), the variant has 46 mutations. This is leading to the fear that IHU could be more resistant to existing vaccines. However, experts have said it is too early to say anything with certainty about its behaviour. At least 12 people were found infected with IHU in the Marseille area and reports have said some of them have been hospitalised with the illness. The cases have been linked to travel to the African country Cameroon.

### MAHARASHTRA SEES OMICRON, COVID-19 CASES ZOOM, WITH 20 DEATHS

Mumbai: Maharashtra on Tuesday again notched a steep hike in Covid-19 cases and its variant Omicron infections with deaths also zooming, health officials said. For the 7th consecutive day, the state reported a massive spike in Covid-19 infections and 'suspect cases' whose samples have been sent for genome sequencing. The state Covid-19 count shot up again - from 12,160 on Monday to 18,466 now - and fatalities also increased from 11 a day earlier to 20, while the mortality rate remained steady at 2.01 per cent. After recording 68 Omicron infections on Monday, the state logged 75 more cases of the variant, taking up the state tally from 510 to 633, with Mumbai again reporting the highest number of fresh cases. Of the 75 cases, 40 are from Mumbai, 12 in Thane, 10 from Pune, five in Raigad, three each in Kolhapur and Nagpur, and one each from Satara and Amravati.

## 'BULLI BAI' APP CASE: 21-YR-OLD SENT TO POLICE CUSTODY TILL JAN 10, ANOTHER YOUNG WOMAN HELD

THE LATEST CONTROVERSY CAME SIX MONTHS AFTER THE 'SULLI DEALS' ISSUE. BOTH NAMES ARE DEROGATORY TERMS FOR WOMEN OF THE PARTICULAR RELIGION.

GITHUB HAD PROVIDED SPACE TO SULLI DEALS AND THIS TIME TOO, THE OFFENDING APP WAS CREATED ON THE PLATFORM. AFTER THE CONTROVERSY, GITHUB HAD REMOVED THE USER FROM ITS HOSTING PLATFORM.

THE APP WAS ALSO BEING PROMOTED BY A TWITTER HANDLE WITH THE NAME @BULLIBAI, WITH THE DISPLAY PICTURE WAS OF A KHALISTANI SUPPORTER.



### DELHI POLICE GETS NOD FOR MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE TREATY IN SULLI DEAL CASE

New Delhi: Delhi Police on Tuesday got approval from the government for Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty to seek details from US-based firm GitHub about the user who uploaded the app, Sulli deal, on the platform six months ago. Sources in the police establishment said that the approval was given by the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi. The derogatory "Sulli Deals" mobile app had surfaced in July last year where photos of Muslim women were displayed without their consent.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Mumbai cyber police apprehended the student, Vishal Kumar from Bengaluru, on Monday and later arrested him.

After being brought to Mumbai, he was produced before the Bandra metropolitan magistrate.

The police sought Kumar's custody for 10 days and also permission from the court to carry out searches at his premises in Bengaluru.

After hearing the police's submission, the magistrate

remanded Kumar in police custody till January 10 and also permitted the cops to carry out searches at his premises.

The cyber cell had filed the FIR against unidentified persons following complaints that photographs of Muslim women were uploaded for auction on the app hosted by the GitHub platform.

Earlier in the day, a Mumbai police team also detained a woman, who is believed to be the main accused in the case, from Uttarakhand, an official said.

According to the police, the woman and Kumar know each other. The woman will be produced before the local court where Mumbai Police will seek her transit remand to take her to Mumbai.

Hundreds of Muslim women were listed for auction on the 'Bulli Bai' app with photographs sourced without permission and doctored. It has happened for the second time in less than a year. The app appeared to be a clone of 'Sulli Deals' which triggered a similar row last year.



### STAMPEDE-LIKE SITUATION IN CONG MARATHON IN BAREILLY

Bareilly: Videos from the 'Mahila Marathon' in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly on Tuesday show that the event led to a stampede-like situation with girls tripping and falling over each other. Sources said that several girls were also injured. The marathon was a part of the Congress party's election campaign theme 'Ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon' (I am a girl and can fight). Even as videos and pictures of girls falling on the ground went viral, the Congress maintained that the participants were 'brimming with enthusiasm,' and were doing a warm up exercise.

### NEET-PG ADMISSIONS

### SC AGREES TO TAKE UP CENTRE'S PLEA ON EWS QUOTA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday again urged the Supreme Court to urgently hear the matter connected with the validity of EWS quota in postgraduate courses in medical colleges. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, after failing to get the matter listed on Tuesday, requested a bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana to list the matter for hearing. Mehta emphasized that the matter needs to be



considered on priority since resident doctors are protesting.

The bench said: "If it is a three-judge bench matter, then it will be listed before a three-judge bench tomorrow". On Monday, Mehta asked a bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud to advance the hearing on the matter to Tuesday from January 6. The Centre has told the top court that Rs 8 lakh income criterion for determining the EWS is

much more stringent than the one for the OBC creamy layer. The top court is hearing writ petitions challenging 27 per cent reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) and 10 per cent reservation for EWS in all-India Quota seats for postgraduate medical courses. As many as 15 per cent seats in MBBS and 50 per cent seats in MS and MD courses are filled through All India Quota from the candidates selected through NEET.

### On New Year Day, Indian Army flew Tiranga high in Galwan Valley

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Chinese propaganda on Galwan Valley went flat after a picture surfaced and went viral on social media showing Indian troops bravely hoisting the tri-colour high at Galwan Valley, though not at the disputed and demilitarized zone. Few days back, the Chinese media first shared a video of Chinese army, PLA troops at Galwan Valley, saluting their national flag, with a caption, China's national flag rises over Galwan Valley on the New Year Day of 2022. "The flag was special since it once flew over Tiananmen Square in Beijing". After a violent face-off in June 2020 in eastern Ladakh, between the two armies, the Galwan Valley is now a demilitarized zone, and both the armies are mutually disengaged from the disputed site and did withdraw two km away from river bend, where clash took place.



### CHINA BUILDING BRIDGE ACROSS PANGONG LAKE: CONGRESS

"China is busy building a bridge on Pangong Tso to make it easier to deploy troops. Meanwhile, 'Beijing' Janata Party leaders led by PM & HM are busy in election rallies. Enemy is at our gates. PM Modi is taking a siesta."

Malikarjun Kharge, Leader of Opposition, RS

### CBSE CAUTIONS STUDENTS AGAINST MISINFORMATION, ISSUES ADVISORY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Cautioning board class students of misinformation being spread online, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) issued a public advisory on Tuesday, stating that the CBSE Term 2 Board Exam 2022 pattern has not been changed and will be the same as announced earlier by the board.

"It has been noticed that a few online media platforms are circulating incorrect information and confusing audiences, using expressions such as 'Breaking News' about major exam pattern

changes in Class X and XII Term 2 Board exams," the official notice read.

CBSE Term 2 Board Exam 2022 pattern has not been changed and will be the same as announced earlier by the Board, it said.

The notice further read, "It is clarified in the interest of students that the Board had announced changes in the exam pattern (mentioned in Circular No. 51, dated July 5, 2021).



### WOMAN WHO SHOWED BLACK FLAG TO PM SHOT

Lucknow: A woman leader of Congress, Rita Yadav was shot by miscreants late on Monday evening near Diara over-bridge of Lucknow-Varanasi four-lane under construction in Sultanpur.

Yadav grabbed the headlines after showing a black flag to prime minister Narendra Modi in Sultanpur. She has been reportedly hit by a bullet on her leg and admitted to CHC Lambhua. The doctors referred her to the district hospital. CO of Lambhua Satish Chand Shukla reached the spot and investigated and Yadav's statement has been recorded.

Yadav said that she had gone to get the poster-banner made and when she was going home on the way, three people overtook her Bolero near Lambhua on the highway and abused and threatened to kill her. She said they "put a pistol on my driver's forehead. When I slapped him on it, he shot me and fled." The Police has said that the condition of the leader is now stable. The shooter has not been identified. The cops are now trying to catch the culprits.

## SHOPPING ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO HIT \$1.2 TN BY 2025, INDIA KEY MARKET

Currently, nearly eight out of 10 social media users in India use social commerce to make purchases, according to the report by Accenture.

Gen Z and millennial social media users will account for 62 per cent of global social commerce spend by 2025.

Millennials alone will account for nearly \$401 billion of social commerce spend by 2025.

"Shoppers in China, India and Brazil care more about features that help them discover and evaluate potential purchases -- both areas where social features enhance the existing experience. Half of social media users surveyed, however, indicate they are concerned that social commerce purchases will not be protected or refunded properly, making trust the biggest barrier to adoption, as it was for e-commerce at its beginning," the report noted.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Driven by Gen Z and millennial users, shopping on social media platforms is likely to reach \$1.2 trillion globally by 2025, and highest growth will be seen in developing markets such as India and Brazil, a new report showed on Tuesday. China will remain the most advanced market both in size and maturity in the social commerce space that will account for 17 per

cent of all e-commerce spend by 2025.

"Despite being a mature market, almost half of consumers in India are making more impulse purchases than planned purchases," the findings showed.

Users from India are more than twice as likely to sell on social platforms compared to users in the US and the UK.

More than half (59 per cent) of social buyers surveyed said they are

more likely to support small and medium-sized businesses through social commerce than when shopping through e-commerce websites.

Furthermore, 63 per cent said they are more likely to buy from the same seller again, showing the benefits of social commerce in building loyalty and driving repeat purchases.

By 2025, the highest number of social commerce purchases globally are expected in clothing, consumer electronics and home decor.



# WET SPELL OVER NORTHWEST, CENTRAL INDIA TILL JANUARY 9

Team Absolute | New Delhi

There would be a wet spell over north-west India and central India till January 9 and no cold wave conditions are likely over north India during next 6-7 days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Tuesday.

"There is a Western Disturbance as a trough in westerlies in lower and middle tropospheric levels with its axis at 5.8 km above mean sea level. Under its influence, an induced cyclonic circulation has formed over southwest Rajasthan and adjoining Pakistan at lower tropospheric levels. There is moisture feeding from Arabian Sea over northwest India and likely to continue during next two days," the IMD said in a bulletin.

Fairly widespread to widespread light/moderate rainfall/snowfall is very likely over Western Himalayan Region on Wednesday and scattered on January 6. Isolated heavy rainfall/snowfall is very likely over Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh-Gilgit-Baltistan-Muzaffarabad on Wednesday and also over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand on Wednesday.

Scattered to fairly widespread light/moderate rainfall is very likely over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh & Delhi, north Rajasthan, and west Uttar Pradesh till January 6, isolated to scattered over south Rajasthan, Gujarat, west Madhya Pradesh, and east Uttar Pradesh on January 5 and 6.



The IMD also said that isolated heavy rainfall is very likely over Punjab on January 5, isolated thunderstorm activity accompanied with hailstorms very likely over Punjab and Haryana and Chandigarh on Wednesday and over east Uttar Pradesh and west Madhya Pradesh on January 6.

Thereafter, an intense Western Disturbance is very likely to affect northwest India from the night January 6 onwards and under its influence, an induced cyclonic circulation very likely to form over southwest Rajasthan and neighbourhood on January 7, the IMD said, adding, "High moisture feeding from Arabian Sea is also very likely over northwest India during January 7 to 9."

Fairly widespread to widespread rainfall/snowfall is very likely over Western Himalayan Region during January 7 to 9 and decrease thereafter. Isolated heavy

rainfall/snowfall is likely over Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh-Gilgit-Baltistan-Muzaffarabad during the same time and then over Himachal Pradesh on January 8 & 9.

"Scattered to fairly widespread light/moderate rainfall/thunderstorm over plains of northwest & adjoining central India during January 7-9 while isolated heavy rainfall is very likely over Punjab on January 7 and 8 and over Haryana on January 8.

Isolated thunderstorm activity accompanied with hailstorms is very likely over Punjab, east Uttar Pradesh, west Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan on January 7 and over east Madhya Pradesh on January 7 and 8. Minimum temperatures are above normal by 2 to 5 degrees Celsius over most parts of northwest India (excluding Uttar Pradesh), west Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat and near normal over rest part of north and adjoining central India. "A gradual rise in minimum temperatures by 2-4 degrees Celsius is very likely over most parts of northwest and central India during next two days and no significant change thereafter for subsequent three days. Hence, no cold wave conditions likely over northwest India during next 6-7 days," the IMD said.

## India, US discuss bilateral issues, Indo-Pacific, global matters



Team Absolute | New Delhi

India and the US discussed many important bilateral issues, as well as coordination on Indo-Pacific region and current global matters, External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar said on Tuesday, after talks with his US counterpart, Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

@A broad ranging conversation yesterday night with @SecBlinken

"Covered current bilateral issues, Indo-Pacific and pressing global matters. Also exchanged New Year greetings," he said in a tweet.

The US-India partnership is founded on a shared commitment to freedom, democ-

cratic principles, equal treatment of all citizens, human rights, and the rule of law, an official statement said.

Both countries have shared interests in promoting global security, stability, and economic prosperity through trade, investment, and connectivity.

The US supports India's emergence as a leading global power and vital partner in efforts to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is a region of peace, stability, and growing prosperity. The strong people-to-people ties between our countries, reflected in a four million-strong Indian American diaspora, are a tremendous source of strength for the partnership, said US Department of State.

## Two held for duping 45 people of Rs 4.6 cr in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Economic Offence wing of Delhi police has arrested two men for duping 45 people in the name of land pooling policy of Delhi Development Authority.

The accused identified as Jatin Gulrajani, 39, and Raj Kumar, 43, both residents of Delhi, induced the public through misrepresentation of facts pertaining to the DDA's newly launched Land Pooling Policy and offering affordable housing at prime locations to the persons in dire need.

Furnishing details about the case, a senior official of the Crime Branch said a man had filed a complaint against MTNL Housing Society with the allegations that he had booked a flat in the society "MTNL Employees House Welfare Society" after the said society published an advertisement in the month of August, 2019. In response to that advertisement, the complainant booked one BHK flat (550 sq ft) for a total cost of Rs 19,80,000/- and paid Rs 4,51,000/- in three instalments towards the cost of land. Even after two years when the complainant saw there was no progress on ground, he lodged a complaint



and subsequently the police registered an FIR under sections 409, 420, 120 B of the Indian Penal Code. "After registration of the FIR more victims approached EOW and made complaints against this society," the official said.

The investigation revealed that an amount of approximately Rs 4.60 crore was received from 45 members in the name of Land Pooling Policy of DDA. Around 90 per cent of this amount was transferred in the account of Matrix Enterprises which was given a huge commission in the name of providing members and arranging land for the Society. Huge amount in turn was found credited in the bank account of the wife of accused Jatin Gulrajani, the Secretary of the Society and one of the accused persons, the official said.

## UNION MIN FROM BENGAL QUILTS BJP WHATSAPP GROUPS

New Delhi: In an embarrassment to the Bharatiya Janata Party, Union minister and prominent member of the Matua community, Shantanu Thakur has quit all WhatsApp groups of the party.

Confirming it, Thakur, the union minister of state for shipping Tuesday told reporters, "It seems the state BJP leadership does not think we (Matuas) have an important role within the organisation.."

He also wondered if he has any importance in the BJP state unit any more..

He is the Sanghadhipati, All India Matua Mahasangha, an influential Matua community body. The Bongaon MP had a few days back voiced his reservation against the omission of some MLAs of the Matua community in the reconstituted BJP state and district committees.

He had, however, said he will be loyal to the party.

## Musk's Starlink refunding pre-orders in India post govt pressure

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Nearly a month after the Department of Telecommunications under the Ministry of Communications warned Starlink to get necessary permission required to offer satellite-based internet services in India, the Elon Musk-owned company on Tuesday informed some individuals in the country that it will refund their pre-orders.

The Indian government had told Starlink, the satellite internet division of billionaire Musk's rocket company SpaceX, to stop "booking/rendering the satellite internet service" in the country sans a licence.

Starlink later announced that it will apply for a commercial licence in India by January 31.

Starlink said in an email that it is "looking forward to making Starlink available in India as soon as possible but does not have a timeline for receiving licences to operate".

"As has always been the case, you can receive a refund at any time," the company said.



An email sent to the company for an official statement went unanswered.

Starlink had said last month that it will apply for a commercial licence in India by January 31, 2022.

"We hope to have applied for a commercial licence on or before January 31, 2022 (unless we hit some major roadblock)," Sanjay Bhargava, India Director for Starlink, had said in a LinkedIn post. Bhargava in his post also said how Starlink could be great for

connectivity in numerous situations.

He said that a 100 per cent Broadband India will require collaboration across stakeholders, service providers, and technologies, and Starlink encourages everyone to think about their usage and develop connectivity plans for districts as well as private use. Earlier, Starlink had announced that it will focus on 10 rural Lok Sabha constituencies to provide internet services.

## 2 terrorists killed in encounter at J&K's Kulgam identified

Srinagar | Agencies

The two terrorists killed in an encounter with security forces at the Okey area in South Kashmir's Kulgam district on Tuesday have been identified, officials said.

The police said that based on specific inputs regarding the presence of terrorists in the area, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by the police, the army and the CRPF.

During the search operation, as the joint search party proceeded towards the suspected spot, the hiding terrorists fired indiscriminately which was retaliated effectively, leading to an encounter. In the ensuing encounter, two terrorists of proscribed terror outfit LeT (TRF) were killed and their bodies were retrieved from the site of



the encounter.

They have been identified as Amir Ahmad Wani, a resident of Alamgunj Shopian, and Sameer Ahmad Khan, a resident of Tiken Pulwama.

"As per police records, Amir Ahmad was a categorised terrorist linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT (TRF). The other killed terrorist joined terror folds

recently. Both the slain terrorists were part of a group involved in several terror crime cases," the police said. Incriminating materials, arms and ammunition, including one AK-47 and one pistol, were recovered from their possession. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation.

## NADDA'S RALLY DENIED IN SECUNDERABAD

Hyderabad: Tension

prevailed near the Mahatma Gandhi statue in Secunderabad on Tuesday evening as BJP was determined to go ahead with a candle-light rally under the leadership of the party's national President J.P. Nadda to protest against the arrest of the party's Telangana unit chief and MP Bandi Sanjay despite police refusing permission for the same.

Large number of BJP workers gathered near the statue while policemen were deployed to foil any rally. The police diverted vehicular traffic in the busy area, causing inconvenience to motorists.

Soon after Nadda landed at the Hyderabad Airport, a police official briefed him about the ban on rallies, meetings and public congregations in view of the prevailing Covid-19 situation. The BJP chief told reporters that he assured the official that they will abide by all Covid rules.



## Punjab hikes honorarium of 53,000 Anganwadi workers, others

CHANDIGARH | Agencies

Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Channi on Tuesday announced a hike in the monthly honorarium of over 53,000 Anganwadi workers, mini-Anganwadi workers and the helpers.

He also declared that all these workers would be now eligible for regular increase in their honorarium annually from January 1, 2023.

Channi also distributed appointment letters to 67 'safai sewaks'. Addressing a gathering of Anganwadi workers in Morinda town, the Chief Minister declared that from now onwards the monthly emoluments of the Anganwadi workers stand increased from Rs 8,100 to Rs 9,500, mini-Anganwadi workers from Rs 5,300 to Rs 6,300 and helpers from Rs 4,050 to Rs 5,100. Likewise, the honorarium of Anganwadi workers would be increased every year by Rs 500 while it would be enhanced Rs 250 in case of both mini-Anganwadi workers and the helpers. Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal said the government is conversant with the problems being faced by the



women who had to undertake household chores before leaving for the professional commitments. They deserved this much awaited increase in their monthly emoluments. Social Security, Women and Child Development Minister Razia Sultana expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister and the Finance Minister for this hike, adding that the government stands shoulder to shoulder with the Anganwadi workers in their hour of need.

## SINDHUTAI SAPKAL, 'MOM TO THOUSANDS OF ORPHANS', PASSES AWAY



Pune: Veteran social worker Sindhutai Sapkal - known as the 'Mother to thousands of orphans' - passed away following a cardiac arrest, a family friend said.

She was 73, and breathed her last at Galaxy Hospital where she was under treatment for almost a month.

Maai - as she was revered by her foster children, is survived by her sole biological daughter Mamta. Sindhutai's last rites shall be performed on Wednesday morning at Manjari, near Hadapsar on the outskirts of Pune, the friend said. She was conferred the Padma Shri award in November 2021 for her selfless services for orphans and abandoned children since nearly five decades.

## WHY BJP APPEALED TO EC TO HOLD POLLING IN UP'S PURVANCHAL FIRST?

► THE BJP WANTS THE UP ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS TO START FROM PURVANCHAL, THE EASTERN PART OF THE STATE. IT RAISED THIS DEMAND TO THE ELECTION COMMISSION DURING A MEETING, TELLING THE POLL PANEL NOT TO START THE POLL SCHEDULE FROM WESTERN UP, AS PER THE USUAL PRACTICE.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

During the meeting of the EC team that went to Lucknow under the Chief Election Commissioner, the BJP delegation said that for the last several decades, both the Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha polls have been started from the western part of the state and the commission should change this



tradition this time.

Several factors are said to be working behind the BJP's demand. In the 2017 state elections, the BJP secured gains in every part of the state,

but this time, the party is little worried due to the farm agitation and the attitude of the Jat community of the western UP. The poll tie-up between Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party and

the Jayant Chaudhury-led Rashtriya Lok Dal has made things worse.

The party also feels that with the elections in western UP in the last phase, it will get more time to prepare. Due to the long election campaign in the state, the party will get the opportunity to woo the farmers and the Jat community and hopes to bring them back to the fold.

Another reason could be heavy voting in favour of the party in Purvanchal is bound to have effect on the voters of western UP as well and the BJP feels that in that case the farmers and the Jat community of western UP will get back to the fold.

The 2017, assembly elections were held in 7 phases. In the first phase, polling was held on February 11, 2017 in 73 seats in 15 districts of western Uttar Pradesh, while the last two phases were held in Purvanchal districts.

If the BJP's appeal is accepted by the Election Commission, then this time the voters of Purvanchal will get the first chance to vote and western UP voters will have to wait till the last phase.



# MP REPORTS 308 COVID CASES, ACTIVE CASES OVER 1K

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh has reported 308 new Covid-19 cases, pushing the tally of active cases in the state to 1,029. A total 57,843 samples were tested in a day, according to the state government's data released on Tuesday.

The daily Covid positivity rate was reported at 0.53 per cent, while the recovery rate in the state was at 98.6 per cent. A total 57 people infected with Covid-19 recovered in the last 24 hours.

Now, the people moving without masks and violating Covid-19 protocols will be charged Rs 200, said state Home Minister Narottam Mishra, who is also the government's spokesperson.

"Situation is becoming critical day by day in the state. The government is prepared to fight against the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, but people have to strictly follow the Covid related restrictions. I have asked state police to impose a fine on those found violating Covid protection related norms," Mishra added.

Earlier in the day, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan held a review meeting on Covid situation with his cabinet colleagues and asked them to visit the districts to take stock of the health and treatment facilities. "Efforts have to be made to save the public from the new Omicron variant. People's representa-



tives should also take care of their own health," Chouhan stated after the meeting.

Chouhan, however, made it clear that the state government has decided not to put any more restrictions on public

movement in the state as of now and the economic activities will continue. "We have to follow all the precautions to prevent infections. Care should also be taken to ensure that the poor do not have to worry for their livelihood,

# Approval for formation of Anand Department, name of Spiritual Department also changed

## Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday, approval was given to amend the work (allocation) rules for formation of "Anand Department" and renaming of "Spiritual Department" to "Religious Trust and Endowment Department."

The Cabinet gave in-principle approval for the implementation of Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) programme. The cabinet has given policy/in-principle approval for a supercritical technology based thermal power expansion unit of 1x660 megawatt capacity at Amarkantak Thermal Power House, Chachai of Madhya Pradesh Power Generating Company, which is proposed to be implemented by a joint venture formed between Madhya Pradesh Power Generating Company Limited and SCEL, a subsidiary of Coal India Limited. For the expansion / reorganization of offices in the new setup of Directorate of Town and Country Planning, the Council of Ministers has sanctioned a total of 941 posts (regular 693, contract 201, out-source 47) and 140 deputation posts, 5 posts of Project Management Unit and



in addition establishment of monitoring unit, hiring of 25 interns and approval for annual expenditure of Rs.13 crore 45 lakh was given. In the setup of the Directorate, 5 new district offices (Morena, Tikamgarh, Dhar, Balaghat, Sehore) of Assistant Director level have been approved. Assistant Director, District Office Katni has been upgraded to Deputy Director level office. This will facilitate the general public in these districts and development works will also get momentum. In order to compensate the loss of state agencies in the state government and ensure that the produce of the farmers is regularly purchased on support price, the Cabinet has decided to implement the new scheme Mukhyamantri Krishak Fasal Uparjan Sahayata Yojana from the year 2020-21 in place of two schemes (reimbursement of loss in food procurement

to Madhya Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation and reimbursement of loss in food procurement to Madhya Pradesh State Cooperative Marketing Federation). The Cabinet decided to implement the new National Livestock Mission scheme of the Government of India in the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying in the state. The objective of the scheme is mainly cattle breed development, employment generation, increasing the productivity of animals, bringing research to the field level and entrepreneurship development. Including the above activities in the National Livestock Mission, three sub-missions have been formed. The Cabinet approved tender forms for purchase, maintenance and operation of linear accelerator equipment in medical colleges Bhopal, Indore and Rewa under PPP scheme to provide easy treatment to cancer patients in the state. According to the suggestions received in the Pre Bid Conference of the tender, the Medical Education Department was given the power to make changes. The Council of Ministers approval was given to the H-1 tenderer at the highest tender bid price and after depositing 100% of the tender bid price by the tenderer for the release of the assets including the commercial tax department's assets.

# 7.71L MP teenagers get Covid jab on 1st day drive, highest among states

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh has administered the highest number of doses of vaccine on the first day of anti-Covid inoculation drive for 15-18 age group, with 7.71 lakh teenagers getting their first dose, the state government said on Tuesday.

The state government has set up 8,667 vaccination centers for teenagers in all the 52 districts across the state. However, it was around 4.25 per cent against its target 12 lakh for the first day of vaccination for the same age.

Neighbouring state Gujarat was the second with 5.6 lakh doses and Andhra Pradesh was at the third position, as per the state government data. Not a single adverse effect case had been reported in Madhya Pradesh on Monday, officials said.

Overall 10 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the state, out of which around 75 per cent jab receivers were teenagers.



With this, the state has so far administered a total around 10.34 crore vaccine doses. Vaccination is now being carried out on all days, including Sundays in the state.

Among the districts where maximum doses were administered so far, Indore was on top with 59,769 doses, then it was Sagar district where 58,312 doses were administered, followed by Chhatarpur district with 49,982 doses and

Chhindwara district with 38,091 doses, till Monday, as per the CwWin app.

Earlier on Sunday, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan stated that around 95 per cent people above 18 years have administered their first dose, while around 91 per cent have received their second dose. On Monday, Madhya Pradesh reported 222 new Covid cases, pushing the tally of active cases in the state to 774.

# Better maintenance and services must increased with energy production: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that more efforts should be put in the direction of making Madhya Pradesh more efficient in the energy sector. Energy production has increased in the state. At the same time, continuous attention is also needed to benefit the general public through better maintenance and best services. In the departmental review meeting of the Energy Department today, Chouhan, ensured uninterrupted power supply to electricity consumers, recovery of bills from big defaulters, repairing of burnt transformers and consumers.

Chouhan directed the Energy Department to study and implement the best practices.

Chouhan said that immediate action should be taken if illegal electricity connections are detected. Similarly, agricultural consumers must be informed in case of change in the schedule of electricity supply. The Chief Minister issued instructions to make persistent efforts for installation of smart meters, material purchase, sustainable maintenance of distribution infrastructure, construction of green energy corridors, construction of new ultra high pressure substations for strengthening of transmission system, GIS based field survey and Project planning, renewal of Hydro Power Plants and implementation of Revamped Distribution Area Improvement Plan.



Chouhan congratulated the Energy Department for timely completion of work of all 12 sub-stations and the completion of 44 out of 46 lines in the construction of Green Energy Corridor. Principal Secretary Energy informed that the target is to complete the work of the remaining two lines by the end of the year 2022. Success is also being achieved in fulfilling the target of setting up seven in-house testing laboratories in the state. Laboratories have been set up at Bhopal, Jabalpur and Indore for testing transformers, meters and cable materials. In the second phase, the process of setting up laboratories in Gwalior, Satna, Chhindwara and Ujjain has been started. Initiative has been taken for setting up of new thermal power unit at Chachai.

The Energy Department of Madhya Pradesh has completed the works in the implementation of the schemes of the Government of India. Work has been completed in 136 approved schemes for Madhya Pradesh under Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana. Similarly, IPDS 43 approved schemes have been completed.

Chouhan was told that the process for construction of 35 EHV sub-stations and associated transmission system through the TBCB route in the implementation of the roadmap for Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh is underway. The estimated investment for this work is Rs.2000 crores. With the strengthening of the transmission system through these works, quality power supply will be ensured. The target is to complete these works by March 2023. Similarly, out of the total 58 activities in the Green Energy Corridor project, 56 have been completed.

Chouhan directed to provide training to rural youth in ITIs and to provide them the opportunity for maintenance of power lines on outsourced basis. The Chief Minister said that the youth of rural areas who are not ITI trained, but willing to be employed, may also be attached to various responsibilities. New measures and innovations in departmental activities bring more good results. Efforts should be made to bring more good results from new measures and innovations in departmental activities.

# WOMAN RAPED DURING FAMILY OUTING, 2 ARRESTED: REPORT

Bhopal: The incident took place on Sunday following which the police arrested two persons, police said.

A woman was allegedly raped during an outing with her family members in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district, police said on Tuesday. The incident took place on Sunday following which the police arrested two persons, they said.

In a police complaint, the woman said she had gone out in a car with her husband and children. While they were returning home, two persons signalled them to stop the car on Aron Road in Raghogarh police station area, Superintendent of Police Rajiv Mishra said.

After they stopped the car, one of the persons allegedly held her husband at gun-point while other one took her to the nearby bushes and raped her, he said. According to the complainant, the accused were addressing each other as Sonu and Sumer, the official said. Based on the complaint, the police launched a search and arrested two persons, identified as Sonu Yadav (32) and Sumer Singh Parmar (30), he said. The two accused were booked under relevant sections, he added.

# CM PLANTED SAPPLINGS WITH VOLUNTEERS OF ROBIN HOOD ARMY



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Moulshree and Sapatarni along with volunteers of Robin Hood Army at Smart Garden on Tuesday. Soumya Baijal, Shri Pawas Sogani, Lokesh Dariyani and Fatima Abbas were also present during plantation. Robin Hood Army is a volunteer based organisation working without any funding. This organisation works to provide food to the needy people by obtaining surplus food from restaurants and community. The aim of the organisation is to defeat global hunger. Moulshree is also called Kesava in Sanskrit, Molsari or Bakool in Hindi. It is a medicinal tree, which has been used in Ayurveda for centuries. Sapatarni sapling is an evergreen medicinal tree, which has great importance in Ayurveda. This medicinal plant is used in the manufacture of various medicines.

# CM ASKS OFFICIALS TO FIND PERMANENT SOLUTION FOR DOG MENACE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Two days after a four-year-old girl was attacked by a pack of street dogs in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday asked district administration and Municipal Corporation (BMC) to find a permanent solution for dog menace in the city.

The Chief Minister on Monday called Bhopal district collector Avinash Lavania and BMC Commissioner K.V.S. Choudhary Kolsani. As per the Chief Minister's office, during the meeting, Chouhan

expressed his anguish over the incident that took place on Saturday in which a minor girl was mauled by 5-6 stray dogs, and asked the officials to find a permanent solution for dog menace.

Sources told IANS that during the meeting, BMC apprised the Chief Minister that around 1,600 street dogs have been sterilised in the period of last two months in Bhopal. Sources also said that in the last five years, the BMC has sterilised more than 4,000 street dogs for which it has spent around Rs seven crore.

Meanwhile, the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has also

issued notice to the BMC and has sought an explanation on the matter.

The CCTV footage of Saturday's horrific incident that went viral on social media showed the minor was chased, pulled to the ground and then bitten by dogs. The dogs surrounded her and bit her on her head, belly and legs as she struggled to escape. She was pulled to the ground by the dogs, which continued to attack her. The helpless girl was rescued by a passer-by who noticed her crying surrounded by four to five street dogs. He chased them away. The girl is recuperating in the state government-run hospital in Bhopal.

# Sterlite Power Successfully Commissions Khargone Transmission Project

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Sterlite Power Transmission Limited (the "Company"), a leading private sector power transmission infrastructure developer and solutions provider, announced the successful commissioning of Khargone Transmission Limited (KTL) project worth INR 1662 crore in Madhya Pradesh (the "Project"). The Project will evacuate 1320 MW of power generated by the Khargone Power Plant to 765 kV Khandwa substation to further distribute it downstream

across Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Goa, Daman & Diu, and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. With the completion of the 765 kV D/C Khandwa - Dhule transmission line, all the elements in the project are complete and charged. Commenting on the milestone, Pratik Agarwal, Managing Director, Sterlite Power said, "We are delighted to achieve the successful commissioning of KTL project which aims at solving the critical challenge of energy delivery for the western and central region."

# 'Bade Miyan To Bade Miyan, Chhote Miyan Subhan Allah': Digvijay Singh on MP govt's plan to buy turbo jet aircraft

In order to purchase the new turbojet aircraft, the Madhya Pradesh government will make provisions in the budget proposal in February. However, the main opposition party Congress has slammed the cash-strapped government's move to buy a new aircraft. Senior Congress leader Digvijay Singh has targeted the Shivraj government over the issue.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Shivraj Singh Chauhan government in Madhya Pradesh is planning to buy a modern turbojet aircraft equipped with state-of-the-art technology worth Rs 80 crore in the New Year 2022. According to reports, the state government has spent nearly Rs 13 crore on a rented aircraft that is being currently used for official purposes during the

last seven months.

In order to purchase the new turbojet aircraft, the Madhya Pradesh government will make provisions in the budget proposal in February. However, the main opposition party Congress has slammed the cash-strapped government's move to buy a new aircraft. Senior Congress leader Digvijay Singh has targeted the Shivraj government over the issue.

Notably, It is to be noted that the state government's old aircraft Super King Air B-250 had crashed on the Gwalior runway in May last year. Since then, the government has been using rented aircraft for official tours, surveys and important visits. Now, the state government has



Miyan, Chhote Miyan Subhan Allah," he tweeted further.

Through his tweet, Digvijay is also believed to have taken a swipe at PM Modi

decided to buy a new plane, which is expected to arrive in April-May this year. Veteran Congress leader Digvijay Singh has taken a jibe at the Madhya Pradesh government over its decision to buy a new plane. Digvijay Singh took to Twitter and wrote "If Modi bought an expensive aeroplane, why would CM Shivraj stay behind."

Miyan To Bade Miyan To Bade

over the central government's recent decision to buy an expensive state-of-the-art aircraft worth Rs 8,000 crore.

However, the Madhya Pradesh government would now need more airstrips for the new aircraft to land as presently there are only 5 airstrips that can be used for the landing of the new aircraft in the state. New airstrips would also be required since the proposed aircraft is a turbojet, which has a speed of 800 kilometres per hour. For the safe landing of a turbojet aircraft, the airstrip should have a 4-5 thousand feet long runway. At present only Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior, Jabalpur and Khajuraho have airstrips suitable for turbojet aircraft. Therefore, the state government would need to extend the runways of the remaining 27 airstrips in the state. Besides, the Madhya Pradesh government also owns a 155-B One helicopter. This helicopter was purchased by the government in the year 2011 for Rs 59 crores. This helicopter has completed 3000 hours of flight and it needs to go for extensive maintenance and servicing. It is estimated that around Rs 1 crore rupees will be spent on the service of this helicopter.



EDITOR'S SPECS

WOMEN IN ARMED FORCES

The Defence Ministry ensured women's empowerment in armed forces in 2021 with permanent commission of women officers in the army. It all started with Prime Minister Narendra Modi making an announcement during his Independence Day speech on August 15 that all Sainik Schools across India will now be open for girls. Accordingly, all the Sainik Schools are now offering admissions to girls and more than 350 girls have been admitted so far. Enhancing the women representation, the Border Roads Organisation appointed women officers to command important road construction companies (RCC) along the border areas. In April 2021, EE (Civil) Vaishali S. Hiwase, a GREF officer, took over the reins of 83 Road Construction Company and was employed on an important Indo-China road connecting Mumisairi-Bughdar-Milam. The government has now allowed girls of the country to appear in the National Defence Academy examination. The necessary administrative training and policy changes have been made and the NDA June 2022 course will have the first batch of women cadets. The first batch of women naval operation officers were inducted into the rotary wing and joined the helicopter squadron INAS 336 at INS Garuda, Kochi, on February 3, with Lt Kumudini Tyagi and Lt Riti Singh operating onboard warships as combat aircrew. In 2021, 39 women army officers got Permanent Commission after winning a legal battle in the Supreme Court. A Permanent Commission means a career in the army till retirement, while Short Service Commission is for 10 years, with the option of either leaving or opting for Permanent Commission at the end of 10 years. If an officer doesn't get Permanent Commission then, the officer can choose a four-year extension.

THE DRAGON'S LONG SHADOW ON SRI LANKA

Sumit Kumar Singh

For some South Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bangladesh, the 'China Nightmare' is no longer just a bad dream. It is a living reality, which continues to threaten the countries' national interests, and eat away at their very sovereignty. Sri Lanka's fall into the dragon's trap was triggered when China, taking advantage of the souring relations between Colombo and the Washington, started its aggressive courting of the Mahendra Rajapaksa government from the time he assumed office in 2005. By 2007, the war against the LTTE was raging, and the island nation was facing increasing international criticism over human rights issues. The US significantly reduced its foreign assistance package, and neighbour India's assistance was constrained by the Tamil sentiments back home. The dragon, which was closely watching, swooped in with a \$37 million deal for Chinese ammunition and ordnance. This was followed in 2008 by the gift of six F7 fighters, JY-11 radar and anti-aircraft guns. By the time the war with the LTTE ended in 2009, relations with China were upgraded to a 'strategic cooperative partnership'. However, the deadliest move made by China in its strategic game was made in 2007 itself, when it got Rajapaksa to lease land at Hambantota for construction of a port at a cost of \$1 billion. By 2014, Chinese aid and loans to Sri Lanka had exceeded a staggering \$6 billion, which included the Colombo Port City Project (CPCP), the South Container Terminal at Colombo Port, an Exclusive Investment Zone 35 miles from Colombo port, and a railway project. The net had been cast. It now remained for China to commence reeling it in. President Xi Jinping, in his September 2014 visit to Sri Lanka, did just that, and an agreement for Chinese companies to operate the by now bleeding Hambantota port was signed. Having snared its prey under a debt trap, Beijing then commenced leveraging its might into arm-twisting Colombo to get CCP Navy submarines to dock at Sri Lankan ports during their deployment to the Indian Ocean. These submarines, which are accompanied by submarine rescue ships, have been entering the region more frequently in the recent past, and find Sri Lanka to be a convenient port of call. What is interesting to note here is that Sri Lanka is the only country in the Indian Ocean besides Pakistan, where these sub-



marines have entered during their deployment over the last seven years. China's shadow has also loomed large over Sri Lanka's politics and elections. After 2011, China had also been influencing Sri Lanka's foreign policy decisions, having established a firm grip over the government through the burgeoning debt traps. With Sri Lankan debts to China in excess of \$8 billion, the room for manoeuvre for the government of the day was already quite limited. And of course, Chinese diplomacy has always been very nimble to adjust its front to changing dynamics. In the aftermath of the 2015 elections, China commenced courting not only the political parties, but also prominent Buddhist clergy in the island nation. This development was through the realisation of the influence of these religious figures in Sri Lankan domestic politics. Certain other factors threaten to push Sri Lanka deeper into the dragon's trap. Last year, the IMF prematurely ended the \$1.5 billion loan programme to the island nation. This was accompanied with the Covid pandemic, which delivered a terrible blow to Sri Lanka's tourism industry. This 'double whammy' ended any thoughts that Sri Lanka may have been nurturing of salvaging its situation against China. In March this year, Sri Lanka announced a

\$1.5 billion currency swap with the Chinese Central Bank. It also declared its partnership with China in developing two irrigation reservoirs in the Sinharaja Reserve Forest, which is a UNESCO-protected heritage site. In June 21, China Harbor Engineering Company (CHEC) bagged a project for construction of a 17-km elevated highway in Colombo, the terms of which provide full ownership to the company for revenue and profits for 18 years. This is the same CHEC, which is a subsidiary of the China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) that is leading the Hambantota Port Project, Mattala International Airport and the \$1.1 billion Colombo Port City. For the 2015 elections, payments totalling to \$1.1 million were linked from CHEC to Rajapaksa's election campaign supporters. Today, the situation is grim to the extent that the Chinese squeeze is resulting in Sri Lanka backing off from deals with other countries. In December 2020, Sri Lanka cancelled a \$480 million compact with the US Millennium Challenge Corporation. In the same month, Sri Lanka also cancelled the Colombo East Container Terminal Agreement, in which both India and Japan were signatories. There have been some

attempts made by Sri Lanka this year to showcase 'non-alignment' in strategic projects, but the Chinese influence in Sri Lanka makes these efforts appear extremely feeble as of now. The Chinese strategy is a cancerous trap that lures its victims at a time when they are at their weakest. The bait however, remains constant - money and apparent 'soft' loans, thereby trapping the Government of the day in frivolous infrastructure projects at rates which are 'too good to be true'. The modus operandi of engagement has been similar in Africa, Asia and Latin America where countries have been indebted with Chinese loans of billions of dollars. Sri Lanka was baited when it was facing international criticism on human rights issues, and its strategic allies and neighbours such as the US and India were not available to help. The decisions made by the Sri Lankan leadership at that time led to the dragon wrapping itself around its prey, and today the island nation is finding its strategic decision making increasingly constricted by this tight grip of Beijing.

international

Guterres hails joint statement by nuclear-weapon states

United Nations | Agencies

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has welcomed the five nuclear-weapon states' joint statement on the prevention of nuclear war and avoidance of arms races, his spokesman said. On Monday, the leaders of China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US issued the joint statement which said that they "consider the avoidance of war between Nuclear-Weapon States and the reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities". "We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. As nuclear use would have far-reaching consequences, we also affirm that nuclear weapons-for as long as they continue to exist-should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent



war. "We believe strongly that the further spread of such weapons must be prevented," the statement added. Regarding Guterres' response, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said: "The Secretary-General appreciates the recognition by the nuclear-weapon States of their need to comply with their

bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and commitments, including their binding obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons related to nuclear disarmament. "He is encouraged by the nuclear-weapon States' commitment to pursue measures to prevent nuclear war, consistent with his long-standing call for dialogue and cooperation to this end. He looks forward to further details about future initiatives. "The Secretary-General takes the opportunity to restate what he has said repeatedly: the only way to eliminate all nuclear risks is to eliminate all nuclear weapons. He reiterates his willingness to work with the nuclear-weapon States and all Member States to achieve this goal as soon as possible."

Erdogan pledges to reduce inflation to single-digit



Ankara: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed to decrease the country's inflation back to single-digit levels after the annual inflation surged to 36.08 per cent, the highest since 2002. "Whatever the reason is, we are in sorrow that our citizens are faced with such a picture," Erdogan said at a press conference after a cabinet meeting. The government is determined to decrease the inflation to single digits as soon as possible, he said, recalling that they had managed to reduce to 6 per cent in the past, reports Xinhua news agency.

NY AG seeks to interview Donald Trump, his children in civil case

New York | Agencies

New York Attorney General Letitia James said her office would continue to push forward a civil investigation into Donald Trump and the Trump Organization and is seeking to interview the former President and his two children. "Donald Trump, Donald Trump Jr., and Ivanka Trump are trying to stop my office from interviewing them under oath as part of our investigation into the Trump Organization and Mr. Trump," James said on social media after the three filed a motion on Monday evening to quash upcoming interviews that would take place, under oath, in the investiga-



tion. James' office recently subpoenaed Donald Trump and his daughter Ivanka Trump and his son Donald Trump Jr., Xinhua news agency quoted a court filing made public on Monday. The subpoena is part of an investigation which centres on whether Donald Trump inflated the value of his assets to get bank loans while understating them to minimize his tax payment, according to media reports. Earlier, it was reported that James requested Donald

Trump sit for a deposition on January 7, which was challenged in a federal court. Members of the Trump family and the Trump Organization have continually sought to delay and impede the investigation for more than two years, said James. "Over two years of delay tactics won't stop our investigation because no one is above the law," said James. "Our investigation will continue undeterred." James' office already interviewed Eric Trump, another of Donald Trump's sons, in October 2020. If the prosecutors find evidence of wrongdoing in the intended interviews, James' office could file a lawsuit against Donald Trump and the Trump Organization.

B'DESH EARNS NEARLY \$25 FROM EXPORTS IN H1 OF 2021-22 FISCAL



Dhaka: Bangladesh's total exports in the first half of the current 2021-22 fiscal year (July 2021-June 2022) reached nearly \$25 billion, up 28.41 per cent year on year, according to the latest official data on Tuesday. The Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data posted on its website showed that Bangladesh earned \$24,698.55 million from exports in the July-December period, compared to \$19,233.45 million a year earlier, reports Xinhua news agency. Of the total earnings, the EPB data showed the country's income from ready-made knitwear and woven garment items surged 28.02 per cent to \$19.90 billion during the cited period. In the first half of the current 2021-22 year, the EPB data showed knitwear garment export growth increased 30.91 per cent to \$11.16 billion, while woven garments rose 24.50 per cent to \$8.74 billion, compared with the same period of last fiscal year. With hefty growth in garment exports, Bangladesh shipped goods worth \$4.91 billion in December, which was 48.27 per cent higher than the same month a year ago. Bangladesh set its export target in 2021-22 fiscal year at \$43.50 billion, including \$35.14 billion from ready-made garment products, which usually account for about 85 per cent of the national shipment in a year.

UN envoy expresses concern over ongoing political crisis in Sudan

Khartoum | Agencies

Volker Perthes, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan, has expressed concern over the ongoing political crisis in the country and civilian casualties in street protests. The envoy said in a statement that he "remains concerned by the ongoing political crisis which risks further derailing progress made since the December revolution", reports Xinhua news agency. He said he was "deeply concerned by the number of civilians killed and injured in the context of the ongoing protests". Perthes urged the security forces to abide by their obligations under international law and strictly uphold the rights of protesters to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, saying that perpetrators of violence must be brought to justice. The UN envoy also regretted the resignation of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok on Sunday. However, the envoy voiced respect for Hamdok's decision and commended the accomplishments made under his leadership, during the first phase of the



transitional period. On Monday, Chairman of Sudan's Sovereign Council Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan stressed the need to form an independent government with consent of all the Sudanese people after Hamdok resigned. Al-Burhan stressed the need to achieve the tasks of the transitional period with the top priority of realising peace and security and conducting elections in the country. Sudan has been suffering a political crisis after Al-Burhan, also General Commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces, declared a state of emergency on October 25, 2021, and dissolved the Sovereign Council and government. On November 21, Al-Burhan and the then removed Prime Minister Hamdok signed a political declaration, which included reinstating the latter as Prime Minister, but the deal has so far failed to calm the street.

LIBYAN PARLIAMENT CALLS FOR SETTING OF NEW DATE FOR PREZ POLLS

Tripoli: Libya's House of Representatives or Parliament has called on the High National Elections Commission to propose a new date for the presidential polls as soon as possible. The House of Representatives made the call after a parliament session, during which 80 of its members gathered to hear the briefing of the Commission's head on the failure to hold the presidential election on schedule, reports Xinhua news agency. "The High National Elections Commission should communicate with all departments and agencies involved in the electoral process in order to lift the state of force majeure and set a new date for the elections," said the statement. According to Emad al-Sayeh, head of High National Elections Commission, "conflicting legal rulings that were not released on time, and threats made to the Commission against publishing the final list of presidential candidates containing certain names" were among the factors that prevented the presidential election from taking place on time. Presidential election in Libya was scheduled for December 24, 2021. However, along with the parliamentary elections, it was postponed indefinitely over technical and legal issues, according to the Commission. The most notable presidential candidates in the fray include Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, son of the late leader Muammar Gaddafi; Khalifa Haftar, the commander of the eastern-based army; Aguila Saleh, the speaker of Parliament; and Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah, the incumbent Prime Minister. The elections are part of a roadmap adopted by the UN-sponsored Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, which aimed at restoring peace to the country after years of political turmoil and violence.



EDITOR'S SPECS

WOMEN IN ARMED FORCES

The Defence Ministry ensured women's empowerment in armed forces in 2021 with permanent commission of women officers in the army. It all started with Prime Minister Narendra Modi making an announcement during his Independence Day speech on August 15 that all Sainik Schools across India will now be open for girls. Accordingly, all the Sainik Schools are now offering admissions to girls and more than 350 girls have been admitted so far. Enhancing the women representation, the Border Roads Organisation appointed women officers to command important road construction companies (RCC) along the border areas. In April 2021, EE (Civil) Vaishali S. Hiwase, a GREF officer, took over the reins of 83 Road Construction Company and was employed on an important Indo-China road connecting Mumisairi-Bughdar-Milam. The government has now allowed girls of the country to appear in the National Defence Academy examination. The necessary administrative training and policy changes have been made and the NDA June 2022 course will have the first batch of women cadets. The first batch of women naval operation officers were inducted into the rotary wing and joined the helicopter squadron INAS 336 at INS Garuda, Kochi, on February 3, with Lt Kumudini Tyagi and Lt Riti Singh operating onboard warships as combat aircrew. In 2021, 39 women army officers got Permanent Commission after winning a legal battle in the Supreme Court. A Permanent Commission means a career in the army till retirement, while Short Service Commission is for 10 years, with the option of either leaving or opting for Permanent Commission at the end of 10 years. If an officer doesn't get Permanent Commission then, the officer can choose a four-year extension.

THE DRAGON'S LONG SHADOW ON SRI LANKA

Sumit Kumar Singh

For some South Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bangladesh, the 'China Nightmare' is no longer just a bad dream. It is a living reality, which continues to threaten the countries' national interests, and eat away at their very sovereignty. Sri Lanka's fall into the dragon's trap was triggered when China, taking advantage of the souring relations between Colombo and the Washington, started its aggressive courting of the Mahendra Rajapaksa government from the time he assumed office in 2005. By 2007, the war against the LTTE was raging, and the island nation was facing increasing international criticism over human rights issues. The US significantly reduced its foreign assistance package, and neighbour India's assistance was constrained by the Tamil sentiments back home. The dragon, which was closely watching, swooped in with a \$37 million deal for Chinese ammunition and ordnance. This was followed in 2008 by the gift of six F7 fighters, JY-11 radar and anti-aircraft guns. By the time the war with the LTTE ended in 2009, relations with China were upgraded to a 'strategic cooperative partnership'. However, the deadliest move made by China in its strategic game was made in 2007 itself, when it got Rajapaksa to lease land at Hambantota for construction of a port at a cost of \$1 billion. By 2014, Chinese aid and loans to Sri Lanka had exceeded a staggering \$6 billion, which included the Colombo Port City Project (CPCP), the South Container Terminal at Colombo Port, an Exclusive Investment Zone 35 miles from Colombo port, and a railway project. The net had been cast. It now remained for China to commence reeling it in. President Xi Jinping, in his September 2014 visit to Sri Lanka, did just that, and an agreement for Chinese companies to operate the by now bleeding Hambantota port was signed. Having snared its prey under a debt trap, Beijing then commenced leveraging its might into arm-twisting Colombo to get CCP Navy submarines to dock at Sri Lankan ports during their deployment to the Indian Ocean. These submarines, which are accompanied by submarine rescue ships, have been entering the region more frequently in the recent past, and find Sri Lanka to be a convenient port of call. What is interesting to note here is that Sri Lanka is the only country in the Indian Ocean besides Pakistan, where these sub-



marines have entered during their deployment over the last seven years. China's shadow has also loomed large over Sri Lanka's politics and elections. After 2011, China had also been influencing Sri Lanka's foreign policy decisions, having established a firm grip over the government through the burgeoning debt traps. With Sri Lankan debts to China in excess of \$8 billion, the room for manoeuvre for the government of the day was already quite limited. And of course, Chinese diplomacy has always been very nimble to adjust its front to changing dynamics. In the aftermath of the 2015 elections, China commenced courting not only the political parties, but also prominent Buddhist clergy in the island nation. This development was through the realisation of the influence of these religious figures in Sri Lankan domestic politics. Certain other factors threaten to push Sri Lanka deeper into the dragon's trap. Last year, the IMF prematurely ended the \$1.5 billion loan programme to the island nation. This was accompanied with the Covid pandemic, which delivered a terrible blow to Sri Lanka's tourism industry. This 'double whammy' ended any thoughts that Sri Lanka may have been nurturing of salvaging its situation against China. In March this year, Sri Lanka announced a

\$1.5 billion currency swap with the Chinese Central Bank. It also declared its partnership with China in developing two irrigation reservoirs in the Sinharaja Reserve Forest, which is a UNESCO-protected heritage site. In June 21, China Harbor Engineering Company (CHEC) bagged a project for construction of a 17-km elevated highway in Colombo, the terms of which provide full ownership to the company for revenue and profits for 18 years. This is the same CHEC, which is a subsidiary of the China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) that is leading the Hambantota Port Project, Mattala International Airport and the \$1.1 billion Colombo Port City. For the 2015 elections, payments totalling to \$1.1 million were linked from CHEC to Rajapaksa's election campaign supporters. Today, the situation is grim to the extent that the Chinese squeeze is resulting in Sri Lanka backing off from deals with other countries. In December 2020, Sri Lanka cancelled a \$480 million compact with the US Millennium Challenge Corporation. In the same month, Sri Lanka also cancelled the Colombo East Container Terminal Agreement, in which both India and Japan were signatories. There have been some

attempts made by Sri Lanka this year to showcase 'non-alignment' in strategic projects, but the Chinese influence in Sri Lanka makes these efforts appear extremely feeble as of now. The Chinese strategy is a cancerous trap that lures its victims at a time when they are at their weakest. The bait however, remains constant - money and apparent 'soft' loans, thereby trapping the Government of the day in frivolous infrastructure projects at rates which are 'too good to be true'. The modus operandi of engagement has been similar in Africa, Asia and Latin America where countries have been indebted with Chinese loans of billions of dollars. Sri Lanka was baited when it was facing international criticism on human rights issues, and its strategic allies and neighbours such as the US and India were not available to help. The decisions made by the Sri Lankan leadership at that time led to the dragon wrapping itself around its prey, and today the island nation is finding its strategic decision making increasingly constricted by this tight grip of Beijing.

international

Guterres hails joint statement by nuclear-weapon states

United Nations | Agencies

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has welcomed the five nuclear-weapon states' joint statement on the prevention of nuclear war and avoidance of arms races, his spokesman said. On Monday, the leaders of China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US issued the joint statement which said that they "consider the avoidance of war between Nuclear-Weapon States and the reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities". "We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. As nuclear use would have far-reaching consequences, we also affirm that nuclear weapons-for as long as they continue to exist-should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent



war. "We believe strongly that the further spread of such weapons must be prevented," the statement added. Regarding Guterres' response, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said: "The Secretary-General appreciates the recognition by the nuclear-weapon States of their need to comply with their

bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and commitments, including their binding obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons related to nuclear disarmament. "He is encouraged by the nuclear-weapon States' commitment to pursue measures to prevent nuclear war, consistent with his long-standing call for dialogue and cooperation to this end. He looks forward to further details about future initiatives. "The Secretary-General takes the opportunity to restate what he has said repeatedly: the only way to eliminate all nuclear risks is to eliminate all nuclear weapons. He reiterates his willingness to work with the nuclear-weapon States and all Member States to achieve this goal as soon as possible."

Erdogan pledges to reduce inflation to single-digit



Ankara: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed to decrease the country's inflation back to single-digit levels after the annual inflation surged to 36.08 per cent, the highest since 2002. "Whatever the reason is, we are in sorrow that our citizens are faced with such a picture," Erdogan said at a press conference after a cabinet meeting. The government is determined to decrease the inflation to single digits as soon as possible, he said, recalling that they had managed to reduce to 6 per cent in the past, reports Xinhua news agency.

NY AG seeks to interview Donald Trump, his children in civil case

New York | Agencies

New York Attorney General Letitia James said her office would continue to push forward a civil investigation into Donald Trump and the Trump Organization and is seeking to interview the former President and his two children. "Donald Trump, Donald Trump Jr., and Ivanka Trump are trying to stop my office from interviewing them under oath as part of our investigation into the Trump Organization and Mr. Trump," James said on social media after the three filed a motion on Monday evening to quash upcoming interviews that would take place, under oath, in the investiga-



tion. James' office recently subpoenaed Donald Trump and his daughter Ivanka Trump and his son Donald Trump Jr., Xinhua news agency quoted a court filing made public on Monday. The subpoena is part of an investigation which centres on whether Donald Trump inflated the value of his assets to get bank loans while understating them to minimize his tax payment, according to media reports. Earlier, it was reported that James requested Donald

Trump sit for a deposition on January 7, which was challenged in a federal court. Members of the Trump family and the Trump Organization have continually sought to delay and impede the investigation for more than two years, said James. "Over two years of delay tactics won't stop our investigation because no one is above the law," said James. "Our investigation will continue undeterred." James' office already interviewed Eric Trump, another of Donald Trump's sons, in October 2020. If the prosecutors find evidence of wrongdoing in the intended interviews, James' office could file a lawsuit against Donald Trump and the Trump Organization.

B'DESH EARNS NEARLY \$25 FROM EXPORTS IN H1 OF 2021-22 FISCAL



Dhaka: Bangladesh's total exports in the first half of the current 2021-22 fiscal year (July 2021-June 2022) reached nearly \$25 billion, up 28.41 per cent year on year, according to the latest official data on Tuesday. The Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data posted on its website showed that Bangladesh earned \$24,698.55 million from exports in the July-December period, compared to \$19,233.45 million a year earlier, reports Xinhua news agency. Of the total earnings, the EPB data showed the country's income from ready-made knitwear and woven garment items surged 28.02 per cent to \$19.90 billion during the cited period. In the first half of the current 2021-22 year, the EPB data showed knitwear garment export growth increased 30.91 per cent to \$11.16 billion, while woven garments rose 24.50 per cent to \$8.74 billion, compared with the same period of last fiscal year. With hefty growth in garment exports, Bangladesh shipped goods worth \$4.91 billion in December, which was 48.27 per cent higher than the same month a year ago. Bangladesh set its export target in 2021-22 fiscal year at \$43.50 billion, including \$35.14 billion from ready-made garment products, which usually account for about 85 per cent of the national shipment in a year.

UN envoy expresses concern over ongoing political crisis in Sudan

Khartoum | Agencies

Volker Perthes, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan, has expressed concern over the ongoing political crisis in the country and civilian casualties in street protests. The envoy said in a statement that he "remains concerned by the ongoing political crisis which risks further derailing progress made since the December revolution", reports Xinhua news agency. He said he was "deeply concerned by the number of civilians killed and injured in the context of the ongoing protests". Perthes urged the security forces to abide by their obligations under international law and strictly uphold the rights of protesters to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, saying that perpetrators of violence must be brought to justice. The UN envoy also regretted the resignation of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok on Sunday. However, the envoy voiced respect for Hamdok's decision and commended the accomplishments made under his leadership, during the first phase of the



transitional period. On Monday, Chairman of Sudan's Sovereign Council Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan stressed the need to form an independent government with consent of all the Sudanese people after Hamdok resigned. Al-Burhan stressed the need to achieve the tasks of the transitional period with the top priority of realising peace and security and conducting elections in the country. Sudan has been suffering a political crisis after Al-Burhan, also General Commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces, declared a state of emergency on October 25, 2021, and dissolved the Sovereign Council and government. On November 21, Al-Burhan and the then removed Prime Minister Hamdok signed a political declaration, which included reinstating the latter as Prime Minister, but the deal has so far failed to calm the street.

LIBYAN PARLIAMENT CALLS FOR SETTING OF NEW DATE FOR PREZ POLLS

Tripoli: Libya's House of Representatives or Parliament has called on the High National Elections Commission to propose a new date for the presidential polls as soon as possible. The House of Representatives made the call after a parliament session, during which 80 of its members gathered to hear the briefing of the Commission's head on the failure to hold the presidential election on schedule, reports Xinhua news agency. "The High National Elections Commission should communicate with all departments and agencies involved in the electoral process in order to lift the state of force majeure and set a new date for the elections," said the statement. According to Emad al-Sayeh, head of High National Elections Commission, "conflicting legal rulings that were not released on time, and threats made to the Commission against publishing the final list of presidential candidates containing certain names" were among the factors that prevented the presidential election from taking place on time. Presidential election in Libya was scheduled for December 24, 2021. However, along with the parliamentary elections, it was postponed indefinitely over technical and legal issues, according to the Commission. The most notable presidential candidates in the fray include Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, son of the late leader Muammar Gaddafi; Khalifa Haftar, the commander of the eastern-based army; Aguila Saleh, the speaker of Parliament; and Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah, the incumbent Prime Minister. The elections are part of a roadmap adopted by the UN-sponsored Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, which aimed at restoring peace to the country after years of political turmoil and violence.



# Gal Gadot drops a heart on Ali Fazal's 'Death On The Nile' post

Los Angeles | Agencies

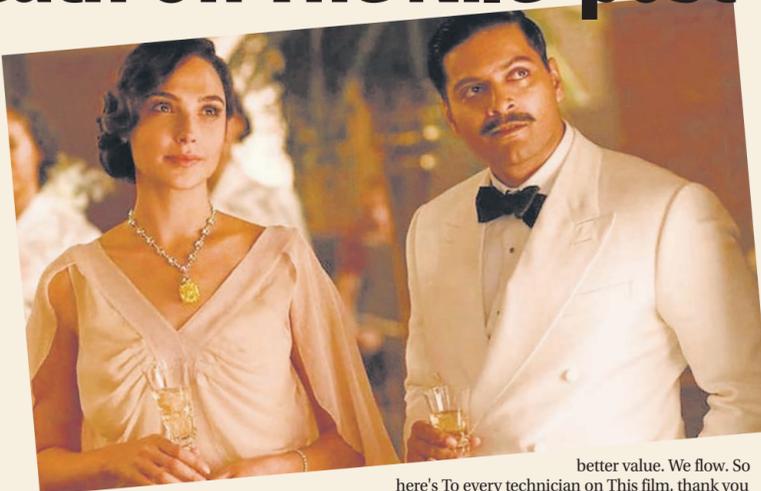
Actor Ali Fazal's post about his upcoming film 'Death On The Nile' received a sweet reaction from Hollywood star Gal Gadot. Ali shared a picture on Instagram from the film. In the image, he is seen blazer next to Gadot looking dapper in a white blazer paired with a white shirt, black bow and pants.

He is seen holding a champagne glass while Gadot looks every inch gorgeous as she sports an all-white gown.

Alongside the post, he wrote: "DEATH ON THE NILE, in theatres soon. Humbled to have had the chance to be immortalised into one of Agatha Christie's characters. Thank you Ken... And to the wonderful cast for being such a sporty and a fun bunch to share notes and screen with."

"We keep gliding through life sometimes so caught up in the realm of the Right and the illusion of the true and the light in the tunnel that we forget to really look past the frame, like the mirror in interrogation rooms."

He added: "Imagine theres always a bunch of ppl behind those mirrors, if those rooms were to constitute our lives. Working it just to make us look our pretty best." Ali recalled the hardwork that went in to create these visuals and bring



better value. We flow. So here's To every technician on This film, thank you for your hard work and perseverance. I sure as shit look good here , and you too @gal\_gadot," he concluded.

Reading the caption, Gadot dropped a heart on the comment section.



## Top talent agency signs up Indian-origin Clubhouse podcast couple

Los Angeles | Agencies

Notable tech players and entrepreneurs of Indian origin -- Sriram Krishnan and Aarthi Ramamurthy -- have signed up with the longest-running international talent agency, WME, whose past clients have included Charlie Chaplin, Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley.

Krishnan and Ramamurthy, who are both 37, married and have a two-year-old daughter, according to 'Variety', gained popularity during the pandemic as the hosts of the Clubhouse audio series 'The Good Time Show', "where moguls such as Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg are known to drop in for chats". The talent agency, which was renamed Endeavor in 2017 and represents more than 6,000 film and television, music, sports and fashion personalities, will work with Krishnan

and Ramamurthy in areas including film and television development, as well as publishing and podcasting projects.

Krishnan, according to 'Variety', is a general partner at Andreessen Horowitz, investing across consumer and crypto startups. He leads the firm's stake in companies such as Hopin and Bitski and was a personal early investor in ventures including the celebrity cash-generator Cameo, Figma and Notion. He has also held positions at Twitter, Facebook and Snap.

Ramamurthy is the head of international business at Clubhouse, where she focuses on the platform's global users. She was a product executive at Facebook, working on consumer and creator verticals. She also founded a start-up backed by Silicon Valley's top accelerators, including YCombinator, and held senior roles at Netflix and Microsoft.

# Kelsey Stratford: Into the 70's

London | Agencies

Former TOWIE star Kelsey Stratford went all disco diva when she stepped out in a glittery bandeau and pants co-ord for dinner with friends at trendy Essex eatery Sheesh on Monday.

The reality TV star, 21, looked sensational in the sexy number that paid tribute to disco era while making her way inside the popular restaurant. Kelsey put on a glamorous display in the glittery bandeau top that barely contained her ample cleavage and showcased her abs.

She oozed 70's glamour with cut-away sleeves that highlighted her slender arms, while high waisted trousers complimented her pert bottom.

The model went full glam with make-up, adopting a bold smokey eye with distinctive mascara and eyeliner detail.

She chose a soft pink blush that complemented her skin tone and opted for a coral shiny lip gloss that accentuated her full and sensual pout. Kelsey finished her look by wearing her waist length blonde wavy tresses loosely over one shoulder.



## David Bowie's back catalogue sold for \$250 million

Los Angeles | Agencies

Music icon David Bowie's estate has sold the publishing rights to his "entire body of work" to Warner Chappell Music (WCM) for more than \$250 million. The late Changes' hitmaker died of cancer in 2016. He released a total of 111 singles in his career, and the deal with Warner Chappell Music (WCM) includes tracks from his 26 studio albums, his upcoming posthumous record 'Toy', the two albums he released with super-group Tin Machine, and songs featured on soundtracks and other projects, reports femalefirst.co.uk. WCM co-chairman and chief executive Guy Moot said they were "proud" to be "chosen as caretakers" for the 'Space Oddity' singer's "extraordinary" music.

He said in a statement: "All of us at Warner Chappell are immensely proud that the David Bowie estate has chosen us to be the caretakers of one of the most groundbreaking, influential, and enduring catalogues in music history."

"These are not only extraordinary songs, but milestones that have changed the course of modern music forever. Bowie's vision and creative genius drove him to push the envelope, lyrically and musically - writing songs that challenged convention, changed the conversation, and have become part of the canon of global culture."

"His work spanned massive pop hits and experimental adventures that have inspired millions of fans and countless innovators, not only in music, but across all the arts, fashion, and media. We are looking forward to tending his unparalleled body of songs with passion and care as we strive to build on the legacy of this most extraordinary human being." The new agreement follows a previous deal between Bowie's estate and Warner Music Group for them to oversee his full back catalogue of albums between 1968 and 1999.

## Jared Leto-starrer 'Morbius' release date pushed by 3 months

Los Angeles | Agencies

The makers of the Spider Man spinoff 'Morbius' starring Jared Leto have pushed the release of the upcoming film by three months.

Sony Pictures will move the release of the film by three months, the studio said on Monday.

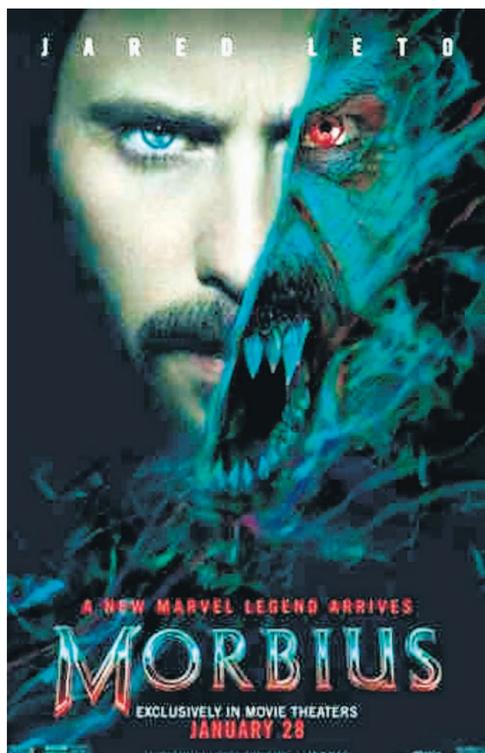
The film, part of Sony's Spider-Man cinematic universe (not to be confused with Disney's Marvel Cinematic Universe), will debut on April 1 instead of January 28, reports variety.com.

It's not the first time that 'Morbius' has had to postpone its red carpet premiere. The film was supposed to debut on July 10, 2020, but got pushed due to Covid-19.

As the pandemic has raged, 'Morbius' has cycled through release dates, at various points it has been scheduled to open on July 31, 2020, then March 19, 2021, then October 8, 2021, and finally moving January 21, 2022, before shifting yet again to the January 28 date that it just vacated.

In its new release date, 'Morbius' will face off against 'Easter Sunday', a comedy with Jimmy O. Yang and Tiffany Haddish, as well as the Chris Pine thriller 'The Contractor'.

Sony just scored massive box office successes with both 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' and 'Venom: Let There Be Carnage', so it makes sense that it would try to give 'Morbius' a longer runway at a time when the public health situation is complicating things. The studio is also planning another standalone spinoff based on Spider Man villain Kraven the Hunter, so the stakes are high.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Ferne McCann



## 2nd Test, Day 2

# PUJARA, RAHANE EXTEND INDIA'S LEAD AFTER SHARDUL'S HEROICS

Johannesburg | Agencies

Senior pros Cheteshwar Pujara (35 not out) and Ajinkya Rahane (11 not out) took India to 85/2 at stumps, leading South Africa by 58 runs on Day 2 of the second Test match at The Wanderers Stadium, here on Tuesday.

After bowling out South Africa for 229 in their first innings and conceding a 27 run lead, India hit the straps straight away in the second innings, with Mayank Agarwal hitting his first four boundaries off Rabada while KL Rahul struck his first four with an upper cut off Duanne Olivier. Dean Elgar was forced to make bowling changes, bringing in Lungi Ngidi and Marco Jansen in tandem. Ngidi was on the mark to Mayank while Jansen took the ball away from Rahul (8) a few times before forcing him to play at an incoming delivery and found the edge. While India took the lead with Agarwal continuing confidently, Cheteshwar Pujara was being tar-



**Brief scores:**  
India 202 & 85/2 in 20 overs (Cheteshwar Pujara 35 not out, Mayank Agarwal 23; Marco Jansen 1/18) lead by 58 runs vs South Africa 229 all out in 79.4 overs (Keegan Petersen 62, Temba Bavuma 51; Shardul Thakur 7/61, Mohammed Shami 2/52).

getted with incoming deliveries. However, soon Agarwal was trapped in front by Olivier, leaving the under pressure veterans to do the heavy lifting. The South Africa pacers posed tough questions with short deliveries, but whenever they went full Pujara and Rahane cashed in by

playing assertive drives for boundaries. Pujara even scored a couple of boundaries in the final over of the day bowled by Maharaj as the fourth wicket pair finished unbeaten having added 41 off 52. Earlier, resuming the day at 35/1, South Africa was all out for 229.

### Shardul registers best bowling figures for India against SA

Pacer Shardul Thakur registered best bowling figures in an innings by an Indian in Tests against South Africa with a seven-wicket haul on Day 2 of the second Test match at The Wanderers Stadium, here on Tuesday.



The spectacular bowling figures of 7/61 by Shardul are now the best by an Indian bowler against South Africa in cricket's longest format. He broke Ravichandran Ashwin's record of 7/66, which the off-spinner had claimed in Nagpur in 2015.

The pacer dismissed Dean Elgar, Keegan Petersen, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne, and Temba Bavuma, Marco Jansen and Lungi Ngidi, respectively, on his way to registering the best figures by an Indian bowler against South Africa.

The 7/61 of Shardul is also the joint second-best figures by any visiting pace bowler in South Africa in the last 100 years.

# La Liga: Sevilla close gap on Real Madrid after narrow win in Cadiz

Madrid | Agencies

Sevilla moved to within five points of La Liga leaders Real Madrid and with a game in hand after their 1-0 win away to Cadiz.

Lucas Ocampos' 58th-minute goal on Monday night separated the two sides as Sevilla overcame a host of absences of players such as Rafa Mir, Erik Lamela, Youssef En-Nesyri and Suso to claim a vital win.

An even game was decided by Ocampos' left foot shot 13 minutes into the second half, but Sevilla's task will be much tougher in the coming weeks as they lose players such as Munir, Bono and En-Nesyri to the African Nations Cup. Villarreal continue to climb the table with their fourth consecutive league win with two goals from Gerard Moreno and opening goals from Boulaye Dia and Pau Torres in a 5-0 thrashing of bottom of the table Levante. Manu Trigueros also got on the scoresheet as Villarreal enjoyed an easy win against the side that



remains bottom of the table without a single win in the first half of the season, Xinhua reports. Oihan Sancet scored a hat-trick as Athletic Club Bilbao came back from a goal down to claim their second away win

of the season with a 3-1 triumph away to Osasuna. On Sunday Real Madrid lost 1-0 to Getafe, while Atletico Madrid beat Rayo Vallecano 2-0 and Barca claimed a 1-0 triumph in Mallorca.

# ATP Cup: Medvedev, Safiullin combine for Russia's second win

Sydney | Agencies

Daniil Medvedev and Roman Safiullin, Russia's latest 'secret weapon', ensured that the defending champion beat Australia on Tuesday to move to 2-0 in Group B play at the ATP Cup.

Medvedev silenced the majority of supporters on the Qudos Bank Arena with his fourth straight victory over Alex De Minaur in a 6-4, 6-2 win over 80 minutes. It followed from World No. 167 Safiullin's gutsy 7-6(6), 6-4 victory over James Duckworth in the No. 2 singles match.

"We fight when we play for our country, to the last point," said World No. 2



Medvedev, Russia now plays Italy on Thursday in a repeat of the 2021 ATP Cup final, while host nation Australia challenges France.

Safiullin, who upset Frenchman Arthur Rinderknech on Sunday, defeated James Duckworth in

just under two hours. "It was a great match for me and the match before as well. This one I would say started more or less the same, but then [I was able to] come back in the first set," Safiullin said. "At the end I could push James a bit more and managed to win."

# Ashes: Cummins hints Starc could be promoted in the batting order

Australian Test captain Pat Cummins has hinted that his pace bowling partner Mitchell Starc could be promoted in the batting order in the fourth Ashes Test beginning here on Wednesday, after averaging more than 50 with the bat. Former's assassin, Nathuram Godse, a patriot in the Lok Sabha.

Sydney | Agencies

Starc has done a turnaround from a below-average performance at the ICC T20 World Cup, and is now



averaging more than 50 with the bat and less than 20 with the ball, which could earn him a batting order promotion at the SCG.

Starc has scored 117 runs at an average of 58.50 in the Ashes campaign and has a better average than every England batter across the first three Tests. Add to it his 14 wickets at 19.64 apiece and it also makes him the leading wicket-taker in the series.

Starc is currently No. 5 in the ICC's Test all-rounders' rankings putting him even ahead of England's Ben Stokes.

Cummins, who has batted ahead of Starc in all but two of the 21 Tests they've played together since the previous home Ashes series in 2017/18, has admitted that he may need to re-think the batting order for the fourth Test beginning on January 5.

# PKL 8: Delhi aiming for top spot; Gujarat meet Pune in clash of strugglers

Bengaluru | Agencies

Overtaken by Bengaluru Bulls a few days back, Dabang Delhi K.C. will be hoping to take back the top spot when they take on Telugu Titans while bottom-dwellers Puneri Paltan will meet a struggling Gujarat Giants in the two matches on Wednesday in Pro Kabaddi League Season 8.

Dabang Delhi are the only unbeaten side in Season 8 but it took their best to manage a tie against Tamil Thalaivas in their latest match. Raider Naveen Kumar has been his formidable best with five Super 10s in as many matches but Dabang's reliance on their star raider can backfire if he spends too much time away from the mat.



Naveen Kumar and his teammates will aim to put Delhi back on the top of the points table by beating a Titans side who are winless this season, at The Sheraton Grand, Whitefield,

here. To stop Naveen Kumar, Titans' corner defenders Rituraj Koravi and Sandeep Kandola would need to be in top form. They've shown glimpses

of their potential in the recent matches but in Naveen, they face the most complete raider in the league.

Titans' raiders have also shown they can cope without captain Rohit Kumar and injured Siddharth Desai. Young stars Ankit Beniwal and Rakesh Gowda will be eyeing to exploit the weaknesses in Delhi's left side of defence manned by season veterans Joginder Narwal and Manjit Chhillar.

Meanwhile, in the first match of the day, the team from Pune have just one win to their name in five attempts with experienced stars such as Rahul Chaudhari and Vishal Bharadwaj failing to make the expected impact. The Giants, meanwhile, have struggled despite having experienced stars in their defence.

# Osaka makes winning return to Melbourne with

Melbourne | Agencies

Former world No. 1 Naomi Osaka made a winning return to the tennis courts here defeating Alize Cornet of France 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 in the WTA 250 Melbourne Summer Set 1 on Tuesday.

Eleven months ago, the Japanese player had left the Rod Laver Arena with her fourth Grand Slam trophy in hand. She returned to the site on Tuesday to win her first match since September.

The top seed here, currently ranked No. 13 in the world, had ended her 2021 season prematurely after a third-round loss to Leylah



Fernandez at the US Open on September 3, but

extended her winning streak at Melbourne Park to eight with a second career victory against Cornet that lasted two hours and two minutes.

Tuesday's match was a reunion of sorts for Osaka and Cornet, who played for the first time ahead of last year's Australian Open at the same venue.

A five-game winning run by the French veteran pushed the match to a third set, but Osaka stamped her authority early in the decider and never looked back. She never faced a break point in the final set, but did serve out victory from a 0-30 deficit.

# STRONG CORE GROUP WILL HELP US MANAGE RIGOURS OF A BUSY 2022: SAVITA

Bengaluru:

Indian women's hockey team goalkeeper Savita feels the side has a strong core group to manage the rigours of a busy 2022, adding that the first priority will be to do well in the Asia Cup this month to set the tone for bigger tournaments later in the year.



The Indian women's team will begin the year with the Asia Cup in Muscat, Oman this month. They are the defending champions and will vie with seven continental teams -- China, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore -- for the top honours. The Asia Cup will be played in a two-pool format with cross-over classification matches. The continental event is the qualifying tournament for the FIH Women's World Cup 2022 to be held in Spain and the Netherlands in July.

Teams finishing in the top-four in Muscat will qualify for the World Cup. With the Birmingham Commonwealth Games scheduled in July and the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China (the 2024 Paris Olympics qualification event) two months later, Savita says the strength of the core group should come in handy during the hectic season. India will also play the FIH Women's Nations Cup in December in Valencia, Spain.

# Bangladesh eye Test win as Ebadot Hossain runs through New Zealand top order

Mount Maunganui | Agencies

Bangladesh's 27-year-old right-arm pace bowler Ebadot Hossain grabbed four second-innings wickets on Day 4 to reduce New Zealand to 147/5 and give the tourists a major victory boost going into the final day of the opening Test at the Bay Oval on Tuesday.

New Zealand have a lead of only 17 runs, and with their entire top order wiped out, Bangladesh can hope to take a 1-0 lead in the two-Test series on Wednesday.

Resuming at 401/6, Bangladesh middle-order batters Yasir Ali and Mehidy Hasan Miraz built on their partnership, adding an extra 44 runs before Tim Southee broke the partnership with the third new ball. Frustrating the home side with vital runs and moving the lead past 100, Miraz, attempting to continue the assault, could only muster an outside edge off Southee, handing Tom Blundell a catch on 47.

It brought Taskin Ahmed out to bat for the tourists, and New Zealand, despite the flurry of runs in the previous partnership, were clinical in removing the tail. Yasir Ali was caught down the leg-side off the bowling of Kyle Jamieson for 26, before Taskin (5) and Shoriful Islam were

claimed in quick succession.

Taskin was adjudged lbw for Southee's second, before Shoriful was clean bowled for left-armed Trent Boult's fourth wicket. With 130 runs behind, Young and Tom Latham survived a three-over siege from Bangladesh's attack, though Latham was undone early in the second session by Taskin, who continued to bowl an incisive spell after the break. Latham played Taskin's delivery on for 14, bringing Devon Conway out to the wicket. Conway was bogged down by a disciplined bowling effort, and was eventually undone by the pace of Ebadot Hossain, thanks to a clever



piece of fielding from Shadman Islam diving forward at first slip.

Young crossed fifty for the second time in the match running a ball to third man. He also combined in a fifty-run partnership with Ross Taylor in his final Test innings at the Bay Oval.

Taylor and Young brought up the milestone before the final drinks break, though Ebadot would not be stopped in his inspired performance. The pace bowler cleaned up Young for 69 and Henry Nicholls (0) in the same over, before sparking fear in New Zealand with the wicket of Tom Blundell, who also departed without scoring.

piece of fielding from Shadman Islam diving forward at first slip. Young crossed fifty for the second time in the match running a ball to third man. He also combined in a fifty-run partnership with Ross Taylor in his final Test innings at the Bay Oval.

Taylor and Young brought up the milestone before the final drinks break, though Ebadot would not be stopped in his inspired performance. The pace bowler cleaned up Young for 69 and Henry Nicholls (0) in the same over, before sparking fear in New Zealand with the wicket of Tom Blundell, who also departed without scoring.

# Stokes should not be pushed into captaincy; he has enough on the plate: Gower

Tokyo | Agencies

Former England captain David Gower has said that Ben Stokes should not be pushed into the captaincy role as he has "enough on his plate" and hasn't had a great comeback in the ongoing Ashes series in Australia.

With England having lost the Ashes after three successive defeats -- Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne -- there are calls back home in England to look for Joe Root's alternative to lead the team. With Stokes enjoying a good rapport with team-mates, several former cricketers and critics are demanding the 30-year-old all-rounder be given the reins of the Test side.

Dissecting the England Test team leadership dynamics, Gower said on Tuesday that now is not the time for Stokes to be made captain.

"(Ben Stokes) would make a good fist of it because he's a very instinctive, strong character, and at the moment that's the sort of character this England side needs,"



Gower told sen.com.au's Sportsday on Tuesday. "Whatever happens in the next two games (Sydney and Hobart), when they go home to the UK and start again, they're going to need to find some new energy from somewhere," said the 64-year-old England great.

On the relationship between Root and Stokes, Gower said that the two were "good mates" and entirely loyal to each other.



# SALMAN KHAN: THE BIGGEST SUPERSTAR



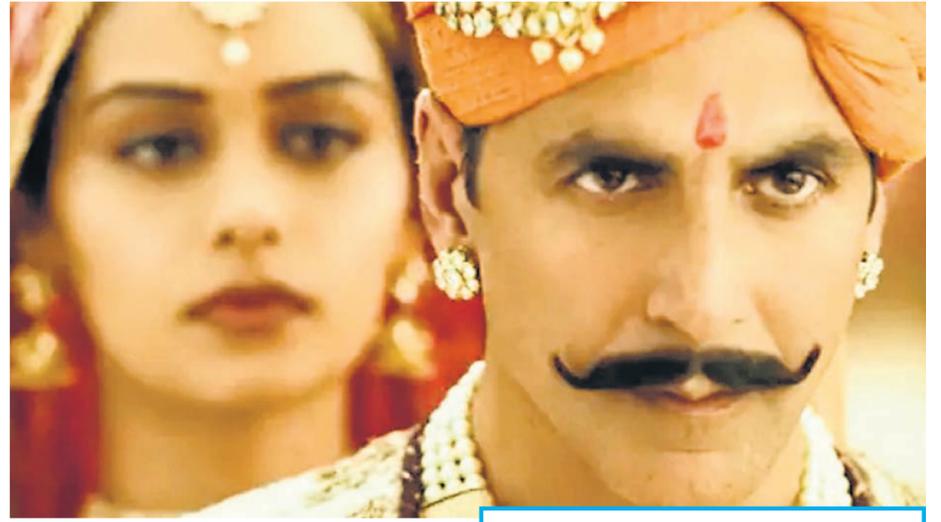
Team Absolute | Mumbai

It's no secret that Salman Khan is a bonafide superstar in all ways possible. The actor has delivered outstanding performances in every film that he has done and has won the audience's hearts over and over again with his signature style of acting and trademark dance steps that go on to become hooksteps for years to come.

It should be noted that Salman Khan has not only got the biggest fandom that any actor has ever had, but he also has delivered the highest grossing film in the year, 10 times over! The highest grossing films that Bhai has delivered till date include, Maine Pyar Kiya, Saajan, Hum Aapke Hai Koun, Hum Saath Saath Hai, No Entry, Dabangg, Bodyguard, Ek Tha Tiger, Bajrangi Bhaijaan and Tiger Zinda Hai.

The actor has never really tommommed about his achievements, but if numbers are to be believed, he definitely has surpassed the likes of many other actors by delivering such a vast number of superhit films! Standing among stalwarts in the industry, Salman Khan aka Bhaijaan surely is the true blue superstar of India and certainly with reason!

The actor is delivering 10 highest grossing films in the year



## 'PRITHVIRAJ' POSTPONED DUE TO OMICRON OUTBREAK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Akshay Kumar's next 'Prithviraj' that was scheduled to release on January 21 has been postponed due to Omicron and the steep rise in Covid cases in India.

A source said: "When you have a sureshot blockbuster at hand that will appeal to audiences across the country, you can't gamble with such a huge product. 'Prithviraj' will massively aid in bringing people back to the theaters and it can't be released at a time when it won't fulfill this purpose. Business wise too it doesn't make sense to compromise a film that will rake in the moolah at the box-office."

"It's a no-brainer to postpone the film and gauge Omicron and the Covid-19 scenario before taking a call on the next release date of the film."

The surge in cases has resulted in strict regulations across India and some markets like New Delhi also decided to shut theatres.

"YRF was waiting till the last minute to see if the situation in India and overseas improves but the pace with which coronavirus cases are accelerating, it forced their hand to hold on to the biggest title."

The source added: "Everyone is looking at 'Prithviraj' to take the box-office by storm and set some new milestones in the post-pandemic era and YRF is committed to this belief. They will put this project out when it can set the box-office on fire."

'Prithviraj', directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi, will also mark the debut of former Miss World Manushi Chhillar.

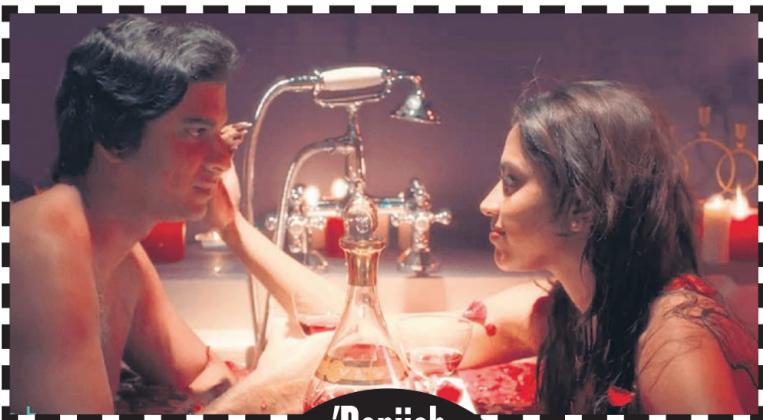
## KIRTI KULHARI: 'HUMAN' MADE ME SEE DOCTORS IN A NEW LIGHT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Kirti Kulhari, who essays the role of Dr Saira Sabarwal in the upcoming medical thriller series 'Human', revealed that her part gave her a new perspective towards the medical professionals.

She feels grateful to be an actor as it allows her to portray and touch many lives with her work. The actress mentions, "While playing the part, I understood the noble thought behind being a doctor, what it really means to be a doctor, to selflessly be there for someone and help in reducing their pain." Defining her process as an actor she states, "I approach all my characters in a way where I try to find out about the person behind the profession."

For her, the beauty of acting lies in the fact that it not just connects with people on a cerebral level but is also rewarding in many ways to the actor itself as she says, "That's the beauty of the profession of acting, all characters that you have portrayed on screen, lead you to becoming a better person."



## 'Ranjish Hi Sahi' trailer gives glimpse into dramatic '70s Bollywood love story

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The trailer of the upcoming series 'Ranjish Hi Sahi', a dramatic Bollywood love story, was unveiled on Tuesday by its makers giving a sneak-peek into the golden era of the 1970s.

The series revolves around a fledgling maverick film director who gets drawn into an extra-marital affair with an eccentric superstar who changes his life forever; his marriage with his first love spirals as he is torn in between two worlds.

Produced by Mukesh Bhatt and Jio Studios, the web-series features Tahir Raj Bhasin, Amala Paul and Amrita Puri in lead roles.

Tahir said: "When I was narrated the script of this unique love story, I was instantly gripped by how layered, Shankar, the character is. What drew me to the part was the challenge of a romantic drama where the protagonist is torn between the love of

the two women in his life. "Shankar blurs the lines between a vulnerable romantic and an authoritative rebel. Playing him was a complex emotional roller coaster but most of all it was a whole lot of fun."

This story goes around the lives of Shankar, Amna, and Anju. It explores complicated human relationships between adults and the different shades that love can take.

Created by Mahesh Bhatt, written and directed by Pushpdeep Bhardwaj, a Vishesh Entertainment production.

Talking about the show, director Pushpdeep Bhardwaj said: "An attempt to bring out complex human emotions, based in the Golden Era of the film industry: the glorious '70s. Recreating this world amidst today's testing times, was nothing short of miraculous, and this wouldn't have been possible without the generosity of all those at Jio Studios."

## SUBHASH GHAI TURNS MUSIC DIRECTOR FOR '36 FARMHOUSE'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmaker Subhash Ghai is making his debut as a music composer and lyricist for the upcoming film '36 Farmhouse' directed by Ram Ramesh Sharma.

Subhash said: "We launched the music of '36 Farmhouse' on 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa' show and the response we received from - my friends, Himesh, Vishal and Shankar, the contestants and the audience members - made me feel overwhelmed and is what keeps me going."

He added: "I tell stories and write and compose songs for my passion but without the love from my fans, all the efforts would mean nothing. So, I am glad that even after all these years, the fans still want to see more from me. I hope that they love and appreciate my OTT debut too and I am looking forward to seeing these songs climb the charts soon". The show is produced by Mukta Searchlight Films and Zee Studios. The first song, 'Mohabbat' is a sweet and melodious, romantic song, sung by Sonu Nigam. Next one is a catchy tune 'Mind Your Business', sung by Hariharan. The song, which is picturised on Sanjay Mishra, is a quirky and unconventional track.

Starring Sanjay Mishra, Vijay Raaz, Amol Parashar, Barkha Dutt, Flora Saini and Ashwini Kalsekar, among others, '36 Farmhouse' highlights the disparity between the rich and the poor in a satirical way giving away the message that - some steal for need and some steal for greed.

'36 Farmhouse' airs soon only on ZEE5.



## Sara Tendulkar debuts in modeling world

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sara Tendulkar is the oldest child of legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar and his wife Anjali Tendulkar. She is the elder sister to cricketer Arjun Tendulkar. She is extremely popular with netizens and has quite a fan following of her own. She is extremely popular with netizens and has quite a fan following of her own. Sara has millions of followers on Instagram and everything a new photo of Sara is out, fans go crazy.



## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Anushka Sen