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India's vax drive has added great strength in fight against Covid: PM

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that India's vaccination programme has added great strength to the fight against Covid-19.

On completion of one year of vaccination drive, Modi saluted each and every individual who is associated with the vaccination drive.

The Prime Minister lauded the role of doctors, nurses and healthcare workers for vaccination drive.

He said that India's vaccination programme has added great strength to the fight against Covid-19.

In response to a tweet by MyGovIndia in a series of tweets, the Prime Minister said, "Today we mark #1YearOfVaccineDrive. I salute each and every individual who is associated with the vaccination drive. Our vaccination programme has added great strength to the fight against COVID-19. It has led to saving lives and thus protecting livelihoods."

"When the COVID-19 pandemic first struck, we did not know much about the virus. However, our scientists and innovators immersed themselves in developing vaccines. India feels proud that our nation has been able to contribute to fighting the pandemic



through vaccines," he said.

The Prime Minister mentioned that role of our doctors, nurses and health care workers is exceptional.

"At the same time, the role of our doctors, nurses and healthcare workers is exceptional. When we see glimpses of people being vaccinated in remote areas, or our healthcare workers taking the vaccines there, our

hearts and minds are filled with pride," he said.

The Prime Minister emphasized that India's approach to fighting the pandemic will remain science based.

"India's approach to fighting the pandemic will always remain science based. We are also augmenting health infrastructure to ensure our fellow citizens get proper care," Modi said.

OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH INDIA'S DYNAMIC YOUTH, SAYS PM ON 'PARIKSHA PE CHARCHA'

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday that the annual event 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' gives him an opportunity to connect with the dynamic youth of the country. "Personally, 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' is a fantastic learning experience. I get the opportunity to connect with our dynamic youth, understand their challenges and aspirations better," the Prime Minister said in a tweet.

'Pariksha Pe Charcha' is an event where the Prime Minister responds to queries related to examination stress and other related issues during a live programme.

The Prime Minister further said that it also gives him the opportunity to discover the emerging trends in the world of education. The first edition of the Prime Minister's interaction programme with school and college students was held at the Talkatora Stadium in Delhi on February 16, 2018. The registration process of the fifth edition of Prime Minister's interaction programme with school students, teachers and parents is currently online and will end on January 20. "Exams are approaching and so is 1/2 Pariksha Pe Charcha 2022". Let's talk stress-free exams and once again support our brave #ExamWarriors, their parents and teachers. I urge you all to register for this year's #PPC2022," Modi tweeted.

Cold days, dense fog in northwest India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Starting Sunday, two western disturbances in quick succession would affect the western Himalayan region even as dense to very dense fog would engulf parts of northwest India for next three to four days, India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said.

A cyclonic circulation lies over western Uttar Pradesh and neighbourhood and extends upto 3.1 km above mean sea level; there is a trough with its axis at 5.8 km above mean sea level, a cyclonic circulation over south Konkan and neighbourhood seen between 1.5 km and 2.1 km above mean sea level, the IMD said, adding, "A fresh western disturbance is likely to affect western Himalayan region from January 16 and another western disturbance is likely to affect north-west India from January 18."

These systems will bring isolated to scattered light or moderate rainfall over coastal Andhra Pradesh till January 17 and over Rayalaseema, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Mahe during next four to five days.

On Sunday, isolated thunderstorms with lightning are very likely over coastal Andhra Pradesh on Sunday while isolated light or moderate rainfall is likely over Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. IMD has also predicted isolated to scattered light or



moderate rainfall over western Himalayan region till January 19.

Dense fog conditions have been predicted, at a few places dense to very dense fog is likely at isolated places during next three days; dense to very dense fog in night or morning hours in isolated pockets over western Himalayan region, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan during next two days; over eastern Uttar Pradesh during next four days and over Odisha and Jharkhand during January 18 to 20.

The forecast also includes cold day to severe cold day conditions in isolated pockets very likely over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan during next two days while cold wave conditions in isolated pockets are very likely over east Rajasthan during next 24 hours.

Now, 75% reservation must in private jobs in Haryana

CHANDIGARH | Agencies

Fulfilling one of the key poll promise made by Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), a coalition partner of the BJP in Haryana, a law that provides 75 per cent reservation in the private sector to job seekers from the state has come into effect.

Elated over the implementation of the legislation, Deputy Chief Minister Chautala on Sunday said: "Today is a historic day for the youth as from now priority for jobs would be given to the youth of Haryana in all private sector companies, institutions, trusts, societies and industries established in the state."

The rule regarding 75 per cent job reservation came into effect on January 15.

"With the implementation of this system, new avenues for employment will open for lakhs of

youth in the private sector," an official statement quoting Chautala said.

In this regard, a dedicated portal has also been created by the Labour Department along with a helpline number. Companies will now have to reflect their vacancy on the portal which will be continuously monitored by the government.

In November last year, the BJP-JJP government had notified the law to implement 75 per cent job reservations for locals in the private sector. It envisages reservation for local youth in the private sector with an upper limit of gross monthly salary up to Rs 30,000.

The law will be applicable for 10 years. The state government also relaxed the residency requirement from 15 to five years for a person to get a bona fide resident certificate in the state to provide some flexibility to the private companies in hiring.

Centre issues postal stamp to mark 1 yr of Covid vax drive

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday released a commemorative postal stamp on India's achievement in developing the indigenous Covid vaccine as the nation marked the first anniversary of its Covid vaccine drive which began on January 16 last year.

Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya released the postal stamp at a virtual programme, and termed India's vaccination drive as the "most successful in the world".

"Today, on the occasion of #1YearOfVaccineDrive, a postal stamp has been issued on the indigenous Covaxin developed jointly by ICMR and Bharat Biotech, realizing PM Narendra Modi ji's dream of Self-reliant India," Mandaviya said in a tweet.

He further congratulated and



thanked all the scientists in the same tweet.

The Minister also shared a graphical representation of how India's vaccination drive began and how it managed to administer more than 150 crore shots in a year on his handle.

As India marks the first anniversary of vaccination drive, over 156.76 crore vaccine doses have been administered so far under the

drive 1,68,19,744 sessions. In the previous 24 hours, over 66 lakh vaccination doses have been administered.

Taking to Twitter, Mandaviya said: "16th January 2021 will always be remembered! Congratulations India on crossing 157 crore Covid-19 vaccinations that too in just 1 year. With PM Narendra Modi Ji's mantra of 'Sabka Prayas', India has emerged as an example in the world in fight against Covid-19."

India's collective fight against Covid pandemic began on January 16 last year with the vaccination drive across the nation.

The drive was later expanded to citizens and people with comorbidities, and finally all above 18 plus.

The drive for administering precaution doses to the healthcare workers, frontline workers and 60 plus individuals commenced this month on January 10.

WHY MSP LAW IS NOT BEING PASSED, ASKS CONGRESS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day after the farmer unions gave ultimatum to the government on the issue of MSP, the Congress on Sunday questioned the government over the issue.

Congress spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill said, "Why MSP law is not being passed? Why Minister in Lakhimpur Kheri case not being dismissed? Why farmers union not being called for meeting? Withdrawal of black farm laws turning into mere election stunt. Will 19 Nov 2021 day when farm laws were withdrawn will turn into 'Dhokha Diwas'?" The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Saturday had alleged that there is no forward movement on the MSP issue. "There has been no progress. No committee has been formed on Minimum Support Price (MSP). There is only some

action on withdrawing cases against farmers in Haryana, but not much progress on that count in other states, including Delhi. There has been no discussion on our demand in connection with power bills," SKM leader Yudhveer Singh told a media conference SKM, a consortium of 40-odd farmers' organisations, had on December 9 declared to suspend their 15-month-long agitation that had started to protest the three contentious farm laws passed in 2020.

Lakhimpur Kheri was the place where on October 4 half-a-dozen people, including farmers and a journalist, were mowed down by a speeding vehicle, allegedly belonging to the son of Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Ajay Mishra Teni. The farmers have demanded action against Teni and his son, but no step has been taken yet.

Indian, Russian Navies carry out joint exercise in Arabian Sea

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indigenously-designed and built guided missile destroyer, INS Kochi, carried out a passage exercise (PASSEX) with Russian Navy's RFS Admiral Tributs in the Arabian Sea, the Indian Navy said on Sunday.

"The exercise (on Friday) showcased cohesiveness and interoperability between the two navies and included tactical manoeuvres, cross-deck helicopter operations and seamanship activities," the Indian Navy statement said. These exercises are aimed at enhancing interoperability, improving understanding and imbibing best practices between both the friendly navies, and this will involve advanced surface and anti-submarine warfare exercises, weapon firings, seamanship exercises and helicopter operations, Navy officials said, adding that these exercises are conducted regularly with units of friendly foreign navies, whilst visiting each other's



ports or during a rendezvous at sea. Last year from October 12 to 15, the Indian Navy participated in the second phase of Multilateral Maritime Exercise Malabar along with the Japan Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF), the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), and the United States Navy (USN) which was conducted in the Bay of Bengal while first phase of the exercise was conducted in the Philippines Sea from August 26 to 29, 2021.

In this exercise, the Indian Navy participated with INS Ranvijay, INS Satpura, P8I Long Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft and a submarine while the US Navy's Aircraft Carrier USS Carl Vinson participated, along with destroyers, USS Lake Champlain and USS Stockdale. The JMSDF was represented by JS Kaga and JS Murasame whilst the AHMAS Ballarat and HMAS Sirius of Royal Australian Navy participated in this mega naval exercise.

ISI activates terror wings to derail Punjab, UP polls: Intel

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With an aim to derail the electioneering process in the state and to increase the Khalistani footprints in Punjab, the Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has activated its terror outfits to execute more terror activities in the state and also in some parts of Uttar Pradesh, the intelligence agencies have warned.

The sources in the security set up, quoting the intelligence inputs, said that the ISI sponsored Sikh terror outfits may target the election rallies and may attempt to hit some important leaders or VVIP during the electioneering process in Punjab, parts of UP and Uttarakhand.

Considering Punjab election as an apt opportunity to reactivate the Khalistani movement in the state and also in other poll bound states wherein the Sikh voters are in large numbers, the ISI has activated all small or big terror groups which have been tasked to derail the poll process in the state, the sources further said.

The inputs have been shared by the Punjab, UP and Uttarakhand administrations which disclosed that these outfits may try to make inroad among Sikh population in other states too to gain their supports for their cause. The ISI has also conveyed these proscribed Sikh Militant organizations that this is a time of 'Now or Never' for Khalistan.

Accordingly, the UP and Uttarakhand governments have been asked to keep a vigil on these activities and to keep in touch with the Sikh religious leaders and prominent persons in these



states.

The ISI has instructed the Sikh militant groups which are active abroad to channelize the supply of weapons and explosives in Punjab and the organizations like International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) to arrange the supply of weapons through Pakistani handlers.

The sources, quoting the intelligence input, also said that Sikh militant Wadhava Singh Babbar of BKI, Parmjit Singh Panjwar of Khalistan Commando Force and Ranjeet Singh Neeta of Khalistan Zindabad Force are in constant touch with ISI and executing the instructions while Gurpatwant Singh Pannu of Sikh for Justice who have already been declared terrorist by Indian authorities, is also active in the UK, the US and Germany to support his men in Punjab by all

means.

They also said that Lakhveer Singh led ISYF has a substantial influence in the villages at international border with Pakistan and many of his henchmen are expert in making bombs and other explosive devices. Singh has been tasked to arrange safe passage in Punjab of these explosive materials once it is smuggled in to Indian Territory, the sources revealed.

The use of drones for transporting weapons and explosives across the border has become a major challenge for the security forces in recent times along the Punjab border. According to the officials, over 60 incidents of drones have been spotted on the Indo-Pakistan border in Punjab sector. Many of them have been shot down by the Border security Force.

The investigations into the recent Ludhiana blast have also revealed that how these Sikh Militant groups are trying to execute their terror attacks in the state with their overground workers.

A senior official in the Punjab security grid said that the ISI has also activated the old terror groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Indian Mujahideen and Hizbul Mujahideen and asked them to recreate their sleeper cell network in Punjab and other parts of UP too. These Pakistan Occupied Kashmir based terror wings have been more active in Jammu and Kashmir through over ground workers especially after the Taliban took over the reign in Afghanistan in August last year. He also said that by extending the jurisdiction of BSF up to 50 km from the border to the hinterland in Punjab will help the security forces to prevent the terror activities in forthcoming elections.



SENIOR OFFICERS, POLICE INVOLVED IN LIQUOR TRADE, ALLEGES BJP BIHAR CHIEF

Team Absolute | Patna

BJP's Bihar unit president Sanjay Jaiswal on Sunday slammed the Nitish Kumar government over the Nalanda liquor tragedy which claimed 11 lives, and accused the senior administrative and police officers of being involved in the liquor trade in the state.

Jaiswal, in a Facebook post said that the senior officers are responsible for it and they should be arrested.

On January 12, JD-U spokesperson Abhishek Jha had said that Sanjay Jaiswal is criticising liquor ban in Bihar. "I want to ask him whether it is his personal stand or of his party. Sanjay Jaiswal should clarify it," Jha had tweeted. Responding to Jha's tweet, Jaiswal said, "I had gone there to console families whose members lost their lives after consuming spurious liquor. Is consoling a victim's family a crime?" he asked.

"Will the Nitish Kumar government send family members of victims who lost their lives in Nalanda liquor tragedy to jail?" Jaiswal said.

"If you want to implement a liquor



ban in Nalanda, arrest the senior officers who have given wrong statements in public. The victims died due to poisonous liquor and Nalanda district magistrate Shashank Shubhankar and other officers claimed that the victims have other diseases like diabetes, blood pressure and others. Such statements are good enough to establish relationships with officers and liquor mafias and to hide their failures," Jaiswal said.

"The second culprits are police officers. They knew about the liquor operations in their respective jurisdiction. They should be jailed for 10 years as per the provision under liquor prohibition law of Bihar."

"Unfortunately, the police officers below Inspector rank officers are getting suspended for 2 months after such incidents and then deployed in other police stations. Due to such an ill practice, they continue their illicit

works," Jaiswal said. "The third culprits are mafias who are involved in liquor operations. Arresting them is very easy if we interrogate police officers in a police style. Liquor manufacturers and consumers should be punished but they are similar to hydra. Every time you cut their arms, it comes out again. If you want to uproot it, you should break the nexus of senior officers, police and liquor mafias," he alleged.

Tableau politics heats up ahead of Republic day parade

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ahead of the Republic day parade, politics of tableau has heated up after Centre rejected the proposals of Kerala and West Bengal governments with Mamata Banerjee shooting off a letter to the Prime Minister and Congress alleging partisan and vindictiveness in the selection of the states for the Tableau.

Congress leader B.K. Hariprasad has alleged that the BJP is vindictive towards non-NDA ruled states. "BJP is having vindictive attitude towards certain states. The Centre has rejected Kerala government's tableau which was based on Narayana Guru, a philosopher & social reformer." "He fought against caste-ridden society & rejecting his tableau is an insult to the spiritual guru. This smells of #BJP conspiracy," he added. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee



on Sunday too shot off a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and requested him to reconsider the decision of excluding West Bengal's tableau. The tableau was to commemorate Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army (INA) on his 125th birth anniversary. "All the people of West Bengal are deeply pained by this attitude of the central government. Bengal was at the forefront of the Indian freedom struggle and has paid the heaviest price for the country's

Independence through the partition," Mamata in her letter said. Earlier, floor leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury had written to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh over the issue and had said that he is disappointed and shocked. "It is an insult to the people of Bengal that the Central Government has rejected the proposal of West Bengal's tableau showcasing its cultural heritage and Netaji's life and contributions in our Freedom Struggle, on Republic Day," he said.

Battle for UP: Ayodhya, Kashi, Mathura in BJP's campaign CBSE set to conduct Class 10, 12 phase-2 board exams amid Covid surge

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With an aim to form a government for the second time in a row in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP is focussing on its Hindutva agenda and has started campaigning with a theme song which focusses on Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura.

BJP Lok Sabha member Manoj Tiwari has launched a theme song mentioning Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura and started electioneering. This theme song talks about Ram temple being constructed in Ayodhya, redevelopment of Kashi Vishwanath and what Mathura will be in the times ahead. How much importance this theme song will get in the saffron party's campaigning can be gauged from the fact that veteran BJP leaders have started spreading it on social media. The whole exercise is aimed at reaching out to the electorate and wooing them with the theme song. This video song features, grand model of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, programmes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar

Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held in the temple city. It also shows the visit of Modi and Adityanath to Varanasi and road shows of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Adityanath in Mathura.

It also features state Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Dinesh Sharma and state party president Swatantra Dev Singh. Cabinet Minister Giriraj Singh, party's national spokesperson Sambit Patra, party IT cell chief Amit Malviya and other party MPs and leaders are tweeting the theme song. The song for Ayodhya says: "Mandir ab banne laga hai, bhagwa rang chadhne laga hai, mandir jab ban jayega soch nazara kya hoga. Desh humara soch ke dekho... is se pyara kya hoga." "For Varanasi, the song is: "Kashi ab sajne lage hai, damru bhi bajne laga hai. Damru jab asar karega soch nazara kya hoga. Desh humara soch ke dekho... is se pyara kya hoga"

And, the song for Mathura says, "Mathura bhi sajne laga hai, bansi ab bajne lagi hai, bansi jab baj jayegi, soch nazara kya hoga."

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As exams across the country have been scrapped in view of the surging Covid-19 cases, the CBSE Board and the Union Ministry of Education are all set to conduct Term 2 of the 10th and 12th board examinations, the first phase of which were held in November-December, 2021 and the second phase is scheduled to be conducted in March-April. The chances of the second term of the board examination getting cancelled this year are very slim, as health experts had earlier mentioned that the third wave is under control.

The duration of the second phase of exams will be of two hours and the questions will be subjective. Dr. Joseph Emmanuel, Academic Director of CBSE, told IANS: "The sample question papers and the marking schemes for Term 2 examinations of Class 10 and 12 have been released on the website and the schools affiliated to CBSE Board have been alerted too." Sanyam Bhardwaj, CBSE's controller of examinations, said: "If the situation gets worse, only then the second term of examinations will not be held. Marks obtained in the first phase will be considered final and based on them, the results



will be prepared. But if such a situation does not arise and the second term is held successfully, the final result will be decided on the basis of 50-50 per cent marks of these two terms." Both the Union Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health are paying special attention to the vaccination of students between the 15-18 years of age group so that they can appear for the board exams safely. Pankaj Rathore, principal of Seth Jaipuria School, said: "The preparation for the exam and the Covid situation has made children used to the hybrid mode of learning. School's new method of evaluation will help us move beyond the traditional notions of assessment. Schools must keep up with

the situation and ensure that students are well prepared for pre board and board exams. He added: "Offline classes are being planned for these children after immunisation of the 15-18 years age group is complete. Vaccination camps within the school premises will help the children feel at home. It is important to observe the students for a few days after vaccination as their health is our top priority." Talking about the children's health being the first priority, the Ministry of Education said that the CBSE Board exams will be held while strictly adhering to all the Covid protocols. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is soon going to do a school priority. "Pariksha Pe Charcha" for which more and more students, teachers and parents are being encouraged to register. According to the Ministry, this year the format of this programme has been proposed to be kept online like last year. An online creative writing competition on various topics is being organised from December 28 to January 20 to select the participants. The questions asked by the selected winners will be included in the 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' programme. School students, teachers and parents of Classes 9-12 students will be selected through an online.

IMD plans pilot project for using drones for weather observations in a year

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India Meteorological Department (IMD) is looking at conducting a pilot project in 2023 for using drones for weather observations across India. Ever since the Ministry of Civil Aviation notified the liberalised Drone Rules, 2021, in August last year, there have been talks of the immense potential that using drones will have for multiple applications. Although this included talks about observational forecasting by the IMD, it was the Minister for State for Earth Sciences, Jitendra Singh, while speaking at the 147th Foundation Day event of the IMD on Friday, brought the issue to the forefront. He had said that his Ministry will deploy and use drone-based observation technology in a big way for strengthening the localised forecasting, besides adopting the high-resolution models. IMD Director General,



Mrutyunjay Mahapatra told IANS: "It is still at a very initial state. We are looking at a pilot study in about a year." The IMD releases 63 balloons everyday uniformly distributed across India. Those reach up to an altitude of four to five km but the equipment that goes with it is lost. "Instead, with drones that can

go up to six km vertically, our equipment can be reused," Mahapatra said. Experts welcomed it as a positive development but were also wary of its limitations in terms of endurance and payload but most of the were welcoming of the development as something for which the time is right. Former IMD Director

General, K.J. Ramesh pointed out how the US and Israel are already extensively using drones and said that for India, drones can be useful in remote areas such as Ladakh or coastal areas. "Drones of three to four hours of endurance (having) horizontal radial scan range of 40-50 km and vertical range of 4-5 km capability that the Defence Research and Development Organisation developed and are being operated by Indian Navy in naval yards or by the Army in hilly regions will have to be used with meteorological instruments payload," Ramesh said. Terming it as a new vista for technology around the unmanned aerial vehicle to play a significant role in weather data management, Nilamadhab Prusty, Mentor Director, Strategy Centre at the Centre for Development and Disaster Management Support Services, said, "Instrumented drone can perform this role. It can help forecast.

Two jailed for filing repeated cases against Azim Premji

Bengaluru | Agencies

The Karnataka High Court has convicted two representatives of India Awake for Transparency Limited for filing repeated cases against IT major Wipro Limited and its founder and chairman Azim Premji. Wipro Chairman Azim Premji, Wipro Limited and Hasham Investment and Trading Company Limited had filed a petition seeking action under criminal contempt against the Chennai based 'shell' company and its representatives. The court has convicted R. Subramanian and P. Sadanand, under Contempts of Court Act. Subramanian appeared as counsel and Sadanand claimed to be a volunteer. The court sentenced both to simple imprisonment of two months and fined Rs 2,000 each.



The bench observed that petitioners filed repeated cases in the name of company which is non-existent. They had given the name as 'India Awake for Transparency' and did not give full name by hiding 'private limited' words. The court opined that it is brazen attempt to conceal the fact and impersonation to mislead the court. The court directed the registrar (judicial) to prepare a warrant for the duo's arrest. The court further gave orders restraining them from filing any legal

proceedings against the complainant and their group before any authorities including any court, tribunal and forums. The court had earlier dismissed the petition on Feb 12, 2021 by India Awake for Transparency and imposed a fine of Rs 10 lakh. It also condemned the conduct of the petitioner. This was challenged in a divisional bench. The divisional bench on Mar 25, upheld the previous order and noted that the company's conduct amounted to criminal contempt. The petitioners claimed that large assets belonging to three companies were diverted after they wound up through gifts to a private trust controlled by Premji couple. Premji couple maintained that though the matter was settled by the ministry of corporate affairs, even after that the petitioners filed slew of cases seeking probe.

Strict laws and tax hike on tobacco products needed to keep our youth safe: Experts

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Experts have called for making India free from tobacco during the National Youth Week, being celebrated during 12-18 January to mark Swami Vivekananda Jayanti.

A significant raise in taxes and implementing the proposed amendments for a stricter anti-tobacco law, COTPA, are the way forward to curbing tobacco consumption. Delivering the keynote address during the webinar 'Freedom From Tobacco: What India Wants' on the occasion of National Youth Day, Mr Priyank Kanoongo, Chairman of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) advocated increase in taxes on a wide range of tobacco products. Kanoongo said that affordability and easy availability of such lethal tobacco products is harmful, especially for the youth. An increase in taxes will not only make these products out of bounds, but the additional revenues earned can be used for the treatment and rehabilitation of those suffering from tobacco-related diseases. In addition to requesting increased taxes on a wide range of tobacco products, NCPCR also suggested an increase in taxes



on films, OTT, and other media that show use of tobacco in any form. "Imposition of greater taxation on media that displays use of tobacco will require people to pay more and help discourage glorification of tobacco products. NCPCR has also requested the government to use the earnings from increased taxes entirely on rehabilitation and preventive activities," he informed. "There is a psychological warfare by the tobacco companies. They are targeting young children by positioning tobacco-related ads at their eye-level at points of sale and pro-

moting sale of tobacco products such as gutka and beedi, alongside sweets, candies, and toys," Kanoongo said. At present, India loses more than 13 lakh of its citizens annually to tobacco and second hand smoke. "The number of tobacco users is rising and it is scary to note that children between 13 and 15 years of age constitute 8.5% per cent of them," said Prof (Dr) Uma Kumar, Head of Rheumatology Department, AIIMS, New Delhi. Long-term use of tobacco is hazardous and is a known cause for cardio-vascular problems, neurological disorders, stroke, reduction in immunity, recurrent infections, respiratory illnesses, and auto-immune conditions. She called for various policy measures to protect the youth from this menace. Shweta Shalini, youth leader and BJP spokesperson for Maharashtra, said that Swami Vivekananda had described youth as the strength of the country and that health should be the top priority for them. However, today they are the most at risk of tobacco. She emphasised on the need for strict policy initiatives against tobacco. Shalini referring to the e-book titled 'What India Wants', released during the programme, said that it has been proven once again that the people of India want

taxes on tobacco products to be increased in order to save the youth from this menace. Even a large number of tobacco users, themselves, favour a hike in taxes. The e-book released on this occasion 'What India Wants', is a compilation of results from various polls and surveys that suggest more than 88 per cent respondents want the proposed amendments to the tobacco control laws to come into effect. The poll results also indicate a sense of urgency among the masses to make India tobacco-free. A scientific survey conducted in 10 states and several Twitter polls conducted by various concerned citizens are included in this e-book. Tobacco consumption is striking deeper roots in the country and increasingly engulfing our children and youth. Children as young as 10 years of age are now using tobacco products, according to the latest Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4). Therefore, experts insist on increasing taxes and passing of the proposed amendments to the tobacco-control law, COTPA, to ensure better deterrence to tobacco consumption. Under the National Youth Week starting from January 12, the Central government is also organising many national level programs.





PROUD THAT OVER 10.72 CR COVID-19 VACCINE DOSES INOCULATED IN MP IN A YEAR: CM CHOUHAN

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday inspected COVID-19 vaccination centre of Jaypee Hospital in Bhopal on the occasion of completing one year of nationwide vaccination drive.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday inspected COVID-19 vaccination centre of Jaypee Hospital in Bhopal on the occasion of completing one year of nationwide vaccination drive. Chouhan said, "Earlier, about 30 to 40 per cent people needed to be admitted when they got infected with COVID-19, but now only 3 to 4 per cent people need to be admitted, this has been possible only through vaccination."

care infrastructure is well equipped to fight the pandemic, Chouhan said that presently no such situation has arisen to admit people to the hospital. "It is even more gratifying that most of the people who are being admitted to the hospitals now are not critical, they do not require oxygen. The only advantage of vaccination is that at first you will not get infected and even if you do, the virus will not affect severely," he said. Chouhan appealed to the citizens to cooperate in getting the vaccine to those who are left out. Identify eligible people who have not been vaccinated at ward, panchayat level in door to door campaigns. This is a powerful means of protection. Adopt Covid appropriate behavior. The number of infected may increase in the third wave, so do not skip precautions such as use of face

masks, avoiding crowds, maintaining social distance and washing hands frequently. It is also the duty of every citizen. Do follow the precautions that have been mentioned for home isolation as well. Covid care centers have started in the state. Oxygen plants are also functional. Despite these arrangements, attention has to be paid to all measures to prevent infection. Chouhan administered vaccination doses to guard Haridev Yadav and Ward Boy Sanjay Yadav at the vaccination center of the hospital and presented certificates to them. Chouhan said that it is possible to avoid infection in the third wave only by adopting Covid appropriate behavior. He advised citizens to take advantage of the Suraksha chakra of the vaccine and follow all precautions. Chief Minister urged all politi-

cal parties, religious leaders, social organizations and members of Crisis Management Group at every level to cooperate in the vaccination work. Notably, vaccination drive across the country began on January 16, 2021. Starting initially by inoculating vaccines to healthcare workers, it was then expanded to frontline workers, followed by people above 60 years of age and those above 45 years with comorbidities on March 1 last year. Later it was also expanded to all above 45 years of age on April 1, 2021 and then those above 18 years of age on May 1, 2021. The vaccination drive for those between the age group 15-18 was started on January 3, 2022 and for administering the precautionary doses to the healthcare workers, frontline workers and sixty plus individuals then commenced on January 10 this year.

Cold wave conditions to continue in MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Cold weather continues in Madhya Pradesh. Due to the cold winds coming from North India in the state, the temperature is falling, due to which the cold is increasing continuously. The Meteorological Department has issued orange and yellow alerts regarding cold wave in many districts. From this morning, the whole of Madhya Pradesh was seen in the respect of fog, while in the evening the Meteorological Department has again issued an alert, due to which it is believed that the people of the state are not going to get relief from the cold yet. The Meteorological Department has issued a yellow alert in the state including state capital Bhopal, Narsinghpur, Seoni, Betul, Indore, Dhar, Khandwa, Ratlam, Shajapur, Ujjain, Satna and Jabalpur districts due to the possibility of cold wave. Let us tell you that yesterday the night of all these districts passed cold, whereas people were seen chilling from the cold since morning. On the other hand, an orange alert of cold wave has been issued in Chhatarpur, Sagar, Ratlam and Gwalior districts. Apart from this, there is a possibility of moderate to dense fog in Gwalior, Rewa, Bhopal and Raigarh districts. Due to which people have been instructed to take precautions. Let us



inform that for the last three days, cold wave is going on in almost the whole of Madhya Pradesh, the lowest temperature in the state has been recorded in Gwalior and Naugaon at 3 degree Celsius. The Meteorological Department said that strong cold winds are coming from North India, due to which there is a continuous drop in the temperature of the state. Due to which the cold is increasing in the state. The Meteorological Department said that on January 16 and Tuesday, January 18, two consecutive new systems are likely to form. Today, on Sunday, a weak western disturbance is expected to enter North India. On January 18, a Western Disturbance with a strong frequency is likely to enter North India, due to which there will be cloud cover due to increase in moisture in the atmosphere. There may also be rain and

thundershowers at some places. At the same time, due to the increasing cold, the Meteorological Department has appealed to the people to be careful and not to go out in the cold. Visibility was very low in Bhopal this morning due to dense fog. According to the Meteorological Department, the minimum temperature in Bhopal today will be 9 degree Celsius and the maximum temperature will be 20 degree Celsius. Minimum temperature was 3.3 in Naogaon, 05 in Khajuraho, 5.1 in Guna, 5.4 in Pachmarhi and 06 degree Celsius in Sagar. On Sunday, there is dense fog in many areas including Gwalior-Chambal division, Bundelkhand, Mahakausal since morning. There is fog in the capital Bhopal as well. Apart from the day, there is a drop in the night temperature as well as the cloud cover.

Medical Institutions Should Come Forward for the Expansion of Health Facilities in Remote Areas of the State: CM

PRIVATE MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PROVIDE TREATMENT TO PATIENTS WITH FEELING OF SERVICE AND DEDICATION. WORLD CLASS CATH LAB INAUGURATED AT NATIONAL HOSPITAL



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has called upon big medical institutions to come forward to expand modern health facilities to remote areas of the state. He has said that the state government is considering bringing a well-planned policy for health facilities through private public partnership. Chief Minister was addressing after the inauguration of the world's modern and the central India's first cath lab at the National Hospital in Bhopal on Sunday. Chouhan said that today is a

special and important day for the country as it was on this day that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had introduced the vaccine to fight against Covid. He also thanked the doctors including scientists and every individual and organisation associated with vaccination. Chouhan said that this cath lab started for heart patients in the National Hospital from today will give perfect results, so that the patients can get perfect treatment.

Chief Minister thanked the medical institutions for their cooperation during the Covid period. He said that private hospitals should be service-oriented and avoid commercial mindset. Chouhan said that there can be no greater reward than serving the patients with dedication. National Hospital will establish a new identity in Madhya Bharat through its new cath lab. Chouhan inaugurated the cath lab and inquired about the technical aspects of the lab.



UNION MINISTER OF STATE MURUGAN MADE A COURTESY CALL ON CHIEF MINISTER

Bhopal: Union Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Information Broadcasting L. Murugan made a courtesy call on Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at the Chief Minister's residence on Sunday. He discussed various issues related to the development of the state.

CM EXPRESSES GRIEF OVER ROAD ACCIDENT IN SATNA

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed grief over the untimely death of 4 people in a road accident at Amarpatan in Satna district. Chouhan has prayed to God to give peace to the departed souls at his lotus feet and strength to the bereaved family members to bear the loss. Chouhan has wished speedy recovery of the citizens injured in the accident and directed the doctors for proper treatment.

SCHOOLS CLOSED BUT STUDIES TO CONTINUE STUDENTS TO STUDY AT HOME IN 'HAMARA GHAR HAMARA VIDYALAYA' FROM MONDAY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The daily routine of school students of Madhya Pradesh will have some changes from Monday, January 17 onwards. Their schools will remain closed but a part of their house will become their school. While the elders of the house will play the role of their mentors, they will get tips for studies from radio and WhatsApp. The government has decided to shut down schools of Classes I to XIII to protect the children from Covid-19. Director Rajya Shiksha Kendra Dhanaraju S said that continuity of studies of students is also necessary. With this view, the system of home based education is also being started again. In this, 'Hamara Ghar-Hamara Vidyalaya' programme will start from January 17. Educational activities will be conducted by creating a school-like environment at home for daily and regular study like before. Along with this, students will study at home with in their homes, surroundings, in the midst of elders of the family, elder brothers and sisters studying in senior school/college. In this, a learning package has been prepared on the basis of radio, textbook and exercise book available as a learning source with the child. In the 'Hamara Ghar-Hamara Vidyalaya' programme 'Radio School' will be broadcast

for the students of elementary classes from Monday to Saturday between 11 am to 12 noon which will be relayed simultaneously by all the broadcasting centers located in the state of All India Radio and Vividh Bharati. Along with this, educational material will also be provided through Digilep WhatsApp groups. Along with this, students will also work on the Agrade exercise book at their homes. Every day elder members of the family will start school work by ringing the bell/plate at 10 am and between 10 am to 11 am students will study and practice by watching the educational activities received on Digilep WhatsApp groups. From 11 am to 12 noon, they 'Radio School' will listen to the broadcast and do related activities. After this, between 12 noon to 1 pm, we will work on the Agrade exercise book. All these works will be monitored by the teachers of the respective schools. Director State Education Center Dhanaraju S has sent detailed instructions in this regard to all the district collectors. He has expected the parents of the students and their elder family members to cooperate with the students during this period and provide them educational environment at home as well.



CM PLANTED ALMOND AND KARANJ SAPPLINGS IN SMART PARK

and informed about the creative and environmental protection activities of the organisation. Almond is a dry fruit. Technically, it is the seed of the fruit of the almond tree. The almond tree bears pink and white fragrant flowers. It flourishes more in mountainous areas. In Asia, it occurs in greater abundance in Iran-Iraq. The presence of fiber in almonds is helpful in digestion. Almonds are also useful in the treatment of high blood pressure, constipation and heart diseases. It is rich in potassium, magnesium, calcium and vitamin E. Karanj plant is considered important in Ayurvedic medicine. Karanj plant is also used in religious works.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted almond and Karanj saplings in Smart Park on Sunday. Along with Chief Minister the office bearers of Bachpan Sanstha also planted saplings

Operation of Anganwadi Centres Suspended till January 31

Ready-to-eat Supplementary Nutritional Food Will Be Distributed. Take Home Ration to Eligible Beneficiaries

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In view of the situation of Covid infection in the state, the state government has suspended the operation of Anganwadi centres till January 31, 2022. Director Women-Child Development Ram Rao

Bhonsle informed that ready-to-eat supplementary nutritional food will be distributed in place of hot cooked food till January 31, till the operation of Anganwadis is suspended. Along with this, arrangements for nutritious food will be ensured at the homes of the eligible beneficiaries in take home ration. Bhonsle informed that other essential services provided in the Anganwadi Centres will remain unchanged. All the district collectors of the state have been asked to give information about this and ensure compliance of the decision

of the government. Instructions have been given to follow the prescribed standard procedure to prevent Covid-19 infection in distribution of ready-to-eat nutritional food to the beneficiaries of Anganwadi. It is noteworthy that in view of the third wave of Corona, the Women and Child Development Department, through the Collectors, was requested by the District Level Crisis Management Committee to take a decision on the operation of Anganwadi centres in view of the local situation.

Pench's famous tigress 'Collarwali' passes away at 16

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests PCCF said prima facie, it seemed that the tigress died due to old age.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The famous tigress of Pench Tiger Reserve 'Collarwali' died on Saturday evening at the age of 16. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests PCCF (Wildlife), Alok Kumar, said that they had been monitoring the tigress for the past few days and it appears that she died because of age-related ailments. "Usually, it is an organ failure like in the case of humans. However, the exact cause will be ascertained following a post-mortem," Kumar added. According to Om Veer, a naturalist and wildlife photographer at Pench, 'Collarwali,' also known as T-15, was last spotted on January 14 when she had come to drink water at her usual spot at the Bhura dev nalla. "She came to the water stream and was so weak that she could barely walk. She rested near the stream and did not move for around 2 hours. At that point,



there were 42 vehicles inside Pench and all of them saw her," Veer said. The forest officials soon reached the spot and the roads were closed. She was taken in for treatment and breathed her last at 6:15 pm on Saturday. According to the officials, T-15 was born on September 22, 2005, to tiger T-1, which was known as 'Charger' and tigress T-7, known as 'Bari mada'. Collarwali was the first born of Barimada's four cubs and was also featured in BBC's documentary 'Spy in the Jungle'. Aniruddha Majumdar, a scientist with MP State Forest Research Institute who had observed Collarwali for seven years to study breeding and cub

raising among tigers said, "Collarwali was the first one among the other cubs to move out and live with her father T-1, who was one of the most dominating tigers of Pench. Much like him, Collarwali dominated the prey rich area of the tiger reserve and held a distinguished record of giving birth to 5 cubs in a litter in October 2010." Sanjay Tiwari, a social activist who followed Collarwali, described her as a tourist-loving tigress. "She used to come out when she would hear jeeps coming in and walk on the kacha road as if she wanted everyone to see her," he added. Majumdar pointed out, "A tiger does not generally live beyond 12 years as it becomes

difficult for them to defend their territory. However, in the case of Collarwali, she dominated the prey-rich base of the core zone in Pench, raising her cubs there. But, over the years, she was injured seriously while defending her territory." T-15 was one of the first tigress that was collared inside Pench on March 11, 2008, by Majumdar, who was then working as a scientist with the Wildlife Institute of India, thereby earning her the title Collarwali. "On May 20, 2008, we spotted her with three cubs. This was her first litter but none of them survived. On October 25 the same year, she gave birth to four cubs - three males and one female - and raised them successfully," Majumdar added. Over the years, Collarwali gave birth to 29 cubs of which 25 have survived successfully. "The glory of Collarwali still lives on as one of her cubs, a tigress, who was relocated to Panna tiger reserve, has also given birth to five cubs in one litter. Other male cubs of Collarwali now dominate Pench and its adjoining territory in Maharashtra as well. She is the pride of Madhya Pradesh," Majumdar said.



EDITOR'S SPECS

BJP CMS ATTACK ON PM SECURITY BREACH IS A DISTURBING

The breach in the Prime Minister's security in Punjab on January 5 was grave. In the run-up to the PM's visit, several letters were sent out to police officials on the field warning against disruption by protesters and urging them to make arrangements. The Supreme Court has set up a five-member committee headed by a former SC judge to probe the incident, observing that the matter cannot be left to "one-sided inquiries." At the same time, the court has also called out the "blame game" and "war of words" between the Centre and the state government they stand in the way of a "robust mechanism to respond at such a critical juncture." In other words, instead of political point-scoring and grandstanding, what is needed is the sober pursuit of answers to serious questions about the breach, and what needs to be done to avoid a repeat. But the court's wise counsel may have fallen on ears that didn't hear. On Wednesday, at least six BJP chief ministers, almost in concert, came out to accuse the Congress and its government in Punjab of a "pre-planned, well-orchestrated conspiracy", two of them alleged the involvement of "Khalistanis", one even called for the arrest of the Punjab CM. So far, the BJP has used party forums to accuse the Congress and its government of deliberately putting the PM in harm's way in Punjab. Even though senior BJP ministers at the Centre have echoed the allegations, the apparently synchronised attack of the BJP chief ministers is a disturbing escalation of intemperate rhetoric. As the ruling party at the Centre and in several states, the BJP needs to pause, and take stock. For one, as the court has pointed out, it is obscuring due process by rushing to pronounce guilt, it is preempting a free and fair probe. Then, the accusation itself represents a new breakdown in a public discourse that is not always known to abide by standards of mutual civility or respect. After all, to accuse your political opponent of a conspiracy to do physical harm, to do so at the level of instant rhetoric, is to lead the political conversation into a very dark dead end. By invoking spectres of "Khalistan", BJP chief ministers are sending yet another disturbing signal that the party which tried and failed to discredit the farmers' movement in Punjab is still looking for labels to tar and taint the state.

IT'S BACK TO THE SEASON OF 'AAYA RAM GAYA RAM' POLITICS

As the election to the five state assemblies draws near, the pace of political activities naturally has become turbocharged. Not that rallies or road shows are happening, neither are posters and banners flooding the streets. The movement is of politicians shifting alliances in search of pastures that they believe can fetch them the necessary greens.

The proverbial 'Aaya Ram Gaya Ram' is here again, and no matter what the law says, or what the sentiment and goal of the law is, the crossovers continue. It is not common to see politicians who have been ministers for full five years suddenly decide to exit their parent party and join the rivals. In recent days, Uttar Pradesh, Goa and Punjab -- three of the five states going to the polls -- has this drama unfolding almost daily. It must surely have made the voters sit up and ponder. In Goa, political defections continue unabated. At least nine MLAs resigned their seats in the state assembly to join other parties. A Minister in Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's cabinet, Michael Lobo, switched over to the Congress, which is said to have promised tickets to him (Lobo), his wife and some of his associates.

Senior Goa Congress leader and former MLA Victor Gonsalves left the party to join Mamata Banerjee's TMC. The reason for his resignation is said to be the induction of Lobo into the Congress. However, Gonsalves has himself been party-hopping, from the Congress to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to Goa Forward Party (GFP) in 2017, to the Congress in 2020, before settling in Trinamool.

Uttar Pradesh is considered to be one of the toughest political territories in the country, where political equations and affiliations are dominated by caste and religion. And the state has its own share of 'Aaya Ram Gaya Ram' stories. At least 20 leaders, including ministers, have jumped ship so far. Just ahead of the election, Swami Prasad Maurya, a minister in the Yogi Adityanath government, announced his resignation on Twitter and joined the Samajwadi Party. After serving his complete five-year term as minister, he accused the BJP of neglecting Dalits, OBCs and farmers.

Maurya had switched over to the BJP from the Bahujan Samaj Party, months ahead of the 2017 Assembly elections, accusing Mayawati of corruption. Before joining the BSP in 1996, he had a stint in the Janata Dal. Soon after



Maurya's resignation from the BJP, two more ministers -- Dara Singh Chauhan and Dharam Singh Saini -- followed in his footsteps.

Saini was with the BSP before joining the BJP in 2016 and now has moved to SP with Maurya. Chauhan started with the BSP in 1996, then went to SP and got elected as a Rajya Sabha MP, returned to the BSP ahead of 2009 general elections and was appointed leader of the BSP parliamentary party in the Lok Sabha, switched to the BJP in 2015, and now has again moved on. As the exodus continued, the BJP was also inducting 'other' leaders -- SP's Hariom Yadav and Dharampal Singh, and Naresh Saini of the Congress, for instance. In Punjab, too, politicians are hopping around from one party to another in search of better deals. The Congress' Dalit face and former minister Joginder Singh Mann resigned and joined AAP after accusing the party of "patronising the tainted and giving space to opportunists". Six days after joining the BJP, MLA Balwinder Laddi rejoined the Congress on January 2. It is being said that he returned after being assured of a party ticket in the assembly elections.

Harjot Kamal, Congress MLA from Moga, was said to be unhappy after his seat was given to actor Sonu Sood's sister Malvika, just weeks ahead of the state elections. A "humiliated" Kamal joined the BJP on Saturday. Congress MLA Fateh Jung Singh Bajwa, brother of senior party leader and MP Partap Bajwa, also switched sides, fearing he may lose the candi-

dature this time. In Uttarakhnd, AAP leader Ravindra Jugran quit the party and rejoined the ruling BJP, saying it was like a homecoming for him. He had earlier been in BJP for 25 years, but had joined AAP a year ago. Former Uttarakhnd Congress president Kishore Upadhyay was reported to have met some BJP leaders because he is said to be unhappy with Harish Rawat spearheading the party's election campaign. Upadhyay was removed from all party posts on the charge of committing 'anti-party activities'.

Similar examples of jumping ships can be multiplied. The 'Aaya Rams Gaya Rams' may evoke awkward responses, but the fact is that they are a striking feature in the political space. Some may dismiss them as being disgustingly opportunistic, others may even regard them as loyalty shifts dictated by legitimate political reasons.

The fact is that 'Aya Rams Gaya Rams' continue to exist even in 2022, a good 55 years after an independent MLA, Gaya Lal, from Haryana in 1967 switched two parties in a day and three in 15 days -- joined the Congress, then the United Front, and finally, back to the Congress to become a part of the new government. According to contemporary news reports, Congress leader Rao Birender Singh addressed a press conference in Chandigarh with Gaya Lal by his side.

Birender Singh told the media: "Gaya Ram ab Aaya Ram hai." A few days later, the then

Union Home Minister, Yashwantrao Chavan, used the phrase 'Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram' in Parliament as he took a jibe at Gaya Lal.

In June 1979, Bhajan Lal formed the Janata Party government in Haryana. However, when Indra Gandhi won the Lok Sabha elections in 1980, he joined the Congress along with all his MLAs. This is also regarded as one of the worst instances of 'Aaya Aam Gaya Ram' politics. The Rajiv Gandhi government in 1985 introduced the anti-defection law to stop the jumping jacks from ditching their mother parties. A Constitution Amendment Bill that included the Tenth Schedule to enact the anti-defection law was passed. An MLA or MP who switches parties can avoid the anti-defection law, only if one-third of the party legislators also resign; otherwise he or she would stand disqualified.

Although 'Aaya Ram Gaya Ram' politics has become uncommon after the anti-defection law came into force, it keeps surfacing every now and then. The phrase is an idiom that became popular in the late 1960s, but has a deep political history laced with suspicion.

The openness on social media and the unparalleled access to all sorts of information today gives an advantage to the people and it is this that the turncoats, the 'Aaya Rams Gaya Rams', need to fear.

international

DON'T CONSTRUCT ROAD VIA NEPALI TERRITORY UNILATERALLY, NEPAL TELLS INDIA

Kathmandu | Agencies

Nepal on Sunday once again reminded India not to construct any roads in Nepali territory unilaterally. This reaction comes in a response to a recent statement of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 30 in Uttarakhnd. While addressing an election rally, Modi on December 30 announced that his government had built a road to Lipulekh and that there were more plans to extend it further.

Responding to the statement of the Indian Prime Minister after it created a huge uproar in Nepal across the political spectrum, Nepal's Minister for Information and Communication Minister Gyanendra Bahadur Karki said on Sunday that Nepal government has been asking India not to extend and construct road via Nepali territory unilaterally. The Indian government is building a road via Lipulekh to Kailash Mansarovar in the Tibetan Autonomous Region of

China. After the row in Nepal over Modi's statement, the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu on Saturday issued a statement, clarifying that any outstanding boundary issues with Nepal will be settled through established mechanisms and channels. "The Government of India's position on the India-Nepal boundary is well known, consistent and unambiguous," it said in the statement. "It has been communicated to the Government of Nepal." Almost all political parties in Nepal, including Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's own Nepali Congress, have been demanding that the government speak up on Modi's statement and make its position clear on Lipulekh. When India and China agreed to develop a trade and transit route via Lipulekh during Modi's visit to China in 2015, the Nepal government had objected to the decision and protested with both Indian and Chinese governments through the separate diplomatic notes. While calling Lipulekh an integral

part of its territory, Nepal asked both New Delhi and Beijing to scrap the agreement or take prior consent from Nepal if they want to construct anything into the disputed territory. Lipulekh is a trijunction between Nepal, India and China. Earlier in 2020, Nepal again protested India's decision to extend the road via Lipulekh. Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had inaugurated the road in the first week of May 2020, creating quite an uproar in Nepal. The Nepal government then on May 20, 2020 unveiled a new map incorporating Kalapani, Limpiyadhura, and Lipulekh within the Nepali territory. The new map was endorsed by Parliament unanimously through a constitutional amendment.

India had taken umbrage at Nepal's move, calling the publication of the new map "cartographic assertions". Nepal-India relations then hit a rock-bottom and came back on track only at the end of last year. But Modi's remarks on Lipulekh once again created a commotion in Nepal.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday, Karki who is also the spokesperson of the Nepal government, stated that the Nepal government is clear that Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura are the integral part of Nepal. Besides Lipulekh, Nepal and India also have disputes in Kalapani and Limpiyadhura area. Limpiyadhura is the last border point between Nepal and India which Nepal claims as its own territory. Similarly, near Limpiyadhura, there is another chunk of land called Kalapani where India has been keeping its troops after the 1962 Indo-China war. Nepal has been saying that Kalapani falls inside Nepali territory and India had unilaterally stationed its troops there without prior approval from Nepal. Given the close and historic relations between Nepal and India and its letter and spirit, Nepal wants to resolve the dispute through the historic treaty and agreement, facts, maps and evidence through the diplomatic channel, said Karki.

S Korea, UAE to speed up cooperation in hydrogen ecosystem: Moon

Dubai | Agencies

South Korea will speed up cooperation with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in key eco-friendly technologies for the hydrogen economy, visiting President Moon Jae-in said here on Sunday, as Seoul seeks to expand the horizons of energy cooperation with the Persian Gulf nation. Moon, who is in Dubai for a three-day visit as part of his week-long trip to the Middle East, made the remarks at a business forum attended by Suhail bin Mohammed Al Mazrouei, the nation's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, and other senior UAE officials, reports Yonhap News Agency. Since South Korea won a \$20 billion contract in 2009 to construct four nuclear reactors in Barakah, UAE, the two nations have been seeking to expand cooperation in other sectors. "South Korea and the UAE



have made many achievements throughout deeper cooperation in traditional energy sectors, including oil and nuclear power plants," he told the forum.

The countries UAE will "expand energy cooperation into the hydrogen sector, a core energy resource in the age of carbon neutrality", the President added. Also on Sunday, Moon plans to pay a visit to a "Day of Korea" ceremony at the Expo 2020 Dubai and hold a meeting

with the country's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. During the talks, Moon and the UAE Prime Minister plan to discuss ways to expand cooperation in infrastructure, efforts to tackle climate change and space. The two leaders will also discuss South Korea's bid to host the 2030 Expo. In Dubai, Moon will step up South Korea's campaign to host the Expo in the nation's southeastern port city of Busan.

LIBYAN PRESIDENCY COUNCIL STRESSES COMMITMENT TO BACK POLLS

Tripoli: A top official of the Presidency Council of Libya has stressed the need to support holding the presidential elections in the country.

The council's Deputy President Abdullah Alafi made the remarks during a meeting with the Speaker of the Libyan House of Representatives Aguilah Saleh, reports Xinhua news agency quoted an official statement as saying. "The Deputy President of the Presidency Council of Libya, Abdullah Alafi, confirmed that his meeting with the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aguilah Saleh, was fruitful and that they discussed ways to support the political process and the elections in Libya," the statement said. "Alafi stressed the council's commitment to supporting the elections through a clear roadmap and based on strong legal and constitutional foundations," it added.

He also stressed the Council's support for the efforts of the House of Representatives to issue laws that help bring the Libyans together and achieve stability in the country. Libya's presidential elections, originally scheduled for December 24, 2021, were postponed indefinitely due to technical and legal issues, according to the country's elections commission. The elections are part of a roadmap adopted by the UN-sponsored Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, in order to restore stability in Libya following years of political division and insecurity.



NZ pledges aid after Tonga volcanic eruption, tsunami

Washington | Agencies

New Zealand on Sunday pledged to provide support for Tonga following a volcanic eruption that sent tsunami waves crashing onto the Pacific Island. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern told reporters here that her government has made an initial sum of NZ\$500,000 (\$340,000) available to provide assistance to Tonga, reports Xinhua news agency. The tsunami had a significant impact on part of the foreshore of Tonga, with boats and large boulders washed ashore and shops along the coast damaged, said Ardern. There has been no official report of injuries or deaths yet. However, communications were interrupted and limited. The main undersea communications



cable has been impacted, said Ardern. "Damage assessments are under way and New Zealand has formally offered to provide assistance to Tonga. A New Zealand Defence Force P3 Orion is on stand-by to provide

aerial surveillance subject to conditions including ash fall," she said. Along with the aircraft flight, New Zealand was considering the deployment of a naval ship should it being needed, the Prime Minister further said.

The New Zealand government was waiting to hear from the Tongan authorities about what was needed, said Ardern. Tsunami waves hit Tonga on Saturday evening.

The tsunami followed a series of violent eruptions from submarine volcano Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai, 65 km north of the country's main island Tongatapu. Tsunami warnings were issued in Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the US. According to the Tonga Geological Services, a massive underwater volcano erupted on Friday with plumes reaching more than 19 km above sea level.

A cloud of ash and steam reached about 241 km across, an event captured by satellite images that have been shared by various meteorological agencies.

YEMEN FORCES RECAPTURE STRATEGIC DISTRICT FROM HOUTHIS

Sanaa: The Yemen government army has recaptured Harib district in the oil-rich province of Marib from the Houthi militia after a deadly battle, a military source confirmed. The army entered the district's central town on Saturday and now is combing the areas surrounding it, the source told Xinhua news agency. Meanwhile, the Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV reported that the coalition



carried out 33 airstrikes on Marib in the past 24 hours, destroying 21 vehicles of the Houthi militia and killing 190 militants. The Houthis seized Harib and several other districts in the government-controlled province last year. Last week, the Yemeni army recaptured three districts in the adjacent province of Shabwa from the Houthi militia after a 10-day battle, taking the whole province of Shabwa from the militia. Yemen has been mired in a civil war since late 2014 when the Houthi militia seized control of several northern provinces and forced the internationally recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi out of the capital Sanaa.



RETIRED NRI, 'DABANGG' NEIGHBOUR SALMAN KHAN LOCK HORNS

Raigad | Mumbai

An unseemly row has erupted between a retired NRI from the US, Ketan Kakkad and his neighbour Bollywood megastar Salman Khan over a plot of land in the picturesque environs of Raigad.

Taking strong umbrage at Kakkad's recent social media outbursts, the actor has hit back with a civil defamation suit against his next-door neighbour, besides Google, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and other social platform content creators.

The matter pertains to the mid-1990s when the young NRI Kakkad planned to buy a tiny plot of land in Raigad to build his retirement nest, and the seller company introduced him to the legendary Bollywood writer, Salim Khan. The celeb Khans assured Kakkad that the locality was good and they would love to have him as their neighbour instead of some other snooty types as the hilly plot eyed by the NRI - overlooks the family's 100-acre Arpita Farms.

Convinced, the pleased Kakkad bought the 2.50 acre plot in 1996 and later built a tiny eco-friendly Lord Ganesh Temple on it, and years later, even an environment-friendly 120-square feet thatched hut to occasionally go and get a breather there.

The two neighbours got along jovially for over two decades and whenever the Kakkads visited their tiny property, they were accorded a



warm welcome by the Khan clan, with refreshments and beverages, at the Arpita Farms - where Salman Khan was bitten by a non-venomous snake on December 26, 2021, on the eve of his 56th birthday, giving palpitations to the whole nation.

In 2014, Kakkad retired and returned to India, eager to build a small cottage along with wife Anita, and probably an 'ashram' in the future, and meditate before their tiny temple. Kakkad claimed that in December 2019, the Khan family -- which is renowned for worshipping the elephant-headed God during Ganeshotsav every year -- suddenly barred his entry to his property.

"Despite repeated pleas, we are not allowed to go there... The local officials of the Forest and Revenue departments are also not helping us out,"

rueed Kakkad. Left with no options, Kakkad resorted to venting his ire via social media and even gave some interviews on YouTube, raising the hackles of the 'Bajranghi Bhaijaan' superstar. Khan hit back with a stern Short Cause Suit on January 8, against Kakkad and the others, accusing them of "malafide intentions" to damage his goodwill and reputation by hurling "absolutely baseless, false and unwarranted allegations", through the law firm, DSK Legal, of lawyer Anand Desai and his team. The matter came up before Additional Sessions Judge Anil Laddhad who adjourned it to January 21 on a plea for time by Kakkad's lawyers Abha Singh and Aditya Pratap. Khan also charged the social media giants of continuously "loading/uploading, posting and publishing various malicious and defama-

tory content" against him and his family causing "grave and irreparable harm, loss and injury" with the "provocative, unsubstantiated" content without a shred of truth arising out of personal vendetta and ill-will. The actor contended that Kakkad's plot was reportedly cancelled by the Maharashtra government as "illegal", for which he blamed the Khan family, alleged that the superstar harboured underworld links with the 'D-Company' (the absconder mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar), and that illegal/criminal activities were going on at Arpita Farms. Taking objection to certain utterances by Kakkad, the megastar pointed out that the insinuation that he had illegally usurped/grabbed the Lord Ganesh Temple "inter-alia intends to cause communal violence in society". In the suit, Khan sought a permanent order to bar Kakkad and the other defendants from directly/indirectly loading/uploading, posting/reposting, tweeting/retweeting, giving media interviews, corresponding, communicating, hosting, issuing, printing, publishing, disseminating, circulating further, in any manner vide any medium, such defamatory, malicious or scandalous content. Khan urged the court to direct the social media players "to forthwith withdraw and/or recall, take down, block/restrict/disable, all content defamatory to him in the present case, from all other mediums where they are hosted or exist.

Maha: Lull in Covid, Omicron cases, deaths again increase

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra experienced a slight lull in new Covid-19 and Omicron cases on Saturday though deaths again increased, health officials said here. After a record high of 46,723 (January 12), the number of daily Covid infectees fell for the second day, from 43,211 on Friday to 42,462 on Saturday. However, the fatalities increased from 19 a day earlier to 23 on Saturday, and the mortality rate fell from 1.98 per cent to 1.97 per cent. After notching a peak of 238 Omicron cases on January 14 the state infections of the variant went down to 125 for the day, sparking concerns among the health authorities. The government is continuing the intensive surveillance of passengers arriving at the three international airports -- Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur -- since December 1. A total of 281,459 travellers have landed here, including 43,106 from the "high risk" countries from where 531 have tested positive and another 604 from other countries, with all their reports sent for genomic sequencing to confirm if they are afflicted by Omicron. Another staggering 4,792 positive samples from field



surveys conducted since November 1 have been sent for genomic sequencing with the results of 71 are awaited, the officials said. Omicron has spread extensively across several districts in the state, and out of the 1,730 cases till date, 879 have recovered. Pune district led the state with 693 cases of the variant, followed by 653 in Mumbai, 100 in Thane, 90 in Nagpur, 59 in Sangli, 19 in Kolhapur. 18 each in Raigad and Amravati, 14 in Satara, 11 each in Osmanabad and Akola, 6 each in Palghar and Buldhana, 5 in Aurangabad, 4 in Ahmednagar, 3 each in Nanded, Nashik, Jalna, Gondiya and Latur, 2 each in Solapur, Gadchiroli and Nandurbar, and 1 each in Jalna and Wardha. Of the 42,462 new Covid-19 cases on Saturday, Mumbai Metropolitan Region alone accounted for 20,924 infections, while Mumbai city remained at a high, with

10,661 fresh cases. The next is Pune Circle's 11,519 infectees, Nashik Circle 2,917, Nagpur Circle 3,021, Kolhapur Circle 1,388, Latur Circle 1,093, Aurangabad Circle 867 and Akola Circle's 733. The number of people sent to home quarantine shot up hugely - from 19,10,361 on Friday to 22,00,108 now, and another 6,102 have been shunted to institutional quarantine. Mumbai, Pune, Thane, Raigad and Palghar remain at the top with the highest number of 'active cases' currently in the state, with the afflictions shooting up from 261,658 a day before to 264,441 on Saturday, with the recovery rate remaining steady at 94.28 per cent. The state's cumulative figures of Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 now stands at 71,70,483 cases and 141,779 deaths, while a total of 67,60,514 patients have fully recovered till date.

Maha Congress to 'courier' empty gas cylinder to PM

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra Pradesh Mahila Congress (MPMC) will stage protests all over the state on Sunday against the spiralling prices of cooking gas under the 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)' and courier an empty gas cylinder to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a top leader said here on Saturday. MPMC President Sandhya Sawalake said that the PM, who had promised 'Achhe Din', has made life difficult for the common man with 'runaway inflation' and repeated increase in the prices of petrol-diesel-gas, which in turn fuels price hikes across all sectors of the economy. "With the rising prices of petrol-diesel-cooking gas, people's domestic budget has been severely messed up. The government has also reduced the subsidy on cooking gas under the PMUY. As a result, thousands of ordinary women have been forced to revert to cooking on kerosene stoves again," said Sawalake. As a token of its unique form of dissent, the MPMC will 'courier' an empty LPG cylinder

to the PM, women Congress activists will protest at all the 36 district collectorates on Sunday and dump around 50 empty gas cylinders at each collectorate on Monday with a request to forward them to the PM, she said. Sawalake added that the LPG cylinder price has now crossed Rs 900 in different parts of the country, making "life totally miserable" for the home-makers and many have reverted to the cheaper kerosene cooking stoves, but the central government remains indifferent to their plight. "The PM had made a grand show and announced subsidised LPG gas cylinders for poor women under the PMUY, but the same cooking gas has now become unaffordable and beyond the reach of the common masses for whom it was intended," she pointed out. This will be part of the ongoing series of agitations organised by the state Congress and MPMC for the past one year against inflation and zooming hike in prices of all essential commodities that have hit the ordinary folks hard in the past few years of the NDA government at the Centre, said the MPMC leader.

Wardha 'illegal abortions': One more skull found in Kadam Hospital yard

Wardha | Agencies

The police have recovered one more skull of an infant, allegedly aborted at the Kadam Hospital in Arvi town, and raids were carried out at several places, officials said here on Saturday. The case, which has shaken the citizens' collective conscience, first came to light after the Wardha Police arrested a lady medico, Dr Rekha N. Kadam, a nurse, and two others following the secret abortion performed on a 13-year-old girl there on January 4. Interrogation of the accused and investigations led the police to discover a veritable 'grave-yard' of aborted foetuses or unwanted babies, found in the biogas plant of the hospital compound, stunning the people. (IANS - Jan 15). In the ongoing digging work by a team of police officials, another skull of an aborted infant has been recovered, taking the total



recoveries to 12 skulls and 54 other bones, all unidentified, besides bloodstained clothes and other evidence. All the recoveries have been sent for forensic analysis to Nagpur, the reports of which are awaited, and further digging is being undertaken in the vicinity. Simultaneously, raids were carried out at the hospital and

the home of the prime accused and police have seized several files, medical records and reports and other evidence. Police had also detained another relative of the prime accused (Dr Rekha Kadam) in connection with the probe, a lady senior citizen, but she suddenly took ill and was hospitalised. Investigators and locals

say that the hospital had earned a dubious reputation for "all types of abortions" for nearly four decades and people came here from all over Wardha and adjoining districts. Prominent leaders including Shiv Sena's Kishore Tiwari - accorded a MoS status - and Pune-based 'Beti Bachao' proponent Dr Ganesh Rakh have demanded a "thorough probe" into the medical racket, preferably by a SIT, to unravel the true ramifications like female infanticide on the sly besides illegal abortion, and punish all those found guilty. As the probe progresses, the possible role or involvement of some persons in the local health department is expected to come under the scanner for their alleged lapses owing to which the illegalities thrived at the hospital for long, violating the provisions of the stringent Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDTA) Act, 1994.

Maharashtra too invites Elon Musk to set up Tesla plants

Two days ago, Telangana minister K T Rama Rao too had expressed his state's willingness to partner with Tesla in its bid to set up a facility in India.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Leaders from three states and three political parties have invited Elon Musk, the CEO of US-based electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla, to set up the firm's manufacturing units in their states. Shortly after Musk voiced his concerns regarding high import duties in India, senior NCP minister Jayant Patil invited him to set up the firm's manufacturing unit in Maharashtra. Soon after, Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu and West Bengal minister Md Ghulam Rabbani also followed suit.

Patil, Maharashtra's Minister for Water Resources, said, "Maharashtra is a leading industrial state of India. The state which houses Mumbai, the economic capital of the country, has always been conducive for investors." In an open invitation to Musk on Twitter, Patil asked him to consider setting up a manufacturing plant for Tesla cars in the state. "Maharashtra is one of the most progressive states in India. We will provide you all the necessary help from Maharashtra for you to get established in India. We invite you to establish your manufacturing plant in Maharashtra," the tweet said.

The NCP minister's invite came shortly after Musk voiced his concerns regarding high import duties in India. "Still working through a lot of challenges with the government of India," he had tweeted Thursday. Tesla has been hoping that the government would extend some concessions to it. The Union Heavy Industries Ministry had earlier refused to give a blanket commitment in this regard, but urged the firm to first begin manufacturing the electric vehicles. Sources said the ministry's primary concern was that other firms may seek similar concessions. "At present, it is not extending any special concession to auto manufacturing plants in India. If it were to consider



Tesla as a special case and give concessions on import duties, it would be unfair on existing companies which have already made huge investments," an official said. Nevertheless, Patil's invitation to Musk has come as a big surprise. NCP sources, however, said, "Patil's offer to Musk is plain. Every state has the right to get the big and best investors." Punjab Congress chief Sidhu and West Bengal minister Rabbani also extended similar invitations to Musk. Sidhu tweeted, "I invite @elonmusk, Punjab Model will create Ludhiana as hub for Electric Vehicles & Battery industry with time bound single window clearance for investment that brings new technology to Punjab, create green jobs, walking path of environment preservation & sustainable development."

Rabbani, who is the Bengal minister for minority development and madrasa education, tweeted, "Drop here, we in West Bengal have best infra & our leader @MamataOfficial has got the vision. Bengal means Business." This, in turn, drew a sharp response from the BJP. Mocking Rabbani, BJP's IT cell in-charge Amit Malviya, "You might think it is a joke. But it isn't! West Bengal's minister in charge for Minority Affairs and Madrasa Education has made an offer to Elon Musk to come invest in WB. His pitch will start with Mamata Banerjee's record on post poll violence and end with Singur agitation?" Two days ago, Telangana minister KT Rama Rao too had expressed his state's willingness to partner with Tesla in its bid to set up a facility in India.

Lata Mangeshkar's health worsens, nobody allowed to meet her

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The health condition of India's singing icon Lata Mangeshkar, who was admitted to Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital after she tested positive for Covid-19, has worsened. The 92-year-old Bharat Ratna awardee has developed pneumonia in addition to Covid and has been admitted to the ICU, where a team of doctors is taking care of her. At this point, nobody is allowed to meet the singer as she continues to be under the supervision of doctors, who have said that it will take some more time for her to show signs of recovery. The doctors did not wish to comment on how long she needs to be in the ICU. 'India's Nightingale' had tested positive on Tuesday, January 11, after reportedly contracting the virus from one the house helps.



QUACK, HIS AIDE HELD FOR DUPING ELDERLY WOMAN PATIENT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Police have arrested a fake doctor and his assistant from Pune for allegedly duping a Mumbai-based 73-year-old woman, who had paid Rs 2 lakh to him for treatment of her knee pain, an official said on Sunday. The accused, Hanis Abdul Hamid Sheikh alias Dr Malik (44) and his assistant Zahid Salim Hussain, were caught from Kondhwa locality in Pune on Friday, he said. "In December last year, the complainant had approached the police saying that Dr Malik had taken Rs two lakh from her, assuring that he would treat her knee pain. However, despite the so-called treatment, she continued to feel the pain in her knees," assistant inspector Swapnil Patil of Cuffe Parade police station said. After a probe, it was found that Sheikh is a bogus doctor, fol-



lowing which an FIR was registered against him and he was caught along with his assistant, he said. He had committed a similar crime in the past, police said. The arrested duo was booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), including 420 (cheating) and further investigation is underway, official added.



Celine Dion cancels North American stretch of 'Courage World Tour', cites health reasons

Los Angeles | Agencies

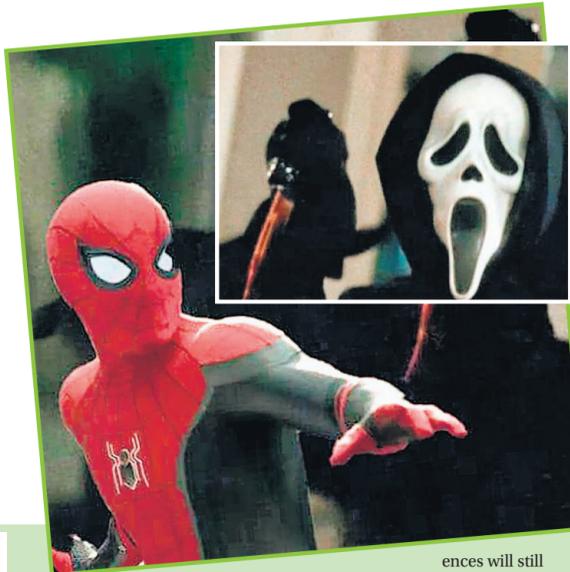
Canadian singer Celine Dion is ending her 'Courage World Tour' in the United States and Canada owing to her health condition as muscle spasms rendered her unable to perform for sometime, reports 'Variety'.

The remaining part of the North American stretch of her 'Courage World Tour' was scheduled for March 9 to April 22. The singer had already performed 52 shows across North America for the tour, which started before the COVID-19 pandemic wrecked live entertainment in March 2020.

According to 'Variety', Celine said in a statement, "I was really hoping that I'd be good to go by now, but I suppose I just have to be more patient and follow the regimen that my doctors are prescribing."

"There's a lot of organising and preparation that goes into our shows, and so we have to make decisions today which will affect the plans two months down the road. I'll be so glad to get back to full health, as well as all of us getting past this pandemic, and I can't wait to be back on stage again", she added.

However, the European stretch of the 'Courage World Tour' is still on cards for the singer with the first concert scheduled for May 25 in Birmingham, England.



decade, grossed \$13.35 million on Friday from 3,664 locations, reports 'Variety'. Paramount Pictures projects the horror film should rake in \$36 million over the four-day Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend, more than enough to land at No. 1 for the weekend.

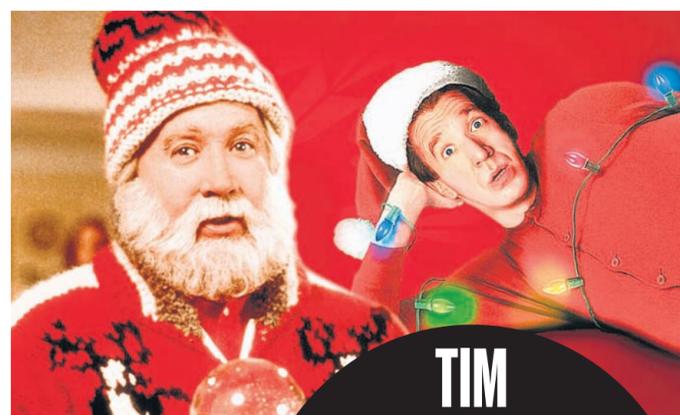
The thrifty 'requel' only cost \$25 million to produce, a number that the release should easily rocket past before the weekend is out, according to 'Variety'. Not too shabby for a January release unleashed on the moviegoing public amid a colossal spike of Covid-19 and its more transmissible Omicron variant.

'Scream' is evidence that audi-

ences will still roll out to theatres during the pandemic, especially films targeting a demographic of younger viewers.

Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett direct 'Scream', taking over the series from its founder Wes Craven, who helmed the four first entries before passing away in 2015, reports 'Variety'. The film stars series regulars Neve Campbell, Courteney Cox and David Arquette as they are once again haunted by a serial killer in a Ghostface mask.

The killing spree extends to a group of high school students in the town of Woodsboro, California. Melissa Barrera, Jenna Ortega, Jack Quaid and Dylan Minnette also star in the slasher.



TIM ALLEN BACK AS SCOTT CALVIN IN 'THE SANTA CLAUSE' REVIVAL SERIES

Los Angeles | Agencies

The 'Santa Clause' Christmas comedy franchise, which was a commercial and critical success when the first film was first released in 1994, is to be continued as a limited series on Disney Plus with Tim Allen returning to star as Scott Calvin, reports 'Variety'.

In the series, Scott Calvin is on the brink of his 65th birthday and realises he can't be Santa forever. He's starting to lose a step in his Santa duties, and more importantly, he's got a family who could benefit from a life in the normal world, especially his two kids who have grown up on the North Pole.

With a lot of elves, children, and family to please, Scott sets out to find a suitable replacement Santa while preparing his family for a new adventure in a life south of the pole.

This will be the fourth time that Allen, who has quite a following for his characters in the sitcoms 'Home Improvement' and 'Last Man Standing', takes up the role of Calvin/Santa.

He first starred in 'The Santa Clause' in 1994, which was followed by two sequels in 2002 and 2006, reports 'Variety'.

In addition to his role in 'The Santa Clause' franchise, Allen is known for voicing Buzz Lightyear in the 'Toy Story' films. He most recently starred in 'Last Man Standing', which aired for six seasons on the American television network ABC and for another three seasons on Fox. The show aired its series finale in May 2021.

Slasher movie 'Scream' ends four-week reign of 'Spider-Man'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Even as most other theatrical releases continue to struggle because of the Omicron wave, the latest horror movie, 'Scream', is making a sizable impression at the North American box-office, showing yet again that audiences in the U.S., especially the younger demo-

graphic, are in love with the horror genre.

With an opening weekend that should finally dethrone 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' after the Marvel entry's four-week perch on top of the earnings totem pole, 'Scream' is the new box-office No. 1. The fifth instalment in the horror franchise, and the first in over a



"Tried Very Hard" To Change To Fit Into Hollywood Standards For Women: Christina Ricci

Los Angeles | Agencies

"There was definitely a period of time when I didn't fit into anything that was being made."

The '90s child star - known for hit roles in beloved cult classics like *The Addams Family* and *Casper* - revealed in a new interview with the *Los Angeles Times* that there was a point in her career where she felt pressure to change herself to meet industry standards for women actors.

"I've done this my whole life, so there's nothing else I'm really going to do. I've always felt that way," the 41-year-old said when asked if she ever thought about stepping back from acting. "But there was definitely a period of time when I didn't fit into anything that was being made."

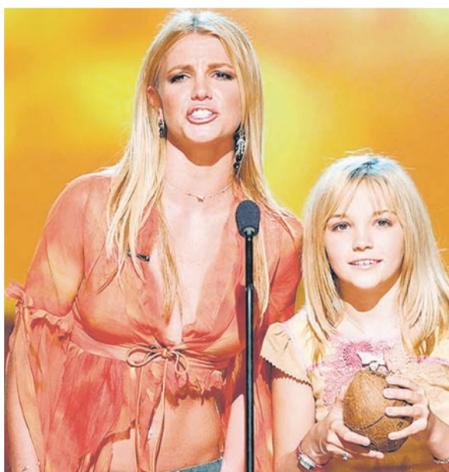
She continued, "I was constantly being asked or having to go and audition for rom-coms and the things that were available for actresses in my age range, and I didn't fit into any of them because, I don't know, I'm just a different kind of actress."

Britney Spears Says She 'Loves' JamieLynn 'Unconditionally' Amid Feud: 'I Know Your Real Heart'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Britney Spears, 40, loves her sister Jamie Lynn Spears, 30, "unconditionally" - despite the current drama between the pair. The *In The Zone* singer took to Twitter to post a lengthy open letter to her youngest sibling after drama pertaining to Jamie Lynn's book *Things I Should Have Said* and subsequent GMA interview. "I said some harsh things because you obviously hurt me by the things you are making up about me!!!" Britney wrote in the screen shotted iPhone note posted to Twitter on Saturday, Jan. 15. The letter was in clear reference to Brit's earlier post, in which she called Jamie Lynn a "scum" person.

"When I said only a scum person would make up things like that about someone, I could have sworn I said 'but you're not' ... but it doesn't make sense at all to me what you are saying," Britney explained. "I know you worked hard for the life you have and you have done amazing!!! But I think we would both have to agree to the fact that the family has never been remotely as hard on you as they have been on me!!!" she penned, referencing Jamie Lynn's teen acting



career on *Zoey 101* and successful song writing accolades. Britney went on to discuss her difficult 13 year long conservatorship, which placed her under the control of their father Jamie Spears, 69. As conservator of her estate, Jamie oversaw Britney's business affairs, career and music catalogue, amongst other things. When the arrangement went into place in 2008, Jamie Lynn was then 17-years-old and pregnant with daughter Maddie, now 13 - and said on

GMA she was simply focused on becoming a mother at the time. She also stated she "took no steps" to become a part of the conservatorship as she got older. Her older sister, however, seemed to disagree with that statement. "What Dad did to me, they don't even do that to criminals ... so for you to sit back and act completely aloof to what has happened to me is honestly insane to me!!!" Britney said in her lengthy Jan. 15 post. "You guys treated me like nothing and that's not even

half of it!!! I'm honestly shocked Dad isn't in jail!!! Come on!!! We are supposed to have each other's back ... but what you're saying just truly confuses me!!!" she added. Britney then made it clear that no matter the drama, she "loves" Jamie Lynn no matter what. "All I know is I love you unconditionally!!! So go ahead and say whatever you want ... it's so tacky for a family to fight publicly like this!!!" she wrote. "You say you love me ... yet your loyalty is still with the people that hurt me most... I know your real heart." Jamie Lynn has yet to respond to the latest post. During the interview, Jamie Lynn made it clear she's on Britney's side. "I've always been my sister's biggest supporter," she said to ABC. "When she needed help, I set up ways to do so. Went out of my way to make sure she had the contacts she needed to possibly go ahead and end this conservatorship and end this all for our family - if it's gonna cause this much discord, why continue it?" "I love my sister," she also said on camera through tears. "I've only ever loved and supported her and done what's right by her, and she knows that, so I don't know why we're in this position right now."



Chrishell Stause



INDIA OPEN BADMINTON: CHIRAG-SATWIK UPSET TOP SEEDS TO WIN MEN'S DOUBLES TITLE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty displayed nerves of steel and even put their more illustrious opponents under pressure with their tactics to clinch the men's doubles title in the Yonex-Sunrise India Open 2022, here on Sunday.

It was the second BWF World Tour Super 500 title for the top Indian pair that had won the Thailand Open 2019, beating China's Li Junhui and Liu Yuchen in 21-18, 18-21, 21-19.

The second-seeded Indians saved five-game points in the second game before beating top seeds Hendra Setiawan and Mohammad Ahsan 21-16, 26-24 to win their second Super 500 title. Aware of their opponent's prowess to play quick points, Chirag and Satwik had a clear game plan of playing longer rallies. That meant they were prepared to play softer net strokes and even lift the shuttle high to force the Indonesians into making mistakes. But they also prepared to counter the top-seeds' game of playing flat rallies in the middle and that allowed them to keep pace with the Indonesians at the start. It was in the 15th point in the opening game that they managed to push the rally longer.

The approach was to tire their senior opponents and Chirag/Satwik were willing to lose points but stick to the plan. It allowed Setiawan and Ahsan to win a few quick points in the opening game and close the gap at 13-13.

But Satwik's big smashes bailed them out and helped them run away with the opening game.



The second game was neck-and-neck throughout as the Indonesians began taking more risks. Even Setiawan tried to go for the big smashes to unsettle the Indians but to their credit, Chirag and Satwik stood strong in defence. However, the Indonesians used all their experience to overturn a 14-18 deficit to earn their first game point. It was a tense affair from there on as both the combinations were guilty of making errors while looking for quick points.

Setiawan once served in the net while Ahsan fouled while going for a flick serve on game point and the Indians kept on the pressure with some fantastic shot selection. They ultimately wrapped up the match in 43 minutes, having saved five game points to begin the new season with a title triumph. Speaking about the five-game points in the second game, Satwik said, "We knew they were tired

and would take risks. So, we kept things tight and it worked."

Chirag, who spent some time practicing his net play after Saturday's semi-final, said, "The way we defended today was extremely good. I think the way we handled the pressure and calmed ourselves down in the closing stages of the second game was really good." Earlier, second seed Busanan Ongbamrungphan of Thailand had to dig deep before beating compatriot Supanida Katethong 22-20, 19-21, 2-13 to clinch the women's singles title. Thailand's Benyapa and Nuntakarn Aimsaard defeated Russia's Anastasiia Akchurina and Olga Morozova 21-13, 21-15 to win the women's doubles title while Singaporean husband-wife combination of Hee Yong Kai Terry and Tan Wei Han upset Malaysian third seeds Chen Tang Jie and Peck Yen Wei 21-15, 21-18 in the mixed doubles final.

INDIA OPEN BADMINTON: LAKSHYA STUNS WORLD CHAMP TO WIN MAIDEN SUPER 500 TITLE

New Delhi: World championship bronze medallist Lakshya Sen defeated current World Champion Loh Kean Yew in straight games 24-22, 21-17 to win the first India Open men's singles title, here on Sunday. It was a double delight for India as earlier, Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy won their first-ever Indian Open finals as they defeated Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan 21-16, 26-24 in the men's doubles. In the semi-final, Sen came back from a game down to beat Malaysia's Tze Yong Ng 19-21, 21-16, 21-12 and set up a clash with World Champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore in the summit clash.

Bowlers lead Australia to 4-0 Ashes series win after another England collapse

Hobart | Agencies

Hobart, Jan 16 (IANS) Showing their sheer dominance, fast bowlers helped Australia thrash England by 146 runs in the fifth and final Test on Day 3, to clinch the 2021/22 Ashes series 4-0 and to retain the urn, here on Sunday. Despite Mark Wood's lion-hearted efforts to keep his side in the contest with his career-best 6 for 39 to bowl Australia out in their second innings for 155 and set England a realistic chase of 271, visitors folded from 0-68 a ball prior to tea to 124 all out just 22.4 overs later. It was a 17-wicket day -- just the third of such carnage in Tests played in Australia over the past 25 years, and the second since yesterday -- saw Australia complete such a clinical win that off-spinner Nathan Lyon wasn't required to bowl a ball during the match.

The Australia fast bowlers showed their mastery with wickets shared between skipper Pat Cummins (3-42), Scott Boland (3-18), Cameron Green (3-21) and Mitchell Starc (1-30). Chasing a challenging target of 271 to win, Rory Burns and Zak Crawley logged England's highest opening partnership of the tour in a quick-fire fashion that belied their previous struggles in the series. However, Burns (26) chopped on to Cameron Green at the stroke of tea and his partner Crawley was 32 not out when tea was called.

After the interval, it was Green, who opened the floodgates by picking quick wickets. Dawid Malan wore a bouncer on his head and then chopped a delivery onto his stumps. Crawley, who had moved on to 36 serenely, went searching for a booming drive to a full Green ball that swung away late and nicked off to the keeper. Joe Root and Ben Stokes joined hands to revive England's chase, but the latter fell to a short ball from Mitchell Starc and England's hopes plummeted. Scott Boland then got into the act, dismissing Root for the fourth time in the series. The England captain was a tad unlucky to receive one that stayed low and went beneath his bat to crash into the stumps. Sam Billings chipped one to

mid-on off Boland soon after and Cummins cleaned up Ollie Pope to leave England at 107/7. Chris Woakes, Mark Wood and Ollie Robinson were dismissed in the space of six balls as England went from 82/1 to 124 all out, conceding the match by 146 runs.

Earlier, resuming at 37/3, Wood into fourth over of the day's play hit the hard length and got a delivery to climb steeply towards Scott Boland's throat, something the nightwatchman could only glove to the 'keeper. Two overs later, he dismissed first-innings centurion Travis Head, who became the latest in a list of batsmen strangled down the legside in this game. The short-ball bowling got the biggest reward when Smith got out on the pull at fine-leg. Australia at that stage were reduced to 63/6 with England entertaining the possibility of chasing a target under or close to 200. However, there was resistance from Aussie batters as Alex Carey and Cameron Green got together to add some important runs with some luck along the way. Carey played on to a Chris Woakes delivery while on 19 only for the third umpire to reveal that the bowler had marginally overstepped. Carey was also adjudged LBW, a decision that he overturned with a review.

The 49-run partnership was eventually ended when Broad had Green ruled out LBW with a review. Wood then returned for another spell and used his patented short ball to have Mitchell Starc caught at short leg. Carey wasn't done, though, and he and Pat Cummins gave Australia more cushion with 30 crucial runs before Carey (49) was caught behind off Stuart Broad's bowling.

Brief scores

Brief scores: Australia 303 & 155 (Alex Carey 49; Mark Wood 6-37) beat England 188 & 124 (Zak Crawley 36; Scott Boland 3-18, Pat Cummins 3-42, Cameron Green 3-21) by 146 runs.

ODI series win against India would give us a helluva lot of confidence: Bavuma

Cape Town | Agencies

South Africa white-ball skipper Temba Bavuma believes that a series win in the ODIs against India will give his team a lot of confidence. He added that his main focus will be in sticking to the South African style of play and executing the strategies well.

After South Africa won the three-match Test series 2-1, the focus shifts to the ODI series starting from January 19 in Paarl. The last time India came to the Rainbow Nation, they won the six-match series 5-1 in 2018. It was also their first-ever ODI series win in South Africa. "We will have to get things right in the next ODI series against India. I'm not too worried about what happened in that 2018 series. I'm more concerned about establishing our own style of play and implementing our strategy to good effect. A ODI series win against India would give us a helluva lot of confidence, and some momentum ahead of the games to follow," Bavuma was quoted as saying by 'Daily Maverick'. Bavuma feels the image of South Africa's white-ball side is changing after the campaign in the 2021 Men's T20 World Cup. In the mega event in the UAE, South Africa had won four out of its five Group 1 matches, only to miss the semi-finals on the basis of net run-rate due to the loss in the tournament opener against

Australia. "Perceptions are changing about this South African white-ball team. In the past, it was said that we lacked the ability to take on spin and that we struggled in overseas conditions. I feel like we proved a lot of people wrong at the T20 World Cup. We've just got to keep building towards that next T20 World Cup in Australia, which will require another shift in mindset." He thinks the ODI side with many new faces has got a lot to accomplish despite the series being cancelled against The Netherlands due to the Omicron variant of Covid-19. "The ODI side has a lot more to accomplish. There are some new faces in the mix, and some question marks over several positions. Unfortunately, we didn't get the chance to finish the series against the Netherlands this past December (due to the Omicron outbreak and resultant travel restrictions). It was a shame, as we viewed those three games as important to our process." Bavuma signed off by saying the ODI side needs to derive the energy and good results from the T20Is to again be a force to reckon with. "Perhaps we should take heart from what the T20 side has accomplished in recent times. That team didn't place much emphasis on results, but rather on the process. We really came to grips with how we wanted to play. There was a lot of energy and intensity, especially with regard to our fielding."

Lahore | Agencies

Jan 16 (IANS) The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Sunday recalled left-handed batter Fakhar Zaman, leg-spin all-rounder Shadab Khan and pacers Haris Rauf and Mohammad Hasnain to return from the ongoing Big Bash League (BBL) in order to prepare for the upcoming season of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) starting from January 27.

Zaman had arrived in the tournament to replace an injured England batter Tom Abell for Brisbane Heat. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions and travel issues in the states of Australia, Zaman was able to play just one match for the club.

"Unfortunately the Pakistan Cricket Board confirmed it had rescinded its permission for Fakhar to play our remaining games, along with all Pakistan players currently involved in the BBL, and summonsed him to return immediately to prepare for the Pakistan Super League," said Heat in a statement. "We are disappointed



that he won't be able to play for us and he is disappointed he won't have the opportunity to get some more games in for us. He asked us to thank

the fans for their support and wish the team all the best for the remaining three games. We thank him for making the commitment to come to

Australia at short notice, and wish him all the best with his cricket going forward," added Heat. Shadab didn't feature in Sydney Sixers' win over Sydney Thunder on Saturday while Hasnain had turned out in the same match for the losing side. Rauf, meanwhile, confirmed through his Twitter account on Saturday that he was leaving with two matches to go for his side Melbourne Stars. "A great cricketing experience with @starsBBL for #BBL11 comes to an end as I have to go back to fulfil my national commitment. It was short but a learned & wonderful experience with some thrilling & amazing games of cricket. Always love to be here! All the best #TeamGreen." Heat, though, received a boost in Michael Nesar and Mitchell Swepson linking up with the team ahead of their match against Stars' as the duo were released early from the Ashes squad. Mitchell Marsh and Josh Inglis were also released from the Test side and will turn out for Perth Scorchers against Heat on Monday.

PCB recalls Zaman, Khan, Rauf, Hasnain from BBL to prepare for PSL

Covid-19 Update: ISL postpones match between Kerala Blasters and Mumbai City

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian Super League (ISL) match between Kerala Blasters FC and Mumbai City FC, slated to be played later on Sunday, has been postponed, the League confirmed in a statement.

However, ISL has not revealed the exact reason behind the postponement of the match, but it was believed that ISL clubs are facing problems on multiple fronts due to the rising number of Covid-19 cases

"Indian Super League (ISL) has decided to postpone Match No. 62 between Kerala Blasters FC and Mumbai City FC scheduled to be played on January 16 at Tilak Maidan Stadium, Vasco da Gama. The League will look to reschedule the



fixture to a later date," ISL said in a statement.

"The decision has been taken in consultation with the League's med-

ical team after it was assessed Kerala Blasters FC do not have the requisite number of players available for the match. The League will work closely

with the medical experts to monitor and ensure the safety of all the players and support staff in the squad and others involved," the statement added. Kerala Blaster coach Ivan Vukomanovic on Saturday said that everybody is now talking about rising cases of Covid-19, and no one is interested in the game.

"Well, it's obviously not easy, seeing the circumstances not just for our club but so far I think nine clubs are in lockdown. Nobody is talking about football anymore because everyone is concerned. We have families here. So I just hope everybody stays safe. I have confidence in the ISL people. They have things under control. But of course, it's not easy," the coach had said in the pre-match press conference on Saturday.

Gavaskar says Pant can become India's next Test captain

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Legendary cricketer Sunil Gavaskar feels that young wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant can be the ideal candidate to lead India in Test cricket following Virat Kohli's decision to quit as captain. Kohli on Saturday announced his decision to step down from the captaincy, a day after losing the Test series to South Africa. As the questions start emerging over who could be the next skipper, Gavaskar said, "It's going to be quite a debate as far as the selection committee is concerned as to who should be taking Indian cricket forward. If you ask me, I am still staying. I would look at Rishabh Pant as the next India captain." "For one reason only, just like Rohit Sharma was given the captaincy of Mumbai Indians when Ricky Ponting stepped down, look at the change in his batting after that. Suddenly the responsibility of being captain made him convert those beautiful cameos of the 30s, 40s, and 50s into hundreds, 150s, and

200s. I think that sense of responsibility given to Rishabh Pant will help him score many more of that wonderful hundred he scored at Newlands," he told India Today. Gavaskar further cited the example of Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, who achieved great success after taking over the captaincy at a very young age. "Yes, I am saying that. Tiger Pataudi was captain at the age of 21 under adverse circumstances when Nari Contractor was injured. Look what he did after that. He took to captaincy like a duck to water. I think what we have seen with Rishabh Pant as the captain of Delhi Capitals in the IPL, I do believe he has the capability of taking Indian cricket forward and making it a very exciting team to watch," he said. Rohit Sharma was recently appointed as the vice-captain of India's Test team but he was not part of the recently-concluded three-match series in South Africa. Rohit took over after Ajinkya Rahane was sacked from the role over the dip in form. He emerged as the front-runner to take over Test captaincy.

PKL 8: JAIPUR PINK PANTHERS HOLD TAMIL THALAIIVAS

Bengaluru | Agencies

Tamil Thalaivas and Jaipur Pink Panthers played out an entertaining 31-31 tie in the Pro Kabaddi League Season 8 at The Sheraton Grand, Whitefield, here on Sunday. Defenders of both the teams had a great outing with Thalaivas captain Surjeet Singh and Jaipur's Sandeep Dhull picking up High 5s. Thalaivas had a two-point lead going into the final raid of the match but made a mistake resulting in a tie. Their raider Manjeet misjudged a touch and walked into the lobby

resulting in a Super Tackle and 2 points for Jaipur. Tamil Thalaivas had the better start to the match with their defensive duo of Surjeet Singh and Sagar not giving Jaipur raider Arjun Deshwal an opportunity. The Panthers were not willing to let points leak in their defence as well with Sandeep Dhull and Sahul Kumar tackling the Tamil raiders with ease. The game changed momentum when experienced K. Prapanjan suffered a shoulder injury during a raid in the 7th minute. Ajinkya Pawar was brought in as his replacement, but Jaipur sniffed an opportunity. Surjeet

Singh produced a one-man Super Tackle on Arjun Deshwal but Jaipur clinched their all-out eventually with two minutes to the interval. At half-time, the scores were 17-13 in favour of Jaipur. Tamil coach Uday Kumar wanted his team to make a slow comeback and not rush things, but his team had other plans. The second half started with a tackle on Jaipur's Deepak Hooda which was followed by a two-point raid by Bhavani Rajput. With 3 remaining on the mat, Thalaivas' Manjeet produced a stunning Super Raid that inflicted an all-out. They took the lead, but the

Panthers got it back immediately with Sandeep Dhull and Surjeet Singh picking their High 5s. The two teams matched tackle for tackle and the scores were level at 24-24 with 10 minutes remaining. Ajinkya Pawar got a 2-point raid to open the lead for Thalaivas but Jaipur's Naveen produced a Super Tackle to close the gap. Jaipur, trailing by two points, produced a Super Tackle in the last raid of the match to earn a tie. Thalaivas will consider themselves unlucky as raider Manjeet walked into the lobby under the belief that he had gotten a touch.





Kamal Haasan greets Vijay Sethupathi on his birthday

Team Absolute | Chennai

Actor-politician Kamal Haasan on Sunday greeted fellow actor Vijay Sethupathi on his birthday, saying he was an important actor of the next generation of film heroes.

Taking to Twitter, Kamal Haasan, in his birthday greeting in Tamil to Vijay Sethupathi, said, "Vijay Sethupathi does not go after the market. Rather, he is on an independent search. He is one of the important actors of the next generation of heroes. His search and his courage will not go waste. My heartiest birthday wishes to my brother Vijay Sethupathi."

Kamal Haasan was the latest to greet Vijay Sethupathi, who has been inundated with wishes and greetings from fans and celebrities from the film industry.

Several actors, actresses, directors, producers, music directors and film technicians were among those who sent their birthday wishes to the actor.

Actress and TV anchor Divyadarshini wished Vijay Sethupathi saying, "Happiest birthday to one of the best actors of our time, the coolest Vijay Sethupathi sir. Stay the same warm loving person you are sir and give us more blockbuster performances and make us proud Sethu sir. Sending big hugs of love to you."

Actress Neelima Esai wished Vijay Sethupathi, saying, "Yes pass by! But this man and his humbleness and care stays the same for every soul he comes across! Such a rare soul he is!! Stay the same and keep spreading the love and warmth Sethu. Happy happy birthday Nanba."



Mouni Roy joins 'Dance India Dance Little Masters' as judge

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Mouni Roy, who is known for her dancing skills, has been roped in as a judge for the upcoming season of reality TV show 'Dance India Dance Little Masters'. For her, dance is an amalgamation of different art forms, and it enriches an artiste. Sharing her excitement for the upcoming season, Mouni said, "For me, dance is an expression. It is an amalgamation of various art forms. I am incredibly excited to be a part of 'Dance India Dance Little Masters' as a judge. I can't wait to watch the young kids showcasing their talent on such a huge platform."

Last year, her music videos like 'Disco Balma', 'Dil Galti Kar Baitha Hai', and 'Jodaa' turned out to be absolute blockbuster with the actress headlining the song. For the unversed, Mouni Roy has been a part of many reality shows as a host and participant, earlier. Meanwhile, the actress is gearing up for the release of the much-awaited film 'Brahmastra' where she will share the screen with Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt and Amitabh Bachchan. The film is due for release on September 9, 2022.



"A character has to drive you as an actor"

Akshay Acharya | Mumbai

There are very few actors who seamlessly blend with the universe of a story and deliver performances so real that get etched on the hearts of the audience. Shefali Shah is one such actor. Shefali is known for infusing believability, realism and charm in her characters.

Be it her character of Pyari Mhatre from 'Satya', Sumitra Thakur from 'Waqt: The Race Against Time' where she played the role of Amitabh Bachchan's wife with utter conviction or her recent release 'Human' the medical thriller series, where she portrays the character of a doctor, Shefali has mastered the art of projection and the trick to that, in her own words is that she doesn't act rather she feels what her character would feel at a certain point in the story.

In a recent conversation with IANS, the actress spoke about her character of doctor Gauri Nath from 'Human', how she lets her characters drive her emotions and her approach to the craft.

The character of Gauri Nath was a tricky one because "there was no reference point for her (the character)".

Shefali says that the character "came with no instruction manual".

She mentions that in order to sketch a good performance, an actor has to completely surrender to the character, "Your character has to drive you as an actor right at the beginning of the project once you start reading and studying the script. The character of Gauri surprised me because she is a difficult character to hold onto as an actor even though I was living her."

"But eventually, as a part of the process, you reach at some point on paper with regards to the character and on set it grows from that point. In that sense, this character went beyond what I had thought of", she adds.

While other actors may rely on physical stimuli of taste, smell or vision, for her it's the character and script that act as stimuli, "As an actor physical stimuli like food or smell are never a part of my process, that doesn't work for me."

"What works for me is the script, the language and the tone that my character speaks with me and of course, the inputs of the director and the spontaneity of other actors on set, is what drives me or

my performance", she explains.

Art being subjective has no place for perfection, something that she as an actor lives by, "Every art form is subjective. Hence, I don't expect perfection in any of the artwork be that of an actor, a painter or a musician because that's humanly impossible. What may be perfect for me or for a writer may not be as perfect for the audience."

She further states, "It's my perception of how I perform and what I do when in a scene and it's the perception of the audience as to what they take from it. The beauty of art lies in imperfection."

Ask her how she views risk appetite for an artist and

she says as a parting shot, "Having a risk appetite is very important for any artist, that's how you grow, that's how you explore and reinvent yourself."



Flora Saini recounts experience of working with Subhash Ghai

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Flora Saini, who was last seen in movies such as 'Stree', 'Dabangg 2' and 'Begum Jaan', is excited about being able to work with a master entertainer of the stature of Subhash Ghai for upcoming film '36 Farmhouse'.

Sharing her experience, Flora said: "It was like a wish coming true. Anyone who comes to Mumbai wants to work with legends and people whose films one has grown up watching, Subhash Ghai Sir is one of those names I have always wished I could work with."

Flora said Ghai, who is making his debut as a music composer in the film, not only makes his heroines look gorgeous, but also enacts scenes for his actors and this helps them hone their acting skills. "It makes our work very easy," she added.

Among the few projects that Flora has been a part of in the recent past, are Farhan Akhtar's 'Inside Edge 2', Nagesh Kukunoor's political drama web series 'City of Dreams', the festive movie 'Maya' (where Flora played a mystery woman's character) and a short film titled 'Motherland'. "This is the best time to work in the industry as different filmmakers are making films on a variety of subjects and our Indian films are competing with world cinema globally," Flora said. "I am very fortunate that I have people who trust me with different kinds of roles, roles that are very different from my personality." She concluded: "I am lucky that filmmakers don't stereotype me and give me roles which have been offered to me before."

KATRINA KAIF'S SUNDAY SELFIE IS WINNING HEARTS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Katrina Kaif, who joined her husband Vicky Kaushal in Indore, recently shared pictures from a hotel room where she can be seen enjoying.

Katrina flew down to Indore from Mumbai, to celebrate Lohri with her husband. Vicky is currently shooting for director Laxman Utekar's next film with Sara Ali Khan.

The actress shared a series of pictures on her Instagram as she wrote in the caption, "Indoors in ????? #sundayselfie"

In the pictures, Katrina can be seen wearing an oversized red shirt and smiling for the camera as she enjoys her time off in the safe confines of her hotel room.

On the work front, the actress will be shooting for 'Merry Christmas'. In addition, she will soon start working on the next schedule of 'Tiger 3' opposite Salman Khan.

Meanwhile, Sara too took a day off from shooting as she along with her mom Amrita Singh sought a little divine intervention over the weekend. The two, all masked up, visited Ujjain's famous Mahakaleswar temple and sought blessings from God.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Parineeti Chopra