For Generation Ace

Like our stories? Have something to share? Send in your bouquets and brickbats to absoluteindiadesk@gmail.com

facebook.com @absoluteindianews | twitter.com @absoluteindnews | instagram.com @absoluteindianews | Live TV ▶ Live Tv @absoluteindianews

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

absolute india

VOL. 5, ISSUE 69, NEW DELHI | WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2022 I ₹5 I PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM NEW DELHI, MUMBAI AND BHOPAL

NATION > 02

AAP names Bhagwant Mann as Punjab CM candidate...

HOLLYWOOD > 06

Andrew Garfield reveals Emma Stone's reaction after he lied...

SPORTS > 07

Unmukt Chand becomes first Indian male cricketer to play...

GET DATA ON STARVATION DEATHS, FRAME MODEL SCHEME FOR COMMUNITY KITCHENS: SC TO CENTRE

STOP HUNGER DEATHS

The bench emphasized that the central government should frame a model scheme for community kitchens and leave it on state governments to implement it. The top court clarified that it does not mean that a universal scheme should be framed, as there is no strait-jacket formula to address the issue, but at least government can frame a model scheme. In other hearing, the Supreme Court on Tuesday also agreed to examine a seeking direction to the Election Commission to de-register a political party, which fails to comply with the court's direction to disclose criminal antecedents of candidates fielded in polls.

> "Government of India should give us data on starvation deaths, latest information. Ask your officer to give us information"

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday questioned the Centre for not reporting any starvation death. The court said if it can be understood that there is no starvation death in the country. The apex court asked the government to furnish latest data on starvation deaths and also frame a model scheme, for state governments to implement, on community kitchens to address hunger and malnutrition.During the hearing, the bench remarked that several freebies are announced by political parties during polls and added that it does not want to comment during election time. The bench asked state governments to provide data on malnutrition, starvation deaths and other related issues, within two weeks. The AG argued that no state government has reported starvation death. In the backdrop of Centre already funding 131 welfare schemes, the AG cited scarcity of funds for the operationality of community kitchen scheme across the country, to address hunger and malnutrition.

The Chief Justice told the AG to look into the problem as a human problem and engage with the central government to develop a model scheme for community kitchens.

OVER 1.47L KIDS ORPHANED DUE TO COVID SINCE APRIL 2020: NCPCR

New Delhi: Since April 1, 2020, 1,47,492 children have lost their parents due to Covid-19 or other reason, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) data showed.

- *AFTER INCLUDING 10,094 ORPHANS IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION, A TOTAL OF 1,36,910 CHILDREN LOST THEIR PARENTS, 488 WERE ABANDONED, PUSHING THE TOTAL TO 1,47,492, THE COMMISSION INFORMED SUPREME COURT ON THE BASIS OF DATA UPLOADED BY STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES ON ITS 'BAAL SWARAJ PORTAL-COVID CARE' UP TO JANUARY 11.*
- *THE COMMISSION FURTHER SAID THAT OUT OF 1,47,492 CHILDREN, THERE ARE 76,508 BOYS, 70,980 GIRLS AND FOUR TRANSGENDER. IT SAID THAT THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF CHILDREN ARE BETWEEN THE AGE GROUP OF EIGHT TO 13 YEARS (59,010), FOLLOWED BY CHILDREN IN THE AGE GROUP OF 14 TO 15 YEARS (22,763) AND AGE GROUP OF 16 TO 18 YEARS (22,626) AND FOUR TO SEVEN YEARS (26,080).*
- *"MAXIMUM OF THE CHILDREN ARE WITH THEIR SINGLE PARENT -1,25,205, WHILE 11,272 CHILDREN ARE WITH FAMILY MEMBERS, FOLLOWED BY 8,450 WITH GUARDIANS," IT SAID.*

'WHY ONLY 19 FEMALE CANDIDATES OUT OF 400 IN NDA'

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought a response from the Centre, asking why only 19 women candidates will be admitted in the National Defence Academy (NDA) out of 400 seats in 2023. A bench told ASGeneral Aishwarya Bhati, representing the Centre, that the government needs to clarify why 19 women candidates have been fixed for the year 2023, according to the notification issued by UPSC. The bench asked the Central government to bring on record the total number of women candidates, along with the over tally, who took the NDA examination in 2021. During the hearing, the bench told Centre's counsel: "Last year, you said it was due to infrastructure problems (the intake of women will be less)...Now, again for the year 2022, you have proposed to take the same number of women candidates..."

Centre asks states, UTs to ramp up Covid testing

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday asked the States and Union Territories to enhance Covid-19 testing in a strategic manner to track spread of the pandemic.

"Testing remains a key and crucial component of the framework," Union Health Ministry said in a letter to the states and UTs, adding that "It is seen from available data on the ICMR portal that testing has declined in many states and Union Territories."

The ministry has clarified about the recent ICMR guidelines on Covid testing which said that the contacts of confirmed cases of Covid-19 unless identified as high risk based on age and co-morbidities do not need to be tested.The basic objective of all guidelines remain an early detection of case for quick isolation and care. In addition, testing remains a key strategy for the pandemic management on two counts - identification of new clusters and new hotspots of infection which can in turn facilitate immediate action for containment such as setting up containment zones, contact tracing and others and ensuring reduction in mortality and morbidity, the letter read.

OMICRON TO PEAK IN INDIA BY FEB 15, MAY SPELL END OF 3RD WAVE

New Delhi: *Most of India will see a peak in Omicron cases by mid February, health experts said on Tuesday. Dr Shashank Joshi, member of Covid-19 Maharashtra State Task Force noted that Omicron has followed the South African pattern in the case of both Mumbai and Delhi. "It's a very rapidly progressive and explosive wave, which will come very fast and hopefully go very fast. Mumbai has already passed the peak, Maharashtra will peak by the first week of February. Most parts of India might peak between the first and 15th of February. Somewhere in March, Omicron will be much less and hopefully we should have a disruption free India April onwards," said Joshi, who is also an endocrinologist at the Lilavati Hospital, Mumbai.*

Kashmiri Pandits worldwide to observe Holocaust Day today

Team Absolute | Srinagar

The Kashmiri Pandit community worldwide will observe 'Holocaust Remembrance Day' on Wednesday in memory of the victims of the over three-decade long violence in Kashmir and to reaffirm the community's resolve to fight violence, racism and other forms of intolerance.

Satish Mahaldar, Chairman of Reconciliation, Return and Rehabilitation of Migrants (RRRM), an organisation of migrant Kashmiri Pandits, said in a statement on Tuesday, "Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed each year on January 19 by Kashmiri Pandits to pay tribute to the victims and to reaffirm commitment to counter violence, racism, and other forms of intolerance.

"The Holocaust Day matters to the Kashmiri Pandits because it is one of the most extensively documented instances of atrocity, hatred, dehumanisation and apathy in the present-day world history. It matters because when ethnic cleansing of minorities was happening, the world just watched silently."

Mahaldar added that today, Kashmiri Pandits remember that as the citizens and original aborigines of Kashmir and the community can and must do better.

3 KILLED IN EXPLOSION ONBOARD INS RANVIR

New Delhi/Mumbai: Three sailors were killed in a blast onboard the Indian Navy destroyer Ranvir on Tuesday when the warship was at the Mumbai Harbour.

The identities of the deceased are yet to be disclosed. Source said several onboard were injured in the tragic incident.

In a statement, the Indian Navy said, "In an unfortunate incident today at Naval Dockyard Mumbai, three naval personnel succumbed to injuries caused by an explosion in an internal compartment onboard INS Ranvir."

The force said the ship's crew responded immediately and brought the situation under control.

"No major material damage has been reported," the Indian Navy said.

FIR lodged over obscene remarks against Muslim women on app

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Police has registered an FIR against unidentified people for making derogatory and obscene remarks against Muslim women on an audio chat application, Clubhouse.

The FIR was registered under sections 153A (Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony), 295A (Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) and 354A (Assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) of the Indian Penal Code at the Special Cell police station, DCP (IFSO) KPS Malhotra told reporter.

On Monday, a video of a Clubhouse conversation on the topic 'Muslim gals are more beautiful than hindu gals' went viral on social media. In the conversation, the participants were allegedly heard making obscene, vulgar and derogatory remarks targeting Muslim women and girls.

RELIGIOUS LEADER WHO GAVE CALL TO DEMOLISH MOSQUE ARRESTED

Bengaluru: *Karnataka police on Tuesday arrested a religious seer who gave a call to demolish a mosque in Srirangapatna town in Mandya district on the lines of Babri Masjid. Rishikumar Swamiji of Kaali Mutt has made a video in front of the mosque in Srirangapatna, and made a public appeal that the mosque should be demolished as it is built over a temple. He had also claimed in the video that the pillars, walls and kalyani (water body) inside the premises of mosque symbolise Hindu architecture. He said that Hindus should demolish it immediately. The video was put out on his social media account and it drew sharp reactions.*

4 MAOISTS GUNNED DOWN ON TELANGANA-CHHAT'GARH BORDER

Hyderabad: Four Maoists were killed in a gunfight with police in Telangana's Mulugu district, close to Chhattisgarh border on Tuesday. The exchange of fire occurred in Karragatta forest in Venkatapuram (Nuguru) mandal in the early hours of the day. A constable of Greyhounds, the elite anti-Maoist force of Telangana, was also injured in the operation. He was airlifted to Hanamkonda, where he was admitted to a hospital. The incident occurred when the police personnel engaged in combing operation came face to face with a group of Maoists belonging to the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist). According to police sources, the Maoists refused to surrender and opened fire forcing the police to retaliate.

ED RAIDS HOUSE OF PUNJAB CM'S NEPHEW IN SAND MINING CASE

Punjab/ Agencies: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday morning, just weeks before assembly elections, carried out raids at ten different locations belonging to Punjab Chief Minster Charanjit Singh Channi's nephew Bhupinder Singh Honey, in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering case pertaining to illegal sand mining in Punjab.The raids are conducted in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering case pertaining to illegal sand mining in Punjab.Punjab Police on March 7, 2018 had lodged a case against more than ten accused in illegal mining case. The ED initiated a money laundering probe on the basis of this FIR which has been accessed by IANS. The FIR was filed under several sections of the IPC. The ED found that money was being laundered by the accused involved in the case and they started probing the matter.A source said that the ED team is still conducting raids at different premises including the residence of Bhupinder Singh Honey which is at Homeland Heights. Local police were already looking into the matter. And on the basis of the local police probe, the ED initiated a money laundering probe.

6 IN 10 INDIAN WORKERS SUFFERING FROM PANDEMIC-LED IMPOSTER SYNDROME

- *The professionals are leaving their current jobs due to poor work-life balance (30 per cent), not enough money (28 per cent), or greater career ambitions (23 per cent).*
- *Working women (37 per cent) are 1.3 times more likely to quit their current job due to poor work-life balance, when compared to working men (28 per cent).*
- *They are also more likely (49 per cent) to say they will remain with their current employer if they get better pay, when compared to working men (39 per cent).*

The 'impostor syndrome' is a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts his/her skills, talents or accomplishments.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After going through two stressful years of the Covid-19 pandemic, more than 7 in 10 (71 per cent) of professionals questioned their abilities at work more now than before the pandemic while 63 per cent said they suffer from 'imposter syndrome', a new LinkedIn report showed on Tuesday.

According to the report, the self-doubt seems to be a byproduct of working in isolation for nearly two years as 33 per cent of professionals say the pandemic has negatively impacted their confidence at work.

Amid the stress, more than 8 in 10 Indian professionals are considering a job change this year and flexible working arrangements are their top-most priority.

The report said that the job reshuffle in India is being led by freshers with up to one year of work experience (94 per cent) and Gen Z professionals (87 per cent), who are more likely to consider changing jobs in 2022.The report said that professionals in India are confident about their job roles (45 per cent), careers (45 per cent) and overall job availability (38 per cent) getting better in 2022.The top reasons that can convince professionals in India to stay with their current employer in 2022 include better salary (42 per cent), more appreciation (36 per cent), and improved work-life balance (34 per cent).

R-DAY: SECURITY BEEFED UP IN DELHI AFTER INTEL INPUT OF POSSIBLE TERROR STRIKE

Ujwal Jalali | New Delhi

Delhi Police have strengthened the security arrangements in the national capital after they received intelligence inputs of a possible terror attack in the city ahead of the Republic Day.

Top Delhi Police sources told correspondent that strict security arrangements have been put in place across the national capital.

"On such occasions [Republic Day], Delhi Police always raise the alert. We increase our visibility, presence and checking to counter any threat," a senior police officer said.

Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana said in an order that as per reports, certain criminal or anti-social elements or terrorists inimical to India may pose a threat to the safety of the general public, dignitaries and vital installations.

In view of this, Asthana also put a ban on the use of sub-conventional aerial platforms like para-gliders, para-motors, hang gliders, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), micro-light aircraft, remotely-piloted aircraft, hot air balloons, small-size powered aircraft, quadcopters or even para-jumping from aircraft etc.

"The safety of the people is our topmost priority. The police personnel have been deployed on roads to intensify patrolling and checking at pickets for area dominance," the officer said.

Moreover, recovery of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) on January 14 from the Ghazipur flower market area has already raised the concerns of the Delhi Police.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi district), Deepak Yadav, told IANS that adequate arrangements have been made in and around the Rajpath ahead of the Republic Day. "Around 300 cameras with face-recognition facility have been installed around the Rajpath to thwart any threat beforehand," Yadav said.

The hotels in New Delhi district area are also being checked by the cops. In view of the existing threat, Yadav said that specially-trained commandos of Delhi Police and paramilitary forces would be deployed to counter any threat.

"Apart from the police commandos, assault teams of SWAT, Special Cell and hit squads of NSG would also be deployed," Yadav said.

As the usage of drones to carry out terror attacks has risen in the recent past, the DCP said any flying object that breaches the security cordons in and around the area of Rajpath will be taken care of.

"An anti-drone team will be deployed to take care of that," he said.

Meanwhile, around 1,000 drones, 75 military aircraft and tableaux of 12 states and Union Territories and nine ministries will be part of the Republic Day celebrations at Rajpath.

The government has introduced two important changes -- Republic Day celebration week will be held from January 23 to January 30, and the main function will begin 30 minutes later on January 26.

It will begin at 10.30 a.m. in place of 10 a.m. to let visibility improve by the time the flypast takes place.

The celebrations will begin from January 23 to mark the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. It will end on January 30 to commemorate Martyrs' Day.

Further, the number of visitors at the Republic Day parade has been curtailed significantly owing to the prevailing Covid situation. Last year,

Former JD-U MLA to organise 'drunkards convention' in Bihar's Siwan

PATNA | Agencies

Janata Dal-United (JD-U) lawmakers and workers are backing Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's liquor ban decision, but a former party MLA on Tuesday announced "Piyakkar Sammelan" (Drunkards convention) in the state's Siwan soon.

Liquor is currently banned in Bihar and Nitish Kumar is facing the huge criticism on this issue due to its implementation on the ground, and major loss of life due to people drinking spurious liquorThe organiser, former JD-U lawmaker Shyam Bahadur Singh, is said to be very close to Nitish Kumar, and had won several assembly elections from Siwan but he lost in 2020."We have decided to organise a drunkards' convention in the Gandhi Maidan of Siwan where we will invite every person of the state. We will serve drinks (liquor) according to their choice. We will arrange every brand of liquor from beer to country made and Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) which is popularly known as 'Laal Pani' or 'English' in Bihar," Singh said.

Not giving the exact date, he said that the event will be held after the winter.

"The idea is to find the number of people who are in favour of liquor to be allowed in the state and those who are in favour of the liquor ban," Singh said.

He pleaded that there should be relaxation in the liquor ban.

AAP names Bhagwant Mann as Punjab CM candidate

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party on Tuesday declared Sangrur MP Bhagwant Mann as its chief ministerial candidate in the Punjab Assembly polls.

Announcing Mann's candidature, AAP convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said: "Some people have put forward my name for CM's face, 93.3 per cent favoured Mann as Chief Minister's candidate, while three per cent preferred Navjot Singh Sidhu."

Last week, Kejriwal had announced that the party will elect the Chief Ministerial candidate based on people's suggestions. The party had issued a mobile number and conducted a phone-in poll.

Earlier also the AAP chief had said he wanted the party's state unit chief Mann as the chief ministerial candidate.

In the last five years, the party faced many troubles and protests. The party saw the exit of leaders like H.S. Phoolka, Sucha Singh Chhotepur and Sukhpal Singh Khaira, but Mann remained loyal to Kejriwal.

VIKRAM DEV DUTT NAMED NEW CMD OF AIR INDIA

New Delhi: Senior bureaucrat Vikram Dev Dutt was on Tuesday named as the new Chairman and Managing Director of Air India.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved Dutt's appointment as the CMD of Air India in the rank and pay of an Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Civil Aviation.At present, Dutt, a 1993 batch IAS officer, is based in his UT cadre. He succeeds Rajiv Bansal, who is currently the Union Civil Aviation Secretary.The appointment comes before the likely take-over of the airline's management by the Tata Group under the Centre's divestment rogramme.Presently, Tata Group has entered into a share purchase agreement with the government for buying out the latter's stake in Air India, Air India Express and AISATS.

PRIYANKA GANDHI EXTENDS SUPPORT TO HASTINAPUR CANDIDATE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After a row erupted over Congress' decision of fielding actor-model Archana Gautam from Hastinapur constituency in the upcoming Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, party's general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has come out in support of her alleging that such remarks are being made upon her to "make her look weak (candidate), just because she is a woman."

Priyanka Gandhi during her live interaction, on Tuesday, was asked why her party has given a ticket to Archana Gautam as BJP is attacking Congress over this matter, to which she replied, "She has struggled a lot in her life. No one asks Modi Ji about the kind of clothes he wears or who he wants to marry. Then why are such questions being asked to Archana Gautam? Only because she is a woman? This is wrong."

Vouching for the candidate, she further said, "If the woman is saying that she wants to serve the people, wants to raise real issues, why are you asking such questions to her? That's only because you want to make her look weak."

Soon after Congress released its first list of candidates for UP Assembly polls, a picture of Archana Gautam wearing a bikini had gotten viral on social media. The actor-model has won the title of Miss Bikini India. After Congress' decision to give her a ticket from Hastinapur constituency, BJP accused the grand old party of indulging in "cheap publicity".

Delhi riots: Court grants bail to 6 accused in murder case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday granted bail to six accused persons in connection with a case related to the death of 20-year-old Dilbar Singh Negi, whose charred body was found during the violence in the city's North-East area in February 2020.

Justice Subramonium Prasad granted bail to the accused -- Mohd. Tahir, Shahrukh, Mohd. Faizal, Mohd. Shoaib, Rashid, and Parvez in the order which was reserved earlier this month.The case relates to the death of Dilbar Negi, who used to work at Anil Sweets shop and on the fateful day had gone to the godown for lunch and rest. He could not be located till late at night on February 25.

In the afternoon of February 26, 2020, the local police of Police Station Gokulpuri came to know about the dead body of a male person at the godown of Anil Sweets. The body was found in a charred condition and later identified as Dilbar Negi. He had come from Uttarakhand to the capital city six months prior to his death.

According to police, the rioting mob targeted the properties of Hindus, including the said shop, a book shop, DRP School, and godown of Anil Sweets and others by torching them and the mob of the same rioters remained active till late night.The FIR stated that the accused were charged under Section 147 (Punishment for rioting), 148 (Rioting, armed with deadly weapon), 149 (Unlawful assembly), 302 (Murder), 201 (Causing disappearance of evidence), 436 (Mischief by fire) and 427 (Mischief causing damage) of IPC at Gokulpuri police station. Initially, 12 accused persons were charge-sheeted in the case in 2020.

ARMY RESCUES 14 STRANDED PASSENGERS IN KASHMIR

Srinagar: Fourteen civilians stranded on road blocked by snow avalanches were rescued on Tuesday by the army despite highly hostile weather in the area.

A defence statement said avalanches triggered by snow on Tuesday morning blocked the Tangdhar-Chowkibal road in Kashmir's Kupwara district and 14 civilians, including a child were stranded along with their vehicles."Army's avalanche rescue team from Neelum Company Operating Base under Captain Kuljot Singh along with GREF team immediately swung into action after receiving information about the stranded vehicles with passengers including women, children and elderly people."14 stranded civilians were rescued in this operation after the avalanche debris was cleared", a defence spokesman said.

Nitish Kumar govt likely to relax liquor prohibition law

PATNA | Agencies

Facing criticism over poor implementation of the liquor ban, the Nitish Kumar government in Bihar is likely to give some relaxation to the violators.

According to a top official of the JDU, the state government is ready to review this issue and a proposal is likely to be put on table in the upcoming budget session of the Bihar Vidhan Sabha.

As per the proposal, the violators who are caught in drunken state can be let off after paying penalty on the spot. Though, it is not applicable on repeat offenders. A person repeatedly violating the norms of liquor prohibition law would be liable to face jail term.Such a relaxation would allow liquor consumption at home and would also promote the home delivery concept, which is already popular among habitual drinkers in Bihar.

The JDU official further said that the vehicle used for smuggling of liquor could be released after paying a fine. He said that the Chief Minister is under huge political pressure after a series of spurious liquor tragedies in different districts in the last four months that have taken the lives of more than 80 persons and many others have lost their eyesight.

BSF seize 82 fake licences from truck drivers near Indo-B'desh border

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a special drive along the India-Bangladesh border, the Border Security Force (BSF) has caught 82 truck drivers with fake drivers licence plying near the Integrated Check Post in Petrapole along the international border near Bongaon in West Bengal.

The force had received a tip-off that few drivers were involved in carrying out trans-border crimes such as smuggling of gold, silver, cough syrup, drugs etc. while being engaged in export and import of goods between India and Bangladesh.

On January 16, the BSF carried out a surprise check of the driving licences of the drivers engaged in export and import of goods via road through the ICP-Petrapole and seized 52 fake licences.

On January 17, 30 more trucks drivers were found in the possession of fake driving licence. Accordingly, the BSF handed over 82 fake driving licences to the Customs and it was conveyed by the concerned authorities that those trucks whose drivers had fake driving licence will not be allowed to operate.

In order to ensure smooth running of the trade between India and Bangladesh, the force has also informed the Bongaon Transport Association to follow the standing operating procedure so that security and interests of the both nations are not compromised.

With a spate in the smuggling activities at the ICP-Petrapole in the recent past, BSF has taken many steps to upgrade its surveillance and vigilance measures which resulted in these seizures, officials said.

On January 4, smuggled gold worth around Rs 1,44,22,356 was seized from a transporter who tried to flee on a bike near the ICP-Petrapole.

It was subsequently revealed that the gold was smuggled in from Bangladesh by concealing it inside an import bound truck.

Aligarh says 'no' to Dharam Sansad

ALIGARH | Agencies

After the Haridwar controversy, the Aligarh district administration has denied permission for the proposed Dharam Sansad, planned in the city on January 22 and 23.

Several eminent citizens, minority organisations and former union law minister Kapil Sibal, had also written a letter to the district administration demanding denial of permission for the event that could "spark tension" in the "communally sensitive" city.

ADM (city) R.K. Patel said that since Model Code of Conduct and Covid guidelines are in force in the state, the permission will not be given to the organiser.

"Neither the permission was granted nor will be given," he said.

Several senior citizens, retired officials, professors and social workers had also written a letter to district magistrate Selva Kumari saying that, "Dharam Sansad in Aligarh is being organised on the pattern of Haridwar. Since Aligarh is a sensitive city, the event could disrupt the peaceful atmosphere of the entire nation, could create tension and fear among the society amid assembly elections. Therefore, such an event should not be allowed in public interest."Besides, the petitioner in the PIL seeking criminal action with respect to the Dharm Sansad conclave held at Haridwar and Delhi had also written to the Aligarh district magistrate seeking to take preventive action to ensure that no speeches of such nature are allowed at the proposed events.

Members of All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) had also urged the district magistrate to deny permission for the proposed 'Dharam Sansad'.District president of the party Gufran Noor, said that communal harmony was disrupted after the alleged hate speech delivered during 'Dharam Sansad' held in Haridwar and now the same people were organising it in Aligarh.

AIM FOR A HEALTHY PERSON, HEALTHY FAMILY & HEALTHY NATION: CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN

BAL RAKSHA KIT PROVIDED TO CHILDREN, CHIEF MINISTER PARTICIPATES IN NUTRITION CAMPAIGN PROGRAMME OF AROGYA BHARTI

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that we all have to work keeping the goal of a healthy person, a healthy family and a healthy nation before us. The sixteen sanskars (rituals), including Swarna Prashan, are scientific. It is helpful in making children strong and intelligent. For this reason, Swarna Prashan Sanskar has been prevalent in Indian families since ancient times. Chief Minister was distributing Swarna Prashan, considered as immunity booster, to children under the nutrition campaign at Arogya Bharti office in Tulsi Nagar today. Chouhan said that thousands of years old rock paintings also show that only a healthy person can lead a completely happy life. Efforts should be made that the person does not fall ill.

Creates ability to fight diseases in children

Chief Minister Chouhan said that in the field of Ayurveda, our knowledgeable Acharyas had manufactured chemicals like Swarna Prashan to fight bacterial diseases since ancient times. Swarna Prashan means the consumption of Swarna (gold). It is consumed during Pushya Nakshatra. Swarna Prashana is useful in building the ability to fight various diseases in children. Children were made to lick Swarna Prashan. In rural areas many times the families could not afford this. Then the ritual was completed even by licking ordinary honey. Swarna Prashan consists of Swarna Bhasma as well as mixtures like Ghee, Honey, Giloy, Shankhpushpi and Ashwagandha. It has been of great importance for the good health of children. From birth till the age of sixteen, parents make their children consume it. However, now this tradition is disappearing even in the villages. The work of carrying forward this tradition of increasing immunity in children is commendable. Chief Minister said that the efforts of Arogya Bharti for the promotion of Swarna Prashan are praiseworthy.

Will make Pt. Khushilal College a research centre

Chouhan said that Ayurveda has great importance in daily life. Bhopal's Pt. Khushilal Sharma Ayurvedic College is an ideal centre. Here facilities like Panchakarma are also available. Efforts are on to make this college a research centre. Chouhan also remembered the services of Vaidya Pt. Ramnarayan Shastri. Chief Minister Chouhan said that Arogya Bharti and other organisations can adopt a village or an Anganwadi for distribution of Swarna Prashan. Surely its benefits will reach the society. Chief Minister Chouhan distributed Bal Raksha kits (child protection kits) to some children in the programme. One month's medicine has been given in it. The Chief Minister expressed the need to increase efforts in this direction with the joint efforts of the society and the government.

Conductor and Driver would Be Responsible - Every Passenger Should Wear Mask

Action Will Be Taken Against Bus Owner if a Passenger Is Found Without Mask: Transport Minister Rajput

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Transport and Revenue Minister Govind Singh Rajput said that no person should travel without a mask. Action will be taken against the bus owner if a passenger is found without a mask in the bus. Transport Minister Rajput reached Inter State Bus Terminal (ISBT) Bhopal on Tuesday and applied masks to the drivers, conductors and passengers travelling without masks.

Transport Minister Rajput made a surprise inspection of the buses coming to the bus stand in the campaign 'Mera Mask - Meri Suraksha'. He applied masks while convincing the bus passengers. He said that your mask is the only way to avoid the increasing effects of corona virus. He asked the driver and conductor not to allow any passenger to board the bus without a mask. Corona infection increases due to coming close to each other and being without a mask. Everyone should consider it their moral responsibility to wear a mask. Only then can we stop the spread of infection. He said that wearing a mask is not only necessary but also mandatory for everyone. For this, the state government has also made a provision for fine.

Minister Rajput said that if the traveller himself sees anyone without a mask, he should be interrupted and forced to wear a mask. Minister Rajput has requested women travellers not to use the pallu of Sari or handkerchief as a mask.

Minister Rajput said that according to the requirement of masks for passengers in aeroplanes, guidelines regarding masks should be implemented in buses as well. Minister Rajput told the conductor-driver that action will be taken next time if they are found without a mask.

Chief Minister Chouhan planted Saptaparni and Moulshree saplings in Smart Garden

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Saptaparni and Moulshree saplings in Smart Garden today. Members of Atmos Welfare Society also planted saplings. Chief Minister Chouhan was presented a portrait of the Chief Minister made by child painter Adwitiya Trivedi. Chief Minister Chouhan received information about the activities of Atmos Society.

Importance of plants

Moulshree is also called Kesava in Sanskrit, Molsari or Bakool in Hindi. It is a tree of medicinal importance, which has been used in Ayurveda for centuries. Saptaparni plant is an evergreen medicinal tree, which has great importance in Ayurveda. This plant is used in the manufacture of various medicines.

SACHIN MOURNS DEATH OF LEGENDARY TIGRESS 'COLLARWALI'

Bhopal: Cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar on Monday expressed grief over the demise of Indias first tigress to be radio-collared, who died at the Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh on January 15.

Reacting to the death of the tigress, aptly named 'Collarwali', Tendulkar tweeted, "Wildlife lovers and enthusiasts will understand how heart-breaking it is when a majestic tigress goes into silence forever. Rest in peace, #Collarwali."The last rites of the tigress were performed with full respect by the officials of the Pench Tiger Reserve in Chhindwara district which attracted a huge crowd on Sunday.'Collarwali', who also earned the title of super mom after giving birth to 29 cubs, lived for 17 years and died of prolonged illness.The average age of a tiger is about 12 years, said Ashok Kumar Mishra, field director, Pench Tiger Reserve."The post-mortem revealed multiple organ failure due to intestine blockage resulting from old age as the cause of death. Her intestine was blocked with mud and hair," said Mishra.'Collarwali' was the first-ever tigress to be radio-collared at Pench. After the collar stopped functioning, she was again radio-collared in 2010 and that is why she earned her name 'Collarwali' or T15 tigress.

Teenage girl climbs tree to avoid getting vaccinated in Chhattarpur

Team Absolute | Chhattarpur

In Madhya Pradesh's Chhattarpur district, a teenage girl climbed a tree to avoid getting the Covid vaccine. In a video that has gone viral on social media, an 18-year-old woman can be seen atop a tree while a healthcare worker is walking towards her with a syringe.

After some coaxing from the healthcare worker, she gives in and steps down. The vaccination team was visiting the Mankari village of the district. The woman reportedly ran away from her house and climbed a tree to hide from the doctor administering it to her. The doctor is seen chasing her and standing under the tree, waiting for her to get down as other villagers urge her to do the same. She finally does step down and gets her shot.

Assistance Scheme for Domestic Violence Victims in MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The scheme has been approved by the State Council of Ministers on Tuesday. The cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan approved the assistance scheme for girls and women who were victims of domestic violence. Under the scheme, a provision of Rs 2 lakh for any part of the body of the victim of domestic violence with less than 40 percent disability and Rs 4 lakh for disability caused by more than 40 percent injury.

In this scheme, a provision has also been made to arrange for the actual cost of transportation for the movement of the victim to the destination (including the period of the trial of the case in the court) etc.

Similarly, the cabinet decided to make arrangements for the treatment of gas victims and their children, making Ayushman card under Ayushman Niramayam Madhya Pradesh scheme up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year, according to the rates of package amount in the hospitals identified under NHPS scheme.

The cabinet gave its approval to invite the vacant posts in autonomous engineering colleges and self-government or government polytechnic colleges as guest lecturers for 11 months on payment of monthly honorarium of maximum Rs 30,000.

MINISTERS SHOULD PLAY A LEAD ROLE IN VACCINATION WORK: CM CHOUHAN

Prevention, Treatment and Management of Covid Should Be Reviewed Regularly, Chief Minister Addresses Ministers Prior to Cabinet Meeting

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the ministers should keep an eye on the health infrastructure in the districts. Keep taking stock of the necessary arrangements in the hospitals. Vaccination work is satisfactory, but it has to be done cent per cent. No person should miss a vaccine dose. Keeping an eye on the situation of infection in the third wave of Covid, economic activities should be conducted with full precautions. The works and livelihoods of the poor should not be affected, everyone should adopt precautions of wearing masks and keeping mutual distance. Ministers should play a leadership role with public cooperation in the control of Covid as done in both the earlier waves. Chief Minister Chouhan was addressing the ministers before the meeting of the Council of Ministers at Mantralaya.Chief Minister Chouhan said that the ministers should continue to take stock of the works and infrastructural arrangements for prevention, treatment and management of corona. Ministers and other public representatives should also keep an eye on the home isolation system. It should be ensured that the health information of infected patients is taken daily by the doctors over the phone.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that Madhya Pradesh is in the category of big states, having successful control of Covid. In other states where the positivity is above 10, in the country it is 14.75, while in Madhya Pradesh it is only 7 percent. The state has given the first dose of vaccine to 97 percent and the second dose to 90.6. Despite this, we do not have to be careless, we together have to take full care of and ensure treatment of the citizens who have been infected. Their morale is also to be boosted. Using the model of people-participation of Covid control of Madhya Pradesh, work is being done to bring the common people out of the problem even in the present conditions. Everyone's cooperation in this work will lead to success.

Deaths due to alcohol continues in MP

In Madhya Pradesh, the number of deaths due to alcohol consumption does not seem to be stopping. The new case is from Bhind district, where three people have died after allegedly consuming spurious liquor. Before this, many places including Morena and Ujjain have lost their lives by drinking alcohol.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In Bhind district, three people including two brothers have died due to drinking alcohol. The real brothers along with their other relatives had made and consumed alcohol through chemical substances. Later, both the brothers died, while another also died due to the consumption of alcohol. In this case the in-charge of two police stations has been suspended.

It is to be known that earlier there were major accidents in Ujjain in October 2020 and in Morena in January 2021 due to drinking spurious liquor. While 14 laborers died in Ujjain, 20 people lost their lives in Morena. After that, there have been deaths due to drinking alcohol in many other areas as well. After the Morena incident, the government had removed the Collector and the SP, as well as announced that the Collector and the SP would be considered guilty for such incidents and action would be taken against them.

The Congress has taken a jibe at the government's earlier announcements. Attacking the state president's media coordinator Narendra Saluja, he said, "After Ujjain-Mandsaur-Morena-Indore, now once again a case of death of three people due to poisonous liquor has come to light in Bhind. Uma Bharti disappeared after announcing the campaign of prohibition, the same Shivraj government is continuously showing love for liquor and the havoc of liquor mafia continues and deaths due to poisonous liquor continue.

He further said, the government had announced that the collector-IG-SP of the district where the sale of spurious liquor was found would be guilty, then why blame only two police station in-charges? How long will the government save the Excise Minister, when will it hold him

There is immense potential for expansion of quality education in hybrid education: Governor Patel

GOVERNOR MANGUBHAI PATEL HAS SAID THAT HYBRID EDUCATION HAS IMMENSE POTENTIAL FOR INDIVIDUAL AND SECTORAL, QUALITY EDUCATION AND ITS EXPANSION. HE HAS SAID THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO CONSIDER BETTER USE OF ONLINE DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND NEW DIMENSIONS OF HYBRID EDUCATION AS AN INTEGRATED FORM OF EDUCATION IN THE INSTITUTION.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Patel was addressing the closing ceremony of the 27th two-day annual conference of Sahodaya, the school organization of the Central Board of Secondary Education, through virtual medium at Raj Bhavan.

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that during the last two years, Corona has changed our lifestyles. From education to work and the means of entertainment, everything has changed. Hybrid education is an opportunity emerging from disaster. He said that solutions to the challenges of providing quality education to the disadvantaged sections of rural under-privileged areas should be found in hybrid education. Initiatives should be taken to arrange education through Virtual Reality for the students of disadvantaged sections and areas. Efforts are also necessary to provide new opportunities for education to the disadvantaged sections and increase investment.

Governor Patel said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given an opportunity to create a future generation suitable for the needs of the 21st century and the core sentiments of Indian Sanatan culture through the National Education Policy 2020. In view of the employment prospects in the global scenario, the need of the present time is to pay special attention to skill upgradation in education. It is important for students to develop an understanding of the macroeconomic contexts of the country and the global economy. Social behavior and leadership skills should also be made a part of education in the curriculum. Such training programmes and content should be included in the curriculum which gives the students a holistic view of seeing the unity in diversity of our glorious culture.

EDITOR'S SPECS

RHYTHMIC WORDS OF WAR

BJP MP and actor Ravi Kishan's famous dialogue, "Zindagi jhand ba, phir bhi ghamand ba" (life is terrible, but still, you are arrogant), is now being used to counter his party campaign by another Bhojpuri singer Neha Singh Rathore. Ravi Kishan, in a rap song released on Saturday, made an attempt to woo voters ahead of the Assembly elections. In the number, he says: "Yogi ke sarkar ba, vikas ke bahaar ba, sadakan ke jaal ba, kaam bemisal ba, apradhi ke jel ba, bijli relam rel ba, Corona gayil har ba, UP mein sab ba." Roughly translated, the song says: "This is Yogi's government, there is development, roads, criminals in jail, no Covid, electricity everywhere - UP has everything." A day later, on Sunday, Bhojpuri singer Neha Singh Rathore released a song titled 'UP Mei Ka Ba' (What is there in UP). In her rap song, she criticises the Yogi Adityanath government over issues such as handling of the pandemic, Lakhimpur Kheri violence and the Hathras incident. Responding to Ravi Kishan's praise for the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh, she says in her song: "Corona se lakhan mar gayil le, laashan se Ganga bhar gayil be, kaafan nochat kukur bilar ba, ae baba, UP mein ka ba? (Covid killed lakhs, the Ganga was filled with corpses, dog were snatching shrouds - what is there in UP?)" Referring to the Lakhimpur incident in which a Minister's son allegedly mowed down four farmers with his SUV, she raps: "Mantri ke betuva badi rangdar ba, kisanan ke chhati pe rondat motor car ba, ae chaukidar, bolo ke zimmedar ba? (The minister's son has an attitude, he runs over farmers in his car. 'Chaukidar', who's responsible for this?" She ends her song with the famous dialogue Ravi Kishan is known for -- "Zindagi jhand ba, phir bhi ghamand ba".

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

Deepika Bhan

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 candidature this time.

In Uttarakhand, 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 Uttarakhand 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 handigarh 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 Indira 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

MORE VOLCANIC UPHEAVALS LIKELY TO FOLLOW, WARNS AUSSIE EXPERT

Sydney | Agencies

Ongoing volcanic upheavals are expected to follow the massive January 15 eruption off the coast of Tonga, according to a leading Australian geologist.

The eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano caused a tsunami to send water flooding into the nation's capital of Nuku'alofa, while large waves and tidal surges rolled across the Pacific region including the east coast of Australia, Japan and Hawaii. Monash University's Associate Professor of Geochemistry Oliver Nebel told Xinhua news agency on Monday that the disaster was caused by the volcano sitting near the edge of one of the Earth's tectonic plates.

Over time, a plate can "clash" with another, in this case causing an eruption along what is known as the "Ring of Fire" volcanoes, which are already explosive. "The last eruption

of this volcano was about 1,000 years ago, so it was due for a large eruption, and this is likely what happened now," Nebel said. Nebel said volcanic activity off the Tongan coast had been detected over the Christmas period which was a sign that pressure was building up along the vulnerable plate edges. He said hot magma was constantly accumulating within volcanoes, and it is expected that they will create lots of ash and can have "a fair bit of a violent eruption". Volcanoes build up those underground reservoirs and "every now and then this reservoir is emptied, and this causes an eruption". "Once the magma is evacuated from underneath the volcano, it's likely that eruptions will go on and on. But once you have a violent eruption it's unlikely the next ones will be as disruptive because there's a good chance that a huge amount of the magma has already erupted."

But it is still "not a very predictable" process as to when it would explode, especially given the lack of data currently.

AT LEAST 22 KILLED IN AFGHAN EARTHQUAKE

Qala-E-Naw: At least 22 people were killed and many others injured after a magnitude 5.6 earthquake hit Afghanistan's western province of Badghis on Monday, a local official has said. Multiple houses were affected by the quake which occurred at 4:10 p.m., and the number of casualties may rise, the source said. The US Geological Survey said the earthquake with a magnitude of 5.6 jolted 40 km east of Qala-e-Naw, the provincial capital of Badghis which borders rkmenistan.The epicenter, with a depth of 10.0 km, was initially determined to be at 34.9479 degrees north latitude and 63.5686 degrees east longitude, it said. Several aftershocks were also felt in the region.

Houthis launch 5 ballistic missiles, explosive-laden drones in multiple attacks on UAE

Sanaa | Agencies

The Iran-backed Houthi militia in Yemen announced that it fired five ballistic missiles and several explosive-laden drones in multiple attacks on airports and an oil refinery in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "The attacks targeted the international airports in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, as well as the oil refinery in Abu Dhabi," Houthi military Spokesman Yehya Sarea said in a statement on Monday.

"We vow to hit more vital targets in the UAE if it continues military escalation in Yemen," the spokesman added.

The UAE state media reported earlier on Monday that three oil tankers in the industrial area in Abu Dhabi were exploded after being hit by small drones, reports Xinhua news agency.

It also reported fire in the Abu Dhabi International Airport. The UAE said it reserved rights to respond to the Houthi threat.

The attacks was widely condemned by Arab and foreign countries. This attack came nearly a week after the Houthis hijacked and captured a UAE-flagged commercial ship off the militia-held Red Sea city of Hodeidah. The UN Security Council has called on the Houthi group to release the ship and crew members. The call was however, rejected by the Houthi group. The UAE is part of a Saudi-led Arab coalition supporting the Yemeni internationally recognized government against the Houthi militia.

Last week, the coalition-backed Yemeni government army recaptured four strategic districts in the oil-rich provinces of Shabwa and Marib 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 government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi out of the capital Sanaa.

GLOBAL COVID CASELOAD TOPS 330.2 MN

Washington: Amid an ongoing resurgence across the world, the global coronavirus caseload has topped 330.2 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 5.54 million and vaccinations to over 9.64 billion, according to Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Tuesday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and the death toll stood at 330,275,734 and 5,544,688, respectively, while the total number of vaccine doses administered has increased to 9,649,807,641. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 66,375,579 and 851,451, according to the CSSE. The second worst hit country in terms of cases is India (37,122,164 infections and 486,066 deaths), followed by Brazil (23,015,128 infections and 621,327 deaths). The other countries with over 5 million cases are the UK (15,316,457), France (14,283,514), Russia (10,621,410), Turkey (10,459,094), Italy (8,706,915), Spain (8,093,036), Germany (7,991,373), Argentina (7,094,865) Iran (6,218,741) and Colombia (5,543,796), the CSSE figures showed.The nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are Russia (314,838)), Mexico (301,334), Peru (203,376), the UK (152,483), Indonesia (144,167), Italy (141,104)), Iran (132,044), Colombia (130,996), France (127,957), Argentina (118,040), Germany (115,624), Ukraine (104,663) and Poland (102,305).

S.Korean lottery sales hit all-time high in 2021 amid pandemic

Seoul | Agencies

Lottery sales in South Korea rose 10.3 per cent on-year to reach an all-time high last year amid the Covid-19 pandemic, data from the Finance Ministry revealed on Tuesday.

Sales of lottery tickets stood at 5.98 trillion won ($5.02 billion) in 2021, compared with 5.42 trillion won the previous year, according to the data.

The figure has been rising in recent years from 4.15 trillion won in 2017 to 4.38 trillion won in 2018 and further to 4.79 trillion won in 2019, Yonhap News Agency reported citing the data.

By type, sales of online lottery tickets increased 8.4 per cent on-year to 5.14 trillion won, and sales of pension-type tickets jumped 29.2 per cent to 291.1 billion won.

The brisk sales are attributable to reduced operations of other gambling businesses, such as casino and horse racing, amid the coronavirus pandemic, as well as improved public perception of lottery, the Ministry said in a statement. Lottery tickets accounted for 42.1 per cent of the total sales of the gambling industry in 2020, up from 21.2 per cent the previous year. According to a survey last year of 1,020 people aged 19 or older, 71.8 per cent of males and 54 per cent of females said they had bought a lottery ticket, with those in their 40s accounting for the largest portion of people having made such purchases. Some 73.7 per cent of the people had a positive impression of lottery, up from 66.5 per cent a year earlier, the Ministry said.

WINTER STORM HITS US

New York: A winter storm hit the mid-Atlantic and northeast US, causing widespread travel disruption and knocking out power for more than 200,000 homes and businesses. "From Georgia to parts of Canada, the effects of the storm, known as Winter Storm Izzy, were felt," Xinhua news agency quoted The Wall Street Journal as saying.

The National Weather Service (NWS) said that up to 20 inches of snow had fallen in parts of Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and South Carolina on Monday, with icy roads creating dangerous driving conditions. Heavy rain and strong winds lashed other areas, with some coastal communities at risk of flooding as well as falling trees and power lines, it added. Snow fell at a rate of more than 4 inches an hour in Buffalo, New York.The impact on New York City was expected to be limited to severe thunderstorms, with gusts of up to 55 miles an hour.

BOMBAY HC COMMUTES DEATH SENTENCE FOR 2 SISTERS, RAPS MAHA GOVERNMENT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday commuted the death sentences on two prime accused - both step-sisters - to life term till death in jail, in the sensational case of the kidnapping of 13 minor children and murdering at least 5 of them, that rocked the state in the early 1990s. The accused, Seema Mohan Gavit, 39, and Renuka Kiran Shinde, 45, were arrested by Maharashtra Police in 1996 and have so far spent around 25 years under the shadow of the hangman's noose, at the Yerawada Central Jail, Pune. Another prime accused and their mother, Anjana, who was also arrested and charged in the case, passed away in 1998 during the pendency of the trial. A division bench of Justice Nitin Jamdar and Justice Sarang Kotwal commuted the death penalty, rapping the delays by the government authorities in taking a decision on the mercy pleas of the two. In 2001, the half-sisters were convicted and awarded the death penalty by the Kolhapur Sessions Court for the stunning kidnappings of 13 children and killing 5 of them brutally. The death sentence was confirmed by the Bombay High Court in 2004 and then the Supreme Court in 2006. The sisters had earlier filed mercy pleas before the Governor in 2008 that were declined in August 2013, and later to the President, which was rejected in July 2014, even as people from the USA Japan, Canada, and India appealed to the President for commuting the death verdict, saying that execution of women is extremely rare. After the rejection of their appeals from both the Governor and the President, they moved the Bombay High Court. The matter was taken up urgently on August 19, 2014, as the two sisters awaited the gallows that day. The Public Prosecutor issued telephonic instructions to the YCJ Jail Superintendent Yogesh Desai to stop the hangings till their pleas were heard and the matter came up on the board the following day. The petitioners contended that the government machinery did not adhere to the rules that required utmost expediency and resorted to a "most casual approach" resulting in a delay of nearly 8 years, which the division bench upheld. The sisters contended, through their lawyer Aniket Vagal, that the delay was attributable to the executive including the Governor and the Maharashtra Government, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the President, which was denied by the Centre's lawyer Sandesh Patil. The judges noted that from the date of the sisters submitting their mercy plea on September 1, 2006 till it was finally disposed of on July 30, 2014, it took 7 years, 10 months and 15 days. Justice Jamdar and Justice Kotwal also observed how the chronology showed that there was "nothing but the movement of files, delay, and casual approach demonstrated at each stage" and the state government moved "as if it was a routine file, perhaps even slower than that", at each stage "officers exhibited utter casualness". The court also frowned at how, in the period between 2006-2014, modern electronic communication facilities, email, courier, transportation were easily available to all government officers, and termed as "abhorrent" the movement of files/papers in such a crucial matter within the state or the city after gaps of 15 days, month, six months or up to one year. It also commented on how the matter was circulated before the court only by the petitioner-sisters in 2021 and not by the government since 2016, and the manner in which the two convicts were kept isolated in the 'Death Convict Yard' which has an ominous connotation, and was described as "brooding horror of hanging, daunting the prisoner in the condemned cell" by the late Justice Krishna Iyer. However, the evidence on record shows the kids were brutally murdered, showing the "depravity" of the two convict-sisters which was "heinous and beyond words to condemn", the bench said, ordering "life imprisonment is till the life of the convict" unless the competent authority decides otherwise, though the (convicts) were beyond reform for society. The court also cancelled the unexecuted death warrants against the two sisters and disposed of the petition.

FADNAVIS DEMANDS ACTION OVER PATOLE REMARKS ON MODI

Mumbai: The BJP will not keep quiet over Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole's alleged controversial remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis said on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters in Panaji, Fadnavis also slammed the Maharashtra government for not filing an FIR over Patole's comments, a video of which had gone viral on Monday.

"Someone called the Maharashtra CM's wife Rabri devi and an FIR was filed. And here a person who calls himself a leader, threatens to kill the PM and there is no FIR (First Information Report) against him in Maharashtra. This is wrong. We will not keep quiet," Fadnavis said. In the video in Bhandara district in Maharashtra, Patole is allegedly heard saying he could beat up and badmouth Modi. Patole later clarified that he was not referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but a local goon with a similar surname.Fadnavis, however, hinted at Congress conspiracy against the Prime Minister.

"I feel it is a Congress policy. In Punjab, the security of the PM is compromised and in Maharashtra the president says we will beat the PM. Through this, one can know what he (Patole) really feels about the PM. I feel it is Congress policy and we demand that an FIR and legal action should be taken against Nana Patole because he has spoken about beating the Prime Minister," Fadnavis said.

'Referring to a local goon Modi, not PM': Nana Patole

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a viral news clip, Patole can be heard speaking in Marathi to a group of villagers in Bhandara"I have been in politics for the past 30 years," Nana Patole could be heard saying I helped each and everyone who came to me. That's why I can hit Modi and abuse him, he said

Controversy surrounded Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole after a viral news clip showed him saying that he could beat Modi and abuse him. He, however, later issued a clarification and said that he was referring to a local goon who shares his surname with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a viral news clip, Patole can be heard speaking in Marathi to a group of villagers in Bhandara district. He said, "I have been in politics for the past 30 years. Being a politician, I never favoured anybody. I helped each and everyone who came to me. That's why I can hit Modi and abuse him."

Clarifying later, he said, "A few villagers had complained to me about a local goon. I was talking about a local goon named Modi. I am well aware of the dignity of the post of the prime minister and I have not said anything against PM Narendra Modi."

However, it is not clear when this video was filmed.

Meanwhile, several BJP leaders lashed out at the Congress party and Patole after the video went viral on social media, questioning their respect and honour for the post of prime minister.

Praveen Darekar, Opposition leader in Maharashtra Legislative Council, said, "Though the Congress party is not in power, people respect and honour the members of the party. By giving such a controversial statement, it undermines the glory of Congress."

Ex- minister Anil Deshmukh denied bail in PMLA case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A special court on Mumbai on Tuesday rejected a plea filed by former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh seeking 'default bail' in an alleged money laundering case.

Deshmukh was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on November 2, 2021, and is currently in judicial custody.

In his application, the Nationalist Congress Party leader had said the special court for Prevention of Money Laundering Act cases did not take cognisance of the prosecution complaint (charge sheet) filed by the ED before remanding him in further judicial custody. As the cognisance was not taken in the stipulated period of 60 days from the arrest, he should get bail by default (on technical grounds) under section 167 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the plea said.

The ED opposed this argument, saying the charge sheet had been filed within the stipulated time.

Special judge RN Rokade on Tuesday rejected the NCP leader's plea. As per section 167, if a charge sheet is not filed and its cognisance not taken within 60 days, the accused can seek default bail.

But the central agency's contention was that the question of court taking cognizance of charge sheet was not pertinent. Default bail cannot be considered once the principal charge sheet and a supplementary one had been filed in time, it added. The ED had on December 29, 2021, filed a 7,000-page supplementary charge sheet against Deshmukh and his sons. It had earlier filed a charge sheet against 14 others including Deshmukh's private secretary (an additional collector-rank officer) Sanjeev Palande and personal assistant Kundan Shinde.

The ED launched a separate probe against Deshmukh after the Central Bureau of Investigation registered a case against the senior NCP leader in April 2021 on the charges of corruption. The ED's case is that while serving as Maharashtra home minister, Deshmukh, through (now dismissed) police official Sachin Waze, collected Rs 4.70 crore from various bars in Mumbai. Deshmukh and his family members owned several shell companies which were used to launder this money and divert it to educational trusts controlled by the family, the ED alleged. Waze, an assistant police inspector with Mumbai Crime Branch, was arrested in March 2021 in the Antilia bomb scare and Mansukh Hiran murder case.

Following Waze's arrest, then Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh was transferred.

Singh then accused Deshmukh of asking the police officers to collect Rs 100 crore a month from bars and restaurants in Mumbai.

Deshmukh, while denying these allegations, resigned as minister.

Fadnavis mocks NCP's alliance in Goa with Cong, TMC

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) seeks to make fresh inroads in Goa, a verbal duel has broken out between the Sharad Pawar-led party and former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis. Fadnavis, who is in charge of the BJP's affairs in Goa, had mocked Mr Pawar's attempts to cobble up an alliance with the Congress and the Trinamool Congress in the coastal state, which will go to polls on February 14. "A party does not acquire a national footprint by merely including 'nationalist' in its name. Though it is called the Nationalist Congress Party, in reality, the party is limited to western Maharashtra," he had told reporters. NCP leaders Ajit Pawar, Supriya Sule and Nawab Malik hit back at the BJP leader and asked him to exercise restraint while speaking about Sharad Pawar. NCP chief spokesperson Malik reminded Fadnavis how the veteran leader had prevented him from returning as the chief minister after the 2019 Maharashtra Assembly polls.

"If he continues to speak in the same vein, Sharad Pawar will not hesitate to show him the ghats of Kashi," he wrote on Twitter, in an apparent hint at ending the political career of the BJP leader. In the run-up to the 2019 Maharashtra Assembly polls, Fadnavis had famously declared that the era of Sharad Pawar's brand of politics was over. "The era of Sharad Pawarji's politics is over. The kind of politics he would play of making and breaking (parties) is over now. Such politics will not work. Generations have changed, people do not accept such politics now," he had said. As the Shiv Sena walked out of its coalition with the BJP after the 2019 Maharashtra polls, Fadnavis had assumed office as chief minister with NCP leader Ajit Pawar as his deputy. However, the arrangement barely lasted for three days as Sharad Pawar ensured that none of the NCP MLAs supported the government. Fadnavis had to resign as chief minister within 80 hours and Ajit Pawar too returned to the NCP fold. Sharad Pawar then cobbled up an unlikely alliance of the Shiv Sena, the NCP and the Congress to deny the BJP, the single-largest party in the Assembly, a shot at power.

BULLI BAI APP CASE

Bandra court reserves order on bail plea of three accused

Team Absolute | Mumbai

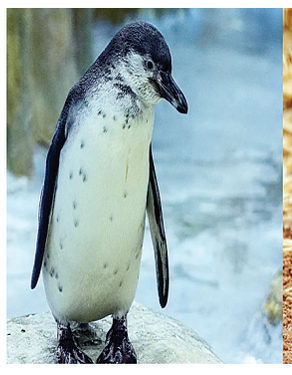
Mumbai's Bandra Court reserved order on the bail applications of Vishal Kumar Jha, Mayank Rawat and Shweta Singh arrested in the 'Bulli Bai' app case, till January 20.

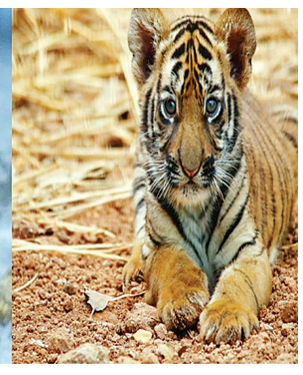
The Cyber Cell of Mumbai Police on Monday opposed the bail pleas of the three stating that the investigation suggested that the accused were also involved in 'Sulli Deals' app case. Advocate Sandeep Sherkhane represented accused Mayank Rawat. A Bandra court had earlier sent Bulli Bai app case co-accused Shweta Singh and Mayank Rawat into 14-day judicial custody till January 28. Before this, they were sent to Mumbai Cyber Cell police custody till January 14.

They were arrested from Uttarakhand on January 5. Vishal Kumar Jha has been sent to judicial custody will January 24.

Mumbai zoo welcomes Royal Bengal tiger cub, Humboldt penguin chick

Team Absolute | Mumbai





The 160-year-old Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Zoo has got two new star attractions - Royal Bengal tiger cub 'Veera' and Humboldt penguin chick, aOscar', officials said here on Tuesday.

Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar performed the naming ceremony of the two new additions to the VJB Zoo family in presence of zoo Director Dr Sanjay Tripathi and other officials.

The male cub was born to the Royal Bengal Tiger pair Shakti and Karishma on November 14, while the penguin chick was born on August 19.

Being cared for by their respective parents, the two new-borns remained out of public glare since their birth and were revealed for the first time during their official christening ceremonies on Tuesday. The Royal Bengal Tiger pair was acquired from Aurangabad Zoo in February 2020, while the colony of 8 penguins - the first of its kind in India - was brought here from Seoul in 2016.

'Oscar', born to the pair Mr. Molt and Flipper, became the third penguin chick to be born in the VJB Zoo in the past six years.The other penguins living here in an ice-cold enclave are Donald, Daisy, Popeye, Olive, and Bubble. Dory, who could not survive and died on October 23, 2016 owing to a bacterial infection.A penguin chick born to Mr. Molt and Flipper in August 2018 had died a week after birth, but their second offspring 'Oscar' is now doing well, while a male chick was born to Donald and Daisy in May 2021. Spread over lush green 50-acres in south Mumbai's Byculla, the VJB Zoo is among the oldest in the country, run by the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation, and has plans to introduce other exotic animals like jaguars, giraffes, etc.

'Decision danger to democracy': SC grills Maha on 12 BJP MLAs suspension

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

The Supreme Court on Tuesday continued to grill the Maharashtra government on the resolution passed by the state Assembly on July 5, 2021 to suspend 12 BJP MLAs for a period of one year for their alleged misconduct and misbehaviour in the House.

A bench, headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar and comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and C.T. Ravikumar, shot a volley of questions at senior advocate C.A. Sundaram, on the rationality of suspending the MLAs beyond the session of the House, as he argued regarding the limited scope for judicial review over the business within the Assembly.

Justice Khanwilkar told Sundaram that the suspension of the MLAs should not be greater than the session of the House, and anything other than this would be irrational. "Your decision of 1 year is irrational because of the deprivation of the constituency being unrepresented for more than 6 months...," noted the bench.

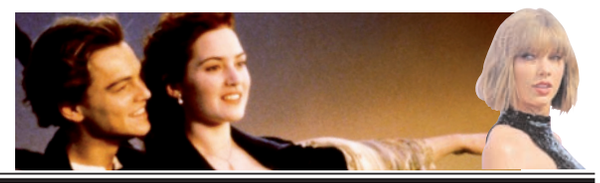
Justice Ravikumar said: "Another is danger to democracy.....Suppose there is a slender lead of the ruling party (in the Assembly), and 15 or 20 people are suspended, what will be the fate of democracy?"

The bench queried Sundaram: "suspension up to what period and for what purpose?"

Justice Maheshwari said the House meets in sessions and the rationale is, when a new session begins, new business begins. "A particular session, he may be suspended but beyond that time, the rationality question comes".

The bench remarked that with a change of session, there is a completely new session and even if the action is punitive, it is for the whole session and not beyond the session. It emphasised that the constituency of the elected representative cannot be left unrepresented for a long time.

The top court made these observations while hearing the petition filed by MLAs challenging their suspension. It will continue to hear the arguments on Wednesday.



KATY PERRY REVEALS BEAU ORLANDO BLOOM'S GROSSEST HABIT

London | Agencies

Pop star Katy Perry has revealed what her fiance and actor Orlando Bloom's "worst habit" is. She said it is leaving used dental floss all over their bathroom. After being asked what bad habits her fiance has, the 37-year-old singer told hosts Amanda Holden and Jamie Theakston: "Oh my God, he loves to floss, which thank God because some partners don't and it's disgusting and he has brilliant teeth.

"But he leaves the floss, everywhere! On the side of my bed, and in the car, and on the kitchen table, I'm like, 'There are bins everywhere'." The 'American Idol' judge also gave some insight into her family's delayed but "amazing" Christmas celebrations, which took place on January 2 - and how it was the "favourite" Christmas she had ever had in her life, partly because of her daughter reaching an age where she understood what was happening. Perry, who shares 16-month-old daughter Daisy with the 'Pirates of the Caribbean' star, said: "I celebrated Christmas with my family, which was amazing.

"It was my favourite Christmas actually because my daughter's now 16 months, and she's aware of presents and we wore Christmas jammies but we celebrated on January 2, so everybody was done with Christmas, and it was like, everybody wakes up, because Covid has been crazy.

Oscar Isaac is Marvel's newest superhero with 'Moon Knight'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Marvel Studios has unveiled the first trailer for its Disney Plus series 'Moon Knight' and it has a new superhero played by actor Oscar Isaac. The teaser was unveiled on Monday night, officially launching the 2022 slate for the Marvel Cinematic Universe, reports variety.com.

In 'Moon Knight' premiering on March 30, Isaac plays Marc Spector, a former soldier with a profound case of dissociative identity disorder that manifests as fully distinct individuals. He becomes the conduit for the Egyptian moon god Khonshu, which only further exacerbates Marc's anxiety over his mental illness.

In the trailer, set to Kid Cudi's 'Day an' Night', Marc can't tell the difference between his normal life and his dreams. He plays with a Rubik's cube, unable to fall asleep, only to jump out of bed in a panic with his foot chained to his bed, though he seemingly forgets he was the one who restrained himself the night before. After visiting a museum on ancient Egypt, he sees a vision of Khonshu and later meets Ethan Hawke's villain, a cult leader who encourages Marc to embrace the darkness within himself. The trailer ends with Marc being enveloped by the Moon Knight costume and a shot of him brutally beating someone up on a bathroom floor.

ANDREW GARFIELD REVEALS EMMA STONE'S REACTION AFTER HE LIED ABOUT 'SPIDER-MAN' RETURN

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Andrew Garfield, who dated Emma Stone after they met on the sets of 'The Amazing Spider-Man', has shared the reaction the actress had after he lied about his return as the superhero in 'Spider-Man: No Way Home'. The British actor revealed that Stone kept on texting him about whether the rumours of his involvement in the new film were true, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"Emma kept on texting me. She was like, 'Are you in this new Spider-Man film?'" he recalled.

"And I was like, 'I don't know what you're talking about'," the Golden Globe winner admitted.

He continued: "She was like, 'Shut up. Just tell me'. I'm like, 'I honestly don't know' - I kept it going, even with her."

After Stone watched 'No Way Home' and found out the truth, she was understandably upset with her former boyfriend.

Garfield shared: "And then she saw it. She was like, 'You're a jerk'."

He had numerous times denied that he would reprise his role as Spider-Man in 'No Way Home' before it hit theatres.

'Hotel Transylvania: Transformania': Hardly groundbreaking but a fun film

FILM REVIEW

BY TROY RIBEIRO

(Streaming on Amazon Prime)

Direction: Derek Drymon, Jennifer Kluska

Cast: Andy Samberg, Selena Gomez, Kathryn Hahn, Jim Gaffigan, Steve Buscemi, Molly Shannon, David Spade, Keegan-Michael Key, Brian Hull, Fran Drescher.

Duration: 88 minutes

Ratings: * (three stars)**

Like the earlier three films of the franchise, 'Hotel Transylvania: Transformania' too, is hardly groundbreaking, but with its kinetic sense of energy and heart in its right place, the film is fun to watch.

This edition too is about Dracula trying to keep a secret from his beloved daughter Mavis and for some reason or another, he has to dig himself out of trouble.

The film begins with Dracula (Brian Hull) celebrating his hotel's 125th anniversary. Now intending to settle down with his new love Ericka (Kathryn Hahn), he announces his retirement plans, that is, to hand over the hotel business to his beloved daughter Mavis (Selena Gomez) and her annoyingly over-enthusiastic human husband Johnny (Andy Samberg).

But as he reflects on his decision, he realises that he does not trust Johnny with the hotel for the monsters. So he decides that he can't relinquish the hotel, which he lovingly built and spent all these years running it, to his irritating "human" son-in-law.

When Johnny learns why Dracula will never accept him, he goes over to Professor Van Helsing, who has a magical gem-studded gun with a request to turn him into a Monster. Dracula too lands there at the same time, and in the ensuing chaos, Johnny is turned into an enormous dragon, and all the monsters, including Dracula, are turned into humans. Now with roles reversed, how they team up and race across the globe to restore normalcy in their lives forms the crux of this crazy tale.

Those familiar with the 'Hotel Transylvania' series will find the narrative a bit of a drab. Nevertheless, it is fun to watch Johnny gradually discover his monster powers and Dracula - his human limitations. Also, there are plenty of impressive gags to entertain and keep you glued to the screen.

In this edition, Brian Hull lends his voice to Dracula, and he does a fantastic job of it after replacing Adam Sandler, who had lent his voice for the same character previously.

Andy Samberg as Jonathan, Kevin James as the selfie-taking narcissist Frankenstein, David Spade as the naked Invisible Man, Selena Gomez as Mavis, and Kathryn Hahn as Ericka are all impressive with their stellar voices that match the characters to perfection.

Overall, 'Hotel Transylvania: Transformania' in its entirety is a feel-good film with its cartoony style and exaggerated elastic character animation.

BRADLEY COOPER FOUND 'NIGHTMARE ALLEY' NUDE SCENES DAUNTING

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Bradley Cooper confessed that it was "pretty heavy" filming full-frontal nude scenes in his new movie 'Nightmare Alley' by acclaimed filmmaker Guillermo del Toro.

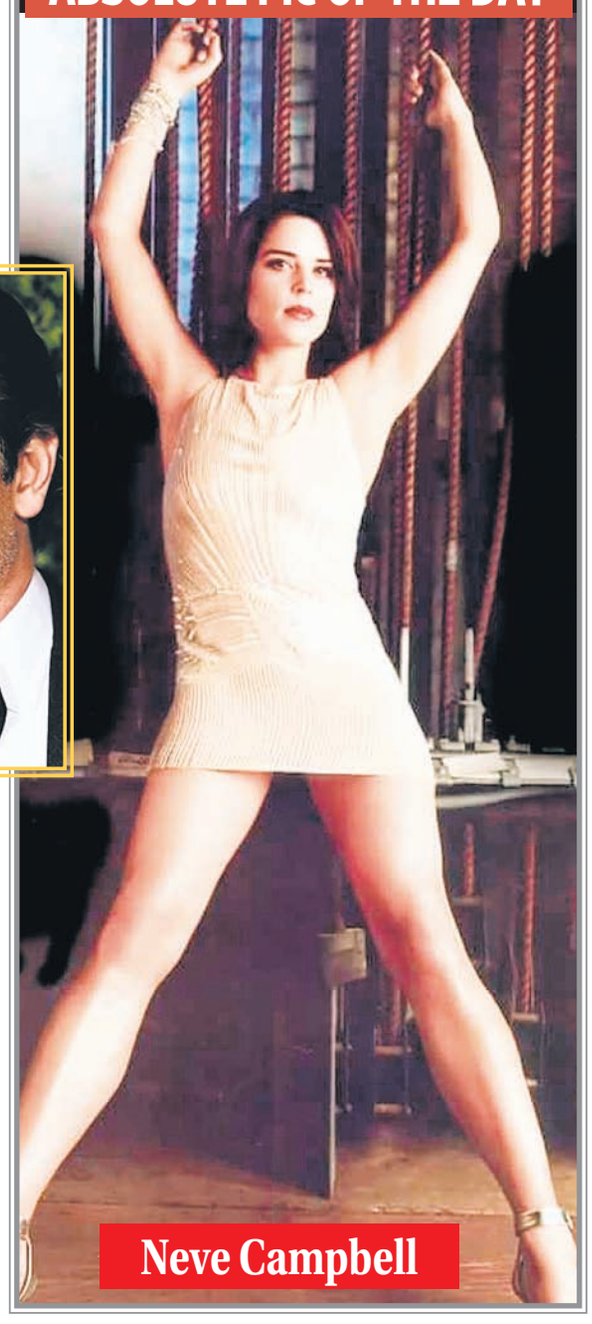
The 47-year-old actor stars in the film as an ambitious carnival worker and explained how he had to get his kit off on camera in an intimate scene with Toni Collette's character in a bathtub, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Cooper told 'The Business': "I remember reading in the script and thinking, he's a pickled punk in that bathtub and it's to story. You have to do it. I can still remember that day just to be naked in front of the crew for six hours, and it was Toni Collette's first day. It was just like, 'Whoa'. It was pretty heavy."

The Hollywood star had no qualms about appearing in the nude during the making of the movie as he felt it was "demanded" to make the project a success.

The 'A Star Is Born' actor said: "The content of what the movie is, what we were exploring, in order to do it in a real way, it demanded that we'd be naked emotionally and soulfully." Bradley also explained the process of delving deep to give the best possible performance in the flick.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Neve Campbell

KL RAHUL TO OPEN FOR INDIA IN SA ODIS IN ROHIT'S ABSENCE

Paarl | Agencies

Stand-in skipper KL Rahul on Tuesday confirmed that he will open the batting for India in the three-match ODI series against South Africa, starting here on Wednesday, in the absence of Rohit Sharma.

The 29-year old has batted for India in a number of different positions in the middle order with Rohit and Shikhar Dhawan opening the batting in the 50-over format. However, he has replaced Dhawan as India's regular opener in T20Is with the latter not being selected in the team for the shortest format of the game.

"The last 14-15 months I have batted at 4, 5, different positions, where the team needed me. With Rohit not being here, I will bat at the top," said Rahul in a pre-match virtual press conference.

"I'm not someone who has a lot of plans and targets. I like to take one game at a time. That's how I've played my cricket and that's how I'll look to lead the team," he added.

With Rahul opening the batting, it will be interesting to see whether India will go for Dhawan or Ruturaj Gaikwad as KL's opening partner in the series.

The star batter, who will also captain the side in the absence of white-ball skipper Rohit, said that he has learnt a lot while playing under great captains like MS Dhoni and Virat Kohli.

"I have played under great captains like MS Dhoni and Virat Kohli and hopefully I will use the learnings when I captain the team. I will make mistakes along the way but I will learn and get better," he said.

Unmukt Chand becomes first Indian male cricketer to play in BBL

Melbourne | Agencies

Former U-19 World Cup-winning captain Unmukt Chand on Tuesday became the first Indian male cricketer to play in Australia's Big Bash League (BBL).

The right-handed batter scripted history after making his debut for Melbourne Renegades against Hobart Hurricanes in match No 54 of the BBL at Docklands Stadium.

"The new colours suit you, @UnmuktChand9," Renegades tweeted along with the picture of the cricketer.

However, Chand didn't have a great outing with the bat as he was dismissed for six off eight balls by Sandeep Lamichhane in the 18th over and his team led by Aaron Finch lost the match as well. Notably, the 28-year-old had called time on his playing career in India last year and is plying his trade in different leagues across the globe. Chand represented three IPL franchises -- Delhi Daredevils, Mumbai Indians, and Rajasthan Royals. He had a domestic career spanning more than a decade, including 67 first-class matches but he never got an opportunity to play for the Indian senior team. The talented cricketer burst onto the international stage as a teenager in the 2012 ICC U-19 World Cup in Australia. He was the player of the match in the final, scoring an unbeaten 111 against an Australian side and guiding India to the title.

Spezia rally to stun AC Milan in Serie A amid controversy

Rome | Agencies

AC Milan squandered a one-goal lead to be upset by Spezia 2-1 in a controversial game at San Siro here. Milan had claimed three consecutive league wins before Monday's game, and a win would have lifted them to the top place. The home side was utterly dominant in the first half, as Rafael Leao was active and won a penalty in the 43rd minute for Milan, but Theo Hernandez scuffed it wide.

Leao kept wreaking havoc and finally found the back of the net on the stroke of half-time when Rade Krunic's long pass found the Portuguese, who outpaced the defender to loop over an on-rushing goalkeeper.

Spezia pulled back on level terms in the 63rd minute as Daniele Verde rolled across from the left and Kevin Agudelo tapped it in undisturbed. The game culminated in stoppages time, Milan's winger Junior Messias thought he had scored the winner, but the referee Marco Serra blew the whistle before the Brazilian hit the ball, instead he awarded Milan a free-kick following a foul on Ante Rebic. It sparked controversy as Milan players thought the referee should allow them to play with advantage, rather than halt the game, Xinhua reports. With Milan still smarting from the decision, Spezia scored the last-gasp winner in the dying seconds through a counter-attack, when Emmanuel Gyasi finished with a daisy-cutter from a close range. With the setback, AC Milan still sit second with 48 points, two behind Inter Milan who have a game in hand. Also on January 16, Napoli dominated Bologna 2-0 on Hirving Lozano's double; Fiorentina registered a comfortable 6-0 victory over relegation battlers Genoa who just sacked coach Andriy Shevchenko.

Hockey: World Cup qualification starts with Asia Cup, Pan Am Cups

Lausanne (Switzerland) | Agencies

The qualifying programme for the next men's and women's hockey World Cup championships will start this week with the Pan American Cups in Santiago, Chile, and the women's Asia Cup in Muscat, Oman.

First up will be the Pan American Cups for men and women in Santiago starting on Wednesday which will decide two places for the men's world cup to be held in January 2023 and three places for the women's edition to be held in June 2022. At Santiago, the top two teams in the men's hockey World Cup championships will start this week with the Pan American Cups in Sants competition and the top three in the women's event will qualify for the next blue riband event in international hockey -- the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup in Spain and the Netherlands 2022 and the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup, Bhubaneswar and Rourkela 2023.

The stakes are also high for the competing teams in Muscat, which has stepped in as host after the event was moved from Bangkok, Thailand last month, with the event starting on Friday (January 21). Four teams from the Asia Cup will qualify for the 2022 Women's FIH Hockey World Cup.

Eight teams, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand are in the fray in Muscat.

India, the Tokyo Olympic Games semi-finalists, will be favourites to clinch one of the four World Cup spots from the Asia Cup with Japan, South Korea, and China, and Malaysia fighting for the remaining three.

In the men's hockey World Cup championships will start this week with the Pan American Cups in Sants competition at the Pan American Cups, reigning champions Argentina (FIH World Ranking: 7) will face some stiff competition from Canada (WR: 11), who will be looking to build on the experiences gained at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. They will also find Chile (WR: 29) eager to repeat the feat their junior national side achieved at the Junior Pan American Championships when they won the competition and became the first team to beat Argentina in the process.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

MUGURUZA, SWIATEK ADVANCE WITH FIRST-ROUND WINS

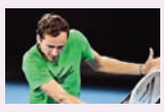
Melbourne | Agencies

Former Australian Open finalist Garbine Muguruza of Spain made a winning return to the Rod Laver Arena, defeating France's Clara Burel 6-3, 6-4, before Poland's Iga Swiatek followed suit, beating British qualifier Harriet Dart 6-3, 6-0 on Day 2 at the Melbourne Park on Tuesday.

No.3 seed Muguruza was pushed over the course of the gripping contest by the 20-year-old world No.77 Burel, but what differentiated the winner from the loser was the quality of serve -- Burel hit 12 double faults and landed just 41 per cent of her first serves, giving Muguruza ample opportunities on return. Muguruza broke five times, and won seven of eight games from 3-3 in the first set to take a commanding lead at 6-3, 4-1. Muguruza will next face Frenchwoman Alize Cornet.

Adelaide finalist and No.12 seed Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan had a tough time against compatriot Zarina Diyas in their first career meeting before winning 6-7(3), 7-6(3), 6-1 win. Samantha Stosur of Australia rallied for a first win in the final singles tournament of her career, moving on to face No.10 seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia. She defeated American Robin Anderson 6-7(5), 6-3, 6-3 in her first-round match.

MEDVEDEV RUTHLESS IN OPENING GAME, RUBLEV ALSO BEGINS IN STYLE



World No.2 tennis player, Daniil Medvedev of Russia, was ruthless in his decimation of Henri Laaksonen, defeating the Swiss player 6-1, 6-4, 7-6(3) in his opening match of the Australian Open at the Rod Laver Arena on Tuesday. With a 13-1 record across the Australian Open and US Open in 2021, the Russian dropped just three sets in those 13 victories, and would be looking for a second consecutive Grand Slam after his triumph at the Flushing Meadows. World No. 6 and four-time Grand Slam quarterfinalist Andrey Rublev of Russia also began his march towards another Grand Slam second week with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 win over Italy's Gianluca Mager in his 2022 debut.

SYED MODI INTERNATIONAL

HS Prannoy advances to second round

Lucknow | Agencies

Ace Indian shuttler HS Prannoy advanced to the second round of the men's singles event in the Syed Modi International 2022 badminton tournament at the Babu Banarasi Das Indoor Stadium, here on Tuesday.

Prannoy, the world No 24, outclassed Danylo Bosniuk of Ukraine 21-14, 21-18 in a 36-minute clash. The Asian Championships bronze medallist will now face 19-year-old Priyanshu Rajawat in the Round of 16.

Meanwhile, siblings Sameer Verma and Sourabh Verma, couldn't get past the first round.

Seeded fourth, Sameer retired after just four minutes into his match against I'eland's Nhat Nguyen while older brother Sourabh, seeded seventh, lost to Azer'aijan's Ade Resky Dwicahyo 21-15, 19-21, 18-21 in a close 67-minute contest.

In women's singles, Aakarshi Kashyap also advanced to the next round after beating compatriot Mugdha Agrey 21-13, 21-14 in 39 minutes. Aakarshi, who made the India Open semis, is slated to face fellow youngster Malvika Bansod in the quarters.

UNDER-19 CWC

West Indies thrash Scotland by seven wickets

Basseterre (Saint Kitts & Nevis) | Agencies

Hosts West Indies recovered from their opening day defeat to Australia to beat Scotland U19 by seven wickets in the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup here on Monday. The West Indies U19 won the toss and asked the Scots to bat first. West Indies U19 bowled out Scotland for a paltry 95 in 35.1 overs with pacer Shiva Sankar claiming three wickets for 17 runs and Onaje Amory (2/26) and Anderson Mahase (2/16) claiming a brace each. In response, West Indies U19s chased down the target to reach 96/3 in 19.4 overs to register a big win. Opener Shaqkere Parris was the highest scorer with 26 runs (3x4, 1x6) while Teddy Bishop contributed an unbeaten 23 (2x4, 1x6) as West Indies U19s romped home with a lot to spare. West Indies U19 will now face Sri Lanka U19s in their next match on January 21.

Brief scores

Australia 175 in 50 overs (Campbell Kellaway 54; Dunith Wellalage 5/28, Treveen Mathew 2/32) lost to **Sri Lanka** 177/6 in 37 overs (Dunith Wellalage 52, Anjala Bandara 33; Joshua Garner 2/21) by four wickets.

Scotland U19s 95 all out in 35.1 overs (Oliver Davidson 43; Shiva Sankar 3/17) lost to **West Indies** 96/2 in 19.4 overs (Shaqkere Parris 26; Oliver Davidson 1/10).

WELLALAGE SLAMS FIFTY WITH FIFER,SRI LANKA BEAT AUSTRALIA

Basseterre (St Kitts): Aided by a patient half-century and a five-wicket haul from skipper Dunith Wellalage, Sri Lanka defeated Australia by four wickets in a Group D match of the Under-19 ICC Cricket World Cup here at the Conaree Sports Club on Tuesday (IST). Wellalage first took five wickets for just 28 runs in his 10 overs and then returned when the chips were down to score a 71-ball 52 to keep Sri Lanka's winning record intact in the tournament. Sri Lanka are leading Group D with four points from two games, while host West Indies are second due to better net run rate (NRR) after a loss and a win.

IPL: Lucknow all set to pick Rahul, Stoinis and Bishnoi ahead of mega-auction

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Stylish opener KL Rahul, Australian allrounder Marcus Stoinis and uncapped Indian leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi are all set to be picked by the Lucknow IPL franchise via draft ahead of the mega auction, scheduled for February 12 and 13 in Bangalore.

Rahul, who will lead India in the ODI series in South Africa, in all likelihood will also captain the Lucknow, which was bought for Rs 7,090 crore (USD 940 million approx.) last October by the RP Sanjiv Goenka Group.

The franchise will go into the auction with a purse of Rs 60 crore -- Rahul cost them Rs 15 crore, Stoinis Rs 11 crore, and Bishnoi Rs 4 crore, an EspnCricinfo report said,

The 29-year-old has been one of the most consistent batters in the IPL since the 2018. The opener led Punjab Kings in the last two seasons but he wanted a change and was subsequently released by the management.

After starting his IPL career in 2013 when Rahul was bought by Royal Challengers Bangalore, he went to Sunrisers Hyderabad in 2014, and was traded back to Royal Challengers in 2016 before the Punjab franchise (then Kings XI Punjab) paid Rs 11 crore to buy him in the 2018 auction.

While the Punjab team didn't perform as per the expectations under his leadership, Rahul had a great outing with the bat. He scored 2,548 runs at an average of 56.62 including 25 fifty-plus scores -- two of them hundreds -- in 55 innings in four IPL seasons with Punjab. However, his strike rate was a point of discussion.

Meanwhile, Lucknow will be the fourth IPL franchise for Stoinis. The Australian had started his IPL journey in 2015 with Delhi Daredevils (now Delhi Capitals), where he returned in 2020 after being bought for INR 4.8 crore.

In the 27 matches he has played for the Capitals, 32-year-old Stoinis scored 441 runs at a strike rate of 142.71 and picked 15 wickets. In between, the all-rounder had also turned out for Punjab Kings and Royal Challengers Bangalore.

On the other hand, Bishnoi, impressed with his performance in the 2020 Under-19 World Cup in South Africa, where he finished as the leading wicket-taker. He was picked by Punjab in the 2020 auction for Rs 2 crore.

With his brilliant performance, the spinner quickly became the lead spinner for Punjab, and took 12 wickets in 14 matches in his first season, and in 2021, he had 12 wickets from nine matches. Overall, he has an economy rate of 6.95.

In another IPL development, the other new franchise -- Ahmedabad are all set to pick Hardik Pandya, Rashid Khan and Shubman Gill.

With both the new teams finalising their players, the cap set by the IPL, the focus will be on the auction, which is scheduled for February 12 and 13 in Bengaluru.

LIN LAISHRAM THANKS PRIYANKA CHOPRA FOR ACKNOWLEDGING LACK OF DIVERSITY IN 'MARY KOM'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Lin Laishram, who impressed audiences with her performance in the movie 'Axone', has praised Priyanka Chopra Jonas for acknowledging lack of diverse casting in her 2014 film 'Mary Kom'.In response to a question, Priyanka completely agreed and commented that someone from the northeast should have played Mary Kom: "I look nothing like her," she had said.This acknowledgement was received as a welcome gesture from Priyanka which was then openly appreciated by Lin who had the same point of view on it.We got an opportunity to speak with Lin on it where she said: "It's really gracious and brave of Priyanka to finally accept this and put it out there. My admiration for her has only grown immensely. Inclusivity I feel is very hard to understand unless you are excluded."With OTT gaining prominence, it seems that merit and authenticity are slowly getting the due importance that they deserve. I'm very thankful for this welcome change and looking forward to good work coming our way."Lin is an international model and actress who hails from Manipur.

'Mary Kom' that was helmed by Omung Kumar, is based on the life of the eponymous boxer from Manipur who won several honours for the country.

Ranveer Singh: As a creative person, I would like to believe that I have no limits

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Ranveer Singh, who was most recently seen in cricket drama '83', refuses to be put in a box creatively.

The 'Bajirao Mastani' actor likes to be limitless and explore his craft in his constant pursuit for artistic excellence.

Ranveer reveals, "My constant endeavour is such that you cannot put me in a box. You can't define me. I don't wish to be defined because I feel defining something by its fundamental nature would be limiting me. As a creative person I would like to believe that I have no limits. That I the possibilities within my craft are limitless, that they be infinite."

The actor adds that there's no end to how many characters he could play for the screen, "There is no end to how much I can explore and how many different people I can become. I hope I continue that and if I keep doing the same thing, then I am stagnating. I should probably take a sabbatical, gather more life experiences, put more different characters into my jholi and then come back to work."

On the work front, he has a string of upcoming releases including YRF's 'Jayeshbhai Jordaar', filmmaker Shankar's remake of his blockbuster 'Anniyan', Rohit Shetty's 'Cirkus' and Karan Johar's 'Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahan'.

'BIGG BOSS 15'

JOY FOR KARAN, TEJASSWI AS FAMILIES APPROVE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP

Team Absolute | Mumbai

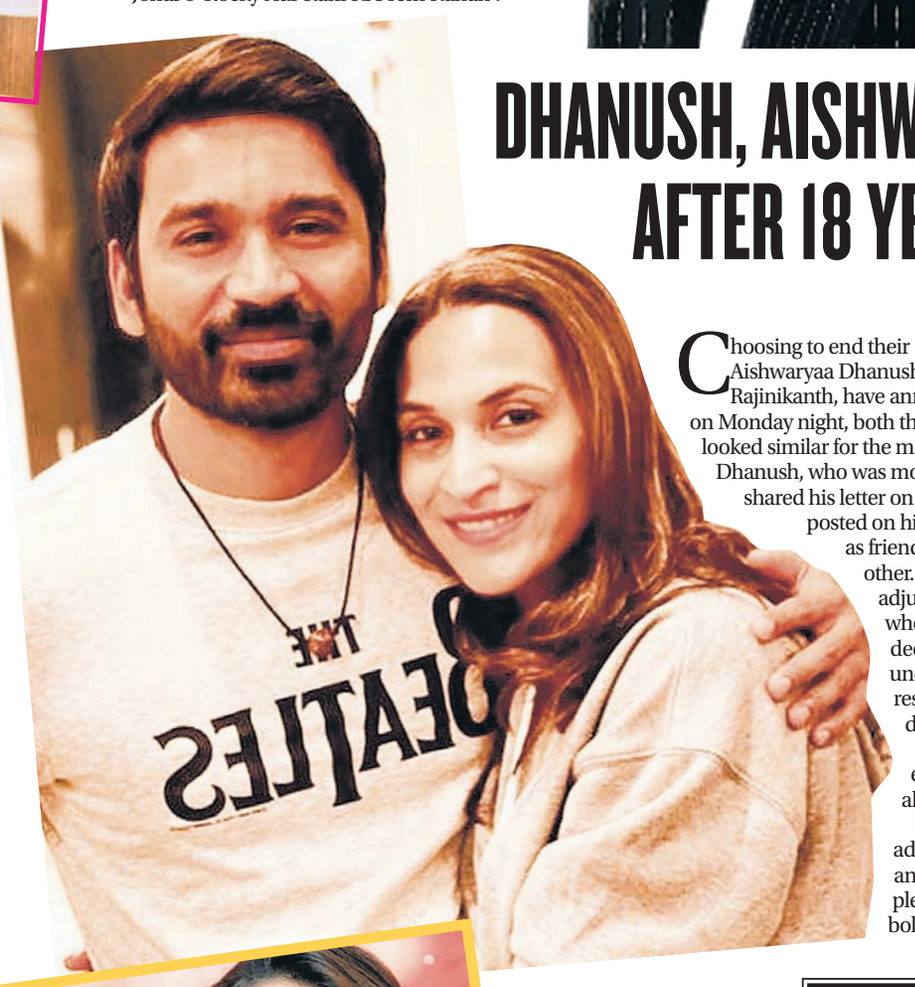
The upcoming episode of 'Bigg Boss 15' is going to be an emotional rollercoaster for the housemates especially Tejasswi Prakash and Karan Kundrra as their families approve of their relationship over a video call.

Karan introduces Tejasswi to his parents and asks them about their views. They say she is the heart of our family and hearing this Karan tells Tejasswi: "They never said anything like this to any girl." Tejasswi is seen blushing.

Tejasswi's brother over video calls informs her that even their mother likes Karan. He says: "Karan now she is your responsibility."

Meanwhile, Rakhi Sawant also gets emotional looking at her mother after a long time. Rakhi breaks down, seeing her beloved mother, over the call. Rakhi's mother, who has been battling health issues, gives a health update to Rakhi in a very entertaining way, saying: "See I am completely fine." 'Bigg Boss 15' airs on Colors.

DHANUSH, AISHWARYAA PART WAYS AFTER 18 YEARS OF MARRIAGE



Chennai | Agencies

Choosing to end their 18-year-long marriage, actor Dhanush and director Aishwaryaa Dhanush, who also happens to be the daughter of superstar Rajinikanth, have announced that they have decided to part ways. Late on Monday night, both the actor and the director put out a letter, which looked similar for the most part, on their respective social media handles. Dhanush, who was most recently seen with Sara Ali Khan in 'Atrangi Re', shared his letter on Twitter, Aishwarya chose Instagram. In the letter posted on his timeline, Dhanush said, "18 years of togetherness as friends, couple, as parents and well-wishers to each other. The journey has been of growth, understanding, adjusting and adapting. "Today, we stand at a place where our paths separate. "Aishwaryaa and I have decided to part ways as a couple and take time to understand us as individuals for the better. Please do respect our decision and give us the needed privacy to deal with this. Om Namah Shivaaya! Spread love!"

Aishwaryaa's letter read pretty much the same except for the last line in which she said: "Much love always to you all! Godspeed."

On Instagram, while posting the letter, Aishwaryaa added: "No caption needed. Only your understanding and your love are necessary!" The decision of the couple, who have two sons, Yatra and Linga, comes as a bolt from the blue to the film industry.

Rumours erupt after Chiranjeevi's daughter drops husband's name

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Telugu Mega Star Chiranjeevi's youngest daughter and actor Ram Charan's sister Sreeja has dropped her actor-husband Kalyan's name from her social media handles amid rumours that their marriage is on the rocks.

Her unilateral action has triggered speculation about the couple's impending separation. Sreeja changed her Instagram handle name to Sreeja Konidela from Sreeja Kalyan.

Ever since Sreeja started using Instagram, her display name has been Sreeja Kalyan up until a couple of days ago.Samantha Ruth Prabhu, who got separated from Telugu actor Naga Chaitanya, also had taken down her then surname -- Akkineni -- much before their divorce announcement.Industry watchers believe that Sreeja's action could be an indication that her divorce formalities have been initiated.

For a while now, there have been rumours that all is not well between Sreeja and her husband Kalyaan Dhev.No one from Chiranjeevi's family was seen promoting Kalyan Dhev's recent movie 'Super Machi', which only added fuel to the fire of the speculation surrounding the couple's marriage.There has been no official confirmation regarding the split. Sreeja and Kalyan Dhev were married in March 2016. The couple was blessed with a daughter in 2018.

Before Kalyan Dhev, Sreeja was married to Sirish Bharadwaj, through whom she had her elder daughter. Their relationship ended in 2011 after Sreeja filed a harassment case against him.

TANZANIAN SOCIAL MEDIA STAR KILI PAUL DANCES ON SAMANTHA'S 'OO ANTAVA'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Popular Tanzanian content creator Kili Paul has shared a video of her shaking a leg on south star Samantha Ruth Prabhu's popular track 'Oo Antava' from the recent hit 'Pushpa: The Rise'.

Kili posted a video on Instagram dancing on the track dressed in a traditional Masaai ensemble.

He captioned the video, which currently has 153,000 likes on the photo-sharing website: 'Oh antava mama pushpa songs are (fire emoji) @alluarjunonline @rashmika_mandanna @thisisdsp@adityamusicindia " This is not the first time Kili Paul has grooved on an Indian number. Previously Bollywood actress Kiara Advani shared a video of the content creator lip-syncing the track 'Raataan Lambiyaan' from her film 'Shershaah'.

'Pushpa: The Rise' also stars Rashmika Mandanna and is directed by Sukumar.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Kriti Sanon

Owned, Published and Printed by Yogenra Chaturvedi at Indian Express, A-8, Sector-7, Noida (UP) and Published from 23, Hanuman Road, Cannaught Place, New Delhi-110001 Editor- Yogendra Chaturvedi, (responsible for selection of news under PRB ACT). RNI Code DELENG/2017/19576, Phone No. 011-23346744, www.absoluteindianews.com,E-mail: absoluteindiadesk@gmail.com (Bhopal will be the jurisdiction of any dispute.)