

absolute india

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OVER 25000 PEOPLE DIED DUE TO FINANCIAL CRISES IN THREE YEARS



▶ THE NUMBERS ALSO COME ON A DAY WHEN THE FACEBOOK LIVE VIDEO OF A TRADER IN UTTAR PRADESH WENT VIRAL, A DAY AFTER HE TOOK POISON ALONG WITH HIS WIFE, BLAMING HEAVY LOSSES AND PM MODI'S ECONOMIC POLICIES LIKE THE GOODS AND SERVICES TAX OR GST.

▶ FOLLOWING THE DISTURBING INCIDENT JUST AHEAD OF POLLS IN THE STATE, RAJIV TOMAR, A SHOE TRADER IN BAGPAT - ONE OF THE TOWNS VOTING TOMORROW - IS CRITICAL BUT HIS WIFE DIED.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

More than 8,000 people died by suicide because of financial crises in 2020 when the first wave of COVID-19 and an abrupt lockdown left many jobless and hit incomes for months, the government said on Wednesday, in the first such acknowledgement of its kind. "As many as 8,761 people committed suicide due to unemployment, bankruptcy or indebtedness in the year 2020," Minister of State of Home Affairs Nityanand Rai informed the Rajya Sabha. The Home Ministry also said that in the three years between 2018 and 2020, as many as 25,251 lost their lives because of financial

crises.

The data assumes significance given that in 2020, the government had told parliament that there was no record of deaths of migrant workers so the "question does not arise" of compensation. Back then, the government's written response to a question on whether families of those who had lost their lives while trying to reach home in the coronavirus lockdown had been compensated had triggered anger and criticism from the opposition. However, the ministry had admitted that more than 1 crore migrants made their way back to their home states from various corners of the country in the weeks following the sudden lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in

March without giving them time to prepare. Along with the data on suicides, the government listed the steps being taken to counter growing mental disorders: "The government is implementing the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) and is supporting the implementation of the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP)." The programme aims to provide suicide prevention services, workplace stress management, life-skills training and counselling in schools and colleges, minister Rai added. He also said that to deal with unemployment, the government has also launched several programmes to encourage job creation and social security benefits.

HIJAB ROW: KARNATAKA HC REFERS CASE TO LARGER BENCH

The volatile situation in Karnataka is likely to continue. Considering the seriousness of the situation and to prevent the confrontation in the capital city, Bengaluru Police Commissioner Kamal Pant has clamped prohibitory orders for two weeks from February 9 to 22. Any gathering, protest or agitation of any kind within the radius of 200 meters from the school premises, PU colleges, Degree colleges or other similar education institutes in Bengaluru city, will not be allowed, the order says.

Bengaluru | Agencies

Amid continuing tensions over wearing of hijab by a section of students in the state, a single-judge bench of the Karnataka High Court, hearing petitions in the matter, on Wednesday referred the case to a larger bench. The decision on interim order regarding uniform and wearing of hijab shall also be taken by the Chief Justice, he added. "There are questions related to the Constitution, there are aspects related to personal laws. Half a dozen court verdicts have been discussed. I have verified more than 12 orders in this regard. There are arguments and counter-arguments related to the case. Let the Chief Justice decide on handing over the matter to an extended bench," Justice Krishna S. Dixit said. Soon after the hearing resumed, the bench told the petitioners that if they agree, the matter would be handed over to the extended bench. However, counsel for the students requested the bench to give interim order as only two months are left for this academic year. They sought an order on Wednesday only so that students could go to colleges. Advocate General Prabhuling Navadagi, appearing for the government, submitted that everyone is looking forward to the court's ruling. He also prayed against an interim order as it would amount to acceptance of the petition submitted.

WILL ABIDE BY COURT ORDER, SAYS STUDENT WHO SHOUTED 'ALLAH-HU-AKBAR'

Mandya: The burka-clad student Muskaan Khan, who faced the wrath of the crowd raising slogans of "Jai Sri Ram" on a college premises, on Wednesday that she will abide by the court order regarding the wearing of hijab. While interacting with reporters, Muskaan, the student of PES College of Arts, Science and Commerce in Mandya district said that she had been to the college to submit an assignment to the department. "I was not scared. I responded with "Allah-hu-Akbar" slogans without fear. Nothing wrong in the crowd raising 'Jai Sri Ram' slogans and me saying 'Allah-hu-Akbar' slogans. I am waiting for the court order and abiding by the order," she said.

'CONG WILL MAKE HIJAB COMPULSORY FOR HINDUS'

"If Congress comes to power, the leaders of Congress will make wearing of hijab compulsory for Hindus. The Congress should come out of communal mindset." V. Sunil Kumar, Minister for Power and Culture, Karnataka



ONE DAY WE WILL HOIST SAFFRON FLAG ATOP RED FORT: K'TAKA MINISTER

Bengaluru: Karnataka Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, K.S. Eshwarappa on Wednesday said that a day will come when saffron flag will be hoisted atop the Red Fort. Speaking to reporters Eshwarappa said that the saffron flag might become the national flag of our nation. "We will hoist the saffron flag on any flag post. Those who have sense must respect it. Earlier, people used to laugh when we said a Shri Ram temple would be built in Ayodhya, haven't we built the temple at Ayodhya now?" Eshwarappa questioned. "We will hoist the saffron flag at any given place in the world. It is our wish to be cladding in saffron shawls," he said.

PAK FM JUMPS INTO INDIA'S HIJAB ROW

"Depriving Muslim girls of an education is a grave violation of fundamental human rights. To deny anyone this fundamental right & terrorise them for wearing a hijab is absolutely oppressive. World must realise this is part of the Indian state plan of ghettoisation of Muslims", he said in a tweet.

WOMEN HAS RIGHT TO DECIDE WHAT SHE WANTS TO WEAR: PRIYANKA GANDHI

"Whether it is a bikini, a ghoonghat, a pair of jeans or a hijab, it is a woman's right to decide what she wants to wear. This right is GUARANTEED by the Indian constitution. Stop harassing women." #Iadkihoonladsakti-hoon

Omicron BA.2 subvariant likely to spread globally: WHO

According to Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's Covid-19 technical lead, the BA.2 subvariant, which is more contagious than the currently dominant BA.1 version, will likely become more common, CNBC reported.

Geneva | Agencies

The BA.2 subvariant of Omicron is likely to spread globally, however it remains unclear whether it will cause reinfection among those infected with the original Omicron strain, according to the World Health Organisation. "BA.2 is more transmissible than BA.1 so we expect to see BA.2 increasing in detection around the world," Van Kerkhove said during a question and answer session live streamed on WHO's social media platforms Tuesday. The WHO is monitoring BA.2 to see if the subvariant causes an increase of new infections in countries that saw a rapid increase and then a sharp decline in omi-



cron cases, Van Kerkhove said. While research is still ongoing, there's no indication of a difference in the severity of infections caused by either subvariant, she added. Although Omicron spreads faster, it is known to cause mild infections than the Alpha and Delta variants. Researchers in Denmark have found that BA.2 is about 1.5 times more transmissible than BA.1 and it is more adept at infecting people who are vaccinated and even boosted. However, people who are fully vaccinated are less likely to spread it than the unvaccinated.

ABHORRENT NATURE OF CRIME CAN'T BE BASIS FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT: SC



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday commuted the death sentence of a man, convicted for raping and killing a seven-year-old girl, to life imprisonment, contending that the abhorrent nature of crime alone cannot be the decisive factor for handing down capital punishment.

A bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar, Dinesh Maheshwari and C.T. Ravikumar said: "It would have been immensely useful and pertinent if the High Court, while taking up the question of confirmation of death sentence and making several comments in regard to the abhorrent nature of crime and its repulsive impact on society, would have also given due consideration to the equally relevant aspect pertaining to mitigating factors before arriving at a conclusion that option of any other punishment than the capital one was foreclosed." The bench noted that the accused committed brutal rape and murder of a minor, but at the same time, it is noticeable he has no criminal antecedents, comes from a very poor socio-economic background, has a family comprising of wife, children and aged father, and has unblemished jail conduct.

INDIA REJECTS PAK-CHINA JOINT STATEMENT ON J&K, CPEC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India on Wednesday strongly objected to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is proposed in the illegally occupied parts of Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian government also rejected the reference of Kashmir in the joint statement released by Pakistan and China. "We have noted references to Jammu & Kashmir and the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in the joint statement between China and Pakistan issued on February 6, 2022. We have always rejected such references and our position is well known to China and Pakistan. In this instance too, we reject reference to Jammu & Kashmir in the joint statement. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the Union Territory of Ladakh have been, are and will always remain integral and inalienable parts of India. We expect the parties concerned not to interfere in matters that are internal affairs of India", said MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi.



EVEREST GLACIERS LOSING ICE, THINNING AT ALARMING RATE

▶ SOUTH COL GLACIER LIES ON THE MAIN CLIMBING ROUTE OF MOUNT EVEREST ON ITS SOUTHERN RIDGES. AT A MEAN ELEVATION OF 7,985 MASL, THIS RELATIVELY SMALL GLACIER IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE HIGHEST GLACIER IN THE WORLD. THE SURFACE OF THE GLACIER IS MAINLY BARE ICE, APART FROM SEASONAL SNOW AND A PERENNIAL SNOW APRON ALONG THE SIDES OF MOUNT EVEREST, WHICH COMPRISE THE UPPER REACHES OF THIS SOUTHERLY ORIENTED GLACIER.

▶ SOUTH COL GLACIER LIES AT ONE OF THE SUNNIEST SPOTS IN THE WORLD. MELTING HERE CAN BE UP TO 20 TIMES FASTER WHEN SNOW COVER DISAPPEARS, AND THE BARE GLACIER ICE IS EXPOSED. THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR GLACIERS LIKE THIS ONE THAT GET VERY LITTLE SNOWFALL.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With estimated thinning rates of nearly two metre per year, glaciers on the Mount Everest such as South Col Glacier, which is located at the highest point in the world, the ice on Mount Everest has been thinning at an alarming rate, a latest study has found. The Mount Everest region has indeed been losing ice significantly since the late 1990s, it was revealed in an article published in the Nature Portfolio journal 'Climate and Atmospheric Research'.

Himalayas are called the third pole as it is the repository of highest volume of ice outside the two poles. The Everest Expedition, the single most comprehensive scientific expedition to Everest, conducted trailblazing research on glaciers and the alpine environment. The multidisciplinary team comprised scientists from eight countries, including 17 Nepali researchers. Based in Kathmandu, Nepal, ICIMOD is a regional intergovernmental learning and knowledge sharing centre for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and

Pakistan. The findings are based on data from a 10-metre-long ice core obtained from South Col Glacier at an elevation of 8,020 metres above sea level (masl), as well as meteorological observations from the two highest automatic weather stations in the world located on the southern slopes of Mount Everest at 7,945 masl and 8,430 masl. With estimated thinning rates of nearly 2 m per year even glaciers such as South Col Glacier, which is located at the highest point in the world, may vanish by mid-century.

Glaciers in the Himalayas make a significant contribution to water resources for millions of people. Most previous studies have focused on glaciers at lower altitudes that are easier to access. These show a strong trend of shrinking, with an accelerating rate in recent years. Earlier work on high altitude glaciers has relied on satellite measurements. However, with the information we now have from the weather stations and the ice core, it is clear that even the highest glaciers are melting rapidly and at an accelerating rate. These changes will have tremendous consequences on people's livelihoods and wellbeing.



CAQM DIRECTS INDUSTRIES IN NCR TO SWITCH TO CLEANER FUELS BY SEPT 30

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) on Wednesday directed the industries located in the NCR districts of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan to switch to PNG or Biomass Fuel by September 30. "These are those industries which, despite the availability of natural gas infrastructure and supply, have still not shifted to PNG/cleaner fuels," a release from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) said.

As per the Commission's directions, industries located in the NCR districts of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan shall completely switch over to PNG or biomass fuels, by September 30, 2022.

"Non-switchover shall result in closure of industries using other fuels," the release said, and added, "Till such time the transition to fuels as above is effected, such industries shall use only fuels as approved by the respec-



pective state governments for industrial operations."

Industries in the jurisdiction of Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) have already shifted to cleaner fuel, mainly PNG. "The emissions from industries using polluting fuels like coal, diesel, etc., create an adverse impact on air quality in the NCR and shifting of industries to PNG/cleaner fuels has

always been a priority for CAQM. Apart from that, open burning of biomass is also one of the major causes for air pollution in NCR. Through enhanced usage of biomass as fuel in industrial operations in the NCR, the Commission is primarily focused on controlling the issue of biomass burning. This will not only help in minimising the usage of polluting fuel in NCR industries but also enhance

farmers' earnings, while ensuring proper utilisation of biomass," it said. All industries in the NCR running on coal if shifted to PNG or biomass fuels, in conjunction with Air Pollution Control Devices (APCD), it would result in a remarkable decline in biomass burning across different regions of NCR and adjoining areas, thereby improving the air quality, the CAQM claimed.

Man held at Chandigarh Airport with gold worth Rs 13 cr

CHANDIGARH | Agencies

The Ludhiana Customs officials intercepted a passenger at Chandigarh Airport and recovered 18 gold biscuits worth Rs 1.3 crore from his possession.

A senior Customs official said that the passenger came to Chandigarh via Air India Flight from Sharjah on Tuesday.

"His bag was searched by us and we recovered 18 gold biscuits weighing 2,100 gm worth Rs 1.3 crore from him. He failed to give any satisfactory answer to us. He also failed to produce any documents in this respect," said the customs official.

The official said that the recovered gold was seized under Section 110 of the customs Act. The passenger was then placed under arrest in terms of Section 104 of the Customs Act.

He was taken to a nearby government hospital where



he was made to undergo a medical test. His Covid report was taken which was negative. After this he was produced before a court.

The customs official told the court that he was not required for further interro-

gation after which the court remanded the accused to fourteen days judicial custody.

The customs official said that further investigation in the matter was underway.

Covid: Over 1 crore adolescents in 15-18 year group fully vaccinated

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Over one crore teenagers in 15-18 year age group have been fully vaccinated with both doses of vaccines in India. According to the CoWIN portal, over 6.12 crore beneficiaries in the age group have been administered the first dose of vaccine.

"What a historic feat by Young India! Over 1 crore youngsters between 15-18 age group are now fully vaccinated against Covid-19," said Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya in a tweet on Wednesday. The estimated population of beneficiaries in the age group of 15-18 years is 7.4 crore for 2021-22.

Meanwhile, Health Minister told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday that about 67 per cent in the age group of 15-18 years have been vaccinated so far.

"The vaccination drive is being implemented in a speedy manner. The future decision will be taken based on the expert group's suggestion," Mandaviya has said on Tuesday. He also said that the current surge of Covid-19 cases in the country is showing a sus-



tained declining trends.

With the administration of more than 53.61 lakh vaccine doses in a span of 24 hours, India's Covid-19 vaccination coverage has exceeded 170.87 crore, according to provisional reports of Health Ministry on Wednesday morning.

Meanwhile, India on Wednesday reported 71,365 fresh Covid infection, a rise of around 6 per cent against 67,597 Covid cases reported on previous day. In the time span of 24 hour, total 1,217 deaths were also reported, taking the death toll to 5,05,279

'Extend full cooperation to CBI': SC grants pre-arrest bail to Mamata poll agent

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted pre-arrest bail to S.K. Supiyon, the election agent of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in a murder case probed by the CBI, directing him to fully cooperate with the investigating agency.

A bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Abhay S. Oka said: "Considering the peculiar facts of the case, we are of the view that the appellant deserves to be granted pre-arrest bail. However, the appellant will have to fully cooperate with the respondent-CBI for investigation and will have to remain present for investigation as and when called upon by the investigating officer."

The bench noted that two chargesheets - one on October 5, 2022 and the other on January 9,



2022 - have been filed but Supiyon has not been named as an accused. It further added that the CBI is relying upon statements of 5 witnesses recorded under Section 164 of CrPC.

"The statements of the first two witnesses were recorded on September 7, 2021 and November 11, 2021 respectively. But the appellant was not named in both the charge sheets filed thereafter," said the bench.

The bench added that statement of Manoj Kumar Bera was recorded on November 18 2021, but he was not cited as a witness in the first two charge sheets and the statements of the other two witnesses have been belatedly recorded on January 24, 2022.

Senior advocates Kapil Sibal, representing Supiyon, had casted doubt on Bera's statement and claimed that the CBI tried to implicate his client for political reasons, as he was the election agent of West Bengal Chief Minister. He submitted that most of the witnesses are workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party and for obvious political reasons, and his client has been falsely implicated.

The CBI had pressed for custodial interrogation of Supiyon and relied on statements of the witnesses recorded under Section 164 of CrPC.

TWO MEMBERS OF 'SEXTORTIONIST' GANG ARRESTED

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Crime Branch of Delhi Police on Wednesday said it has arrested two key members of a 'sextortionist' gang for allegedly cheating and extorting money from over 200 people.

The arrested individuals -- Samaydeen and Munfed, were carrying a reward of Rs 10,000. They were arrested from Rajasthan following a tip-off.

Four members of the gang had earlier been arrested by the Crime Branch.

A senior police officer said one gang member -- Nakhruddin, 42, was arrested in August last year. Later, during the investigation, three more persons -- Jahid, Nishat and Aditya were held.

All the four criminal gang members had disclosed that the main leaders of the gang were Samaydeen



and Munfed. The gang had cheated/extorted money from more than 200 people.

"At least 14 bank accounts used by the gang have been identified. Money transaction traced in the Bank Accounts is more than Rs 22 lakh. Despite efforts, both these individuals had managed to evade arrest till

now," said a senior police officer. He said the accused individuals had prepared fake profiles with fake names along with photographs of attractive women on various social media apps, and sent friend request to the prospective 'victims'. After befriending them, they shared their WhatsApp number and

began sending sexually explicit messages.

"After trapping them through 'sexting', the accused would also record video calls by showing them a girl taking off her clothes. Most of the times, the victims would also take off their clothes. Once the victims' bare bodies were filmed, the 'sextortionists' would start demanding money," a police officer said.

People from all parts of the country -- mostly from Delhi/NCR, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and south India, have fallen into the trap of this gang.

Both Samaydeen and Munfed were later presented at the court which have remanded them to two-day police remand. They have revealed names and details of several other gang members.

Efforts are being made to trace them, a police officer said, adding further investigation into the matter is underway.

Govt imposes stock limits on oils, oilseeds till June 30

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre has notified an order specifying the stock limit quantities on edible oils and oilseeds upto June 30 with a view to provide impetus to the various steps taken to cool the prices of edible oil in the country and prevent hoarding.

The Stock Limit Order, notified on February 3, empowers the Union Government and all states/UTs to regulate storage and distribution of edible oils and oilseeds. This would also help the government in checking hoarding of edible oils and oilseeds in the country, a statement from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution said on Wednesday. A meeting was held by the Department of Food & Public Distribution on Tuesday with all states/UTs for discussing the implementation plan of the above order. During the meeting it was emphasized that states/UTs authorities may enforce Stock Limit



Quantities Order without causing any disruption in the supply chain and also any undue hardship to bonafide trade. For edible oils, the stock limit specified is 30 quintals for retailers, 500 quintals for wholesalers, 30 quintals for retail outlets of bulk consumers i.e. big chain retailers and shops and 1,000 quintals for its depots. Processors of edible oils would be able to stock 90 days of their storage capacities. For edible oilseeds, the stock limit is 100 quintals for retailers, 2,000 quintals for wholesalers.

THIEVES STEAL PARTS OF HISTORIC SUN-WATCH IN BIHAR'S DEHRI



Patna: Unidentified thieves have stolen some important parts of the historic Sun-Watch from Dehri town in Bihar's Rohtas district, an official said.

The Sun-Watch is an important identity and pride of Dehri town built during the British period in 1871. It is installed in the office premises of the water resource development department office. The place is considered a highly secure locality due to the residences and offices of top officials, including district magistrate, Superintendent of Police (SP), Additional SP, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) and others. Thieves took advantage of no security in the premises where the watch is situated. The police said that the premises is considered as a heritage site in the district, but lacks maintenance. The thieves broke the watch and took away its blade made of metal (Brass). "The sun watch comes under the premises of the water resource development office in Dehri. We have registered an FIR against unidentified thieves and are investigating the matter," said R.K. Singh, SHO of Dehri town police station.

CLASS 12 GIRL DRIVING AUTORICKSHAW GETS KTR'S HELP

HYDERABAD | Agencies

Telangana's Cabinet Minister K.T. Rama Rao extended helping hand to a 12th class girl student, driving autorickshaw to support her family.

The minister on Wednesday met the young girl here and handed over to her documents for a double bed-room house under the state government's scheme and an auto-rickshaw.

KTR, as the minister is popularly known, lent the help to the girl from Nalgonda district three days after an assurance through a tweet.

Responding to a tweet by a teacher, who drew the minister's attention to Sabita's struggle, the minister had promised to help her.

"As promised, met this young & supremely confident girl Sabita. Impressed with her clarity of thoughts & expression. Handed over copies of 2BHK proceeding & an Auto rickshaw as she had asked. Also promised to support her education pursuits," tweeted the minister on Wednesday.

While Sabita's father passed away a few years ago, her mother works in a small restaurant in Nalgonda. She was driving a three-wheeler owned by someone else and earning Rs 200 per day.

Impressed by Sabita's will-power and confidence, KTR had requested Nalgonda Collector Prashant Patil to



meet and assist Sabita. In his first tweet, the Minister called Sabita a dynamic girl and also said that he will meet her personally.

During the meeting, KTR enquired about Sabita's health, education, and future goals. He stated that what Sabita was doing was not a small job. It takes a lot of hard work and willpower to take

up something like this, he added. He appreciated her saying that she is a symbol of strength and inspiration for young girls.

Sabita expressed happiness and thanked the minister for his support. She also stated that this will give her tremendous encouragement in achieving bigger goals in life.

SUFFERING FINANCIAL LOSSES, UP COUPLE ATTEMPTS SUICIDE ON FB LIVE

Baghpat: A couple from Badaut in Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat district attempted to kill themselves after going live on Facebook and blamed heavy losses in trade for taking the extreme step, police said.

The wife died during the treatment while the husband is critical. Madan Singh, station house officer (SHO) of the Badaut Kotwali police station said that Rajiv Tomar, a shoe trader, along with his wife, Poonam Tomar, consumed poison on Tuesday. Those watching the suicide pact live called police that immediately took the two to a hospital.

Police said Rajiv was facing a financial crisis for a long time. He was living in the city's Subhash Nagar area with his wife and two children. During the Facebook live, Rajiv, wailing and crying, shared his ordeal with those who joined the session. He opened a sachet and ate one of the tablets. As he kept crying, his wife joined him. "I think I have the freedom to speak. I will pay the debts I have. Even if I die, I will pay. But I request everyone to please share this video as mu Family members of the couple said they were aware of the family's losses but never thought that the two would try to kill themselves.





CM chairs Cabinet meeting

PROVISION FOR EFFECTIVE CONTROL ON ILLEGAL MINING, TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE OF MINERALS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday, the Cabinet gave approval regarding effective control over illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals. With regard to illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals, Rule 53 of Madhya Pradesh Minor Mineral Rules, 1996 and Rule 20 of Madhya Pradesh Sand (Mining, Transport, Storage and Trade) Rules, 2019 have been repealed from these rules. While completely repealing the Madhya Pradesh Minerals (Prevention of Illegal Mining, Transport and Storage) Rules, 2021 (Mining, Transport, Storage and Trade) Rules, 2006, the newly proposed Madhya Pradesh Minerals (Prevention of Illegal Mining, Transport and Storage) Rules, 2021 have been approved. In this rule, unitary provisions have been made regarding illegal mining, transportation and storage of minor minerals. In this, while keeping the mineral dealer license prevailing in the Madhya Pradesh Minerals (Prevention of Illegal Mining, Transport and Storage) Rules, 2006 and the returns to be submitted in the above, registration of vehicles, issue of transit pass for transportation of the main mineral unchanged, permission has been given to make this arrangement through online process in the newly proposed Madhya Pradesh Mineral



(Prevention of Illegal Mining, Transport and Storage) Rules, 2021. In the provisions made in illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals, a provision has been made to impose a penalty of double the amount of the total punishment imposed along with forfeiture of 15 times the royalty and its equivalent amount to be taken as environmental compensation in illegal mining and storage of minerals and vehicles and machinery confiscated for not depositing the total penalty imposed in the case. Apart from this, other technical improvements have been made in the Madhya Pradesh Minerals (Prevention of Illegal Mining, Transport and Storage) Rules, 2021, which will enable effective control over illegal mining, transportation and storage in the state and due to the unified provision in the above

rules, the cases will be resolved with transparency and ease. Under the Atal Renewal and Urban Transformation Mission (AMRUT 2.0) scheme, all 412 (407 urban bodies and 5 cantonment councils) urban bodies of the state have been included. Administrative approval was granted by the Cabinet for the construction of a four-lane Elevated Corridor (Fly Over) from Triple ITM College in Gwalior City (National Highway-92 Bhand-Etawa) to Maharani Laxmibai Statue over Swarna Rekha Nullah, under the Central Road Infrastructure Fund Scheme. The Council of Ministers approved the project cost for the construction of 108 feet high multi-metal statue of Acharya Shankar, Shankar Museum and the infrastructure of Acharya Shankar

International Advaita Vedanta Sansthan at Omkareshwar for which in-principle approval of Rs.2141.85 crore was given. With regard to VGF (Viability Gap Funding) to be paid to the Public Service Centers operated under the Public Service Management Department, the Cabinet decided that due to the Corona pandemic, the eligibility of VGF of all the public service centres of the state has been nullified as due to the closure of the service centres, in the Corona curfew period (April 01, 2021 to May 31, 2021), The time period of the contract executed between the Public Service Centre operators and the District E-Governance Society has been increased by three months. In the meeting of the Cabinet, administrative approval of an amount of Rs.551.20 crore has been given for Dam Reinforcement and Upgradation Project Phase-2. The Cabinet decided to develop two new industrial parks in the state at Bhopal (Bagrauda Gokalkundi) and Sehore (Badiakhedi). In-principle consent has been given by the cabinet on the project proposal for the construction of a 50-bed fully equipped police hospital in the 23rd and 25th Vahini Visual, Bhopal premises. The Cabinet also approved an amount of Rs 80 crore along with continuing the Urban Transport Fund item for the next two years.

"No Controversy.. No Proposal To Ban..." Madhya Pradesh Minister On Hijabs

▶ WHAT BEGAN WITH SIX GIRLS PROTESTING IN KARNATAKA'S UDUPI DISTRICT HAS SNOWBALLED OVER INTO PROTESTS AT COLLEGES IN SEVERAL OTHERS, INCLUDING MANDYA AND SHIVAMOGGA



Team Absolute | Bhopal

The BJP government in Madhya Pradesh said Wednesday that it is not considering a proposal to ban the wearing of the hijab, or headscarf, in educational institutions in the state. "There is no controversy over (the wearing of) hijab in Madhya Pradesh. No proposal is under consideration by the state government regarding a ban," Home Minister Narottam Mishra said. "There should be no confusion in this regard," he told reporters in Bhopal. The statement comes amid protests in Karnataka, where right-wing groups have targeted Muslim girls over their right to wear a hijab in classrooms. Asked to comment, the minister said he would not discuss matters of another

state and that the Karnataka High Court is hearing arguments. Mishra's statement also comes a day after his cabinet colleague, School Education Minister Inder Singh Parmar, appeared to support the anti-hijab protesters and argued that it should be banned. Parmar claimed today that his statement had been "wrongly interpreted." "Some people wrongly interpreted my remarks... We are not going to implement a new uniform code. Present arrangement in schools regarding uniforms will continue," he said. However (and ominously), the minister also said: "If this (the wearing of hijab) happens then it (the ban) will be brought in here also. We will take action accordingly." What began with six girls protesting in Karnataka's Udupi district has snowballed over the past few weeks into protests at colleges in several others, including Mandya and Shivamogga. On Tuesday disturbing footage emerged of a young girl being heckled by a mob of frenzied men in Mandya waving saffron scarves and shouting 'Jai Shri Ram.' That was after two men were arrested by police in Kundapur taluk for carrying knives near a group of protesting students. Apart from Karnataka (and Parmar's "wrongly interpreted" comment), there have also been reports from Puducherry of a teacher objecting to a student wearing the hijab. Karnataka's BJP government, meanwhile, has been largely silent as it waits for a decision by the High Court on a petition by five women questioning the restrictions on wearing hijabs. This evening the High Court referred the matter to a larger bench. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai yesterday ordered all schools and colleges to close for three days, and protests near educational institutions in capital Bengaluru have been banned for two weeks.

Voting in Municipal Council Narwar on March 6

■ The programme for the General Election-2022 of the Municipal Council Narwar of Shivpuri district has been announced by the State Election Commission.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The programme for the General Election-2022 of the Municipal Council Narwar of Shivpuri district has been announced by the State Election Commission. Voting will be held on March 6 from 7 am to 6 pm. Secretary State Election Commission BS Jamod has informed that publication of election information and collection of nomination papers will be held from February 11, 2022. The last date for receipt of nomination papers is February 18, 2022. Nomination papers will be taken on this day till 3 pm.

The scrutiny of nomination papers will be held on February 19. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is February 21. The allotment of election symbols to the candidates will also be done on February 21. Polling will be held on March 6 and counting of votes and declaration of election results will be held on March 9 from 9 am. It is noteworthy that the election of Municipal Council Narwar is being conducted in compliance with the order passed by the High Court Bench Gwalior on February 8, 2022. The election of the President and Vice-Chairman of the Municipal Council will be done indirectly by the elected corporators. The election will be conducted as per the electoral roll published on January 1, 2021, according to the reservation of the post of Mayor/Chairman published on October 21, 2014 and the reservation of wards made by Collector Shivpuri. Voting will be done through the Electronic Voting Machine. Jamod has informed that

instructions have been given to conduct all the processes from the issuance of election information to the declaration of election results through the online application IEMS that has been developed by the State Election Commission. With the announcement of the election programme, the model code of conduct has become effective in the area of the concerned urban body. It will be effective till the declaration of election result. Instructions have been given to the District Election Officer to strictly follow the Model Code of Conduct. It is mandatory for every candidate to submit an affidavit in the format prescribed by the Commission along with his nomination paper. It will contain information about the candidate's criminal background, movable and immovable property and liabilities and educational qualification etc. Instructions have also been given to ensure compliance of Covid guidelines and protocols in the election process.

CM CONGRATULATES DEDICATED ANM MAYA AHIRWAR

Bhopal: It's commendable to work diligently for 1 year without taking leave: CM Chouhan Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has congratulated the dedicated ANM Maya Ahirwar for administering maximum doses of Covid-19 vaccine. Maya, posted as ANM in Chhatrapur District Hospital, has done her duty continuously for 1 year without taking leave. Chief Minister has congratulated her for being such a hard worker. Congratulating the ANM for her diligent services in the work of vaccination in the state Chouhan has tweeted also. Chief Minister said that ANM Sushri Maya has set an example of dutifulness. Her spirit of service is commendable. Other health workers will also be inspired by her sincerity in administering more than one lakh vaccine doses from 16 January 2021 to 7 February 2022 without taking any leave. It is due to the dedicated spirit of such health workers and public cooperation that Madhya Pradesh is ahead of all other states of the country in the efforts to prevent Covid. Due to such spirited workers, success has been achieved in the work of vaccination in the state.

All the Ayush Colleges of the State Should be Developed like Pt. Khushi Lal Sharma Autonomous Ayurveda College

Minister of State for Ayush Kavre Held Virtual Discussions with the Principals of the Colleges of the State

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Minister of State for AYUSH (Independent Charge) Ramkishore Kavre has instructed the principals of all AYUSH colleges in the state that the development of the colleges should be done on the lines of Pt. Khushi Lal Sharma Government Autonomous Ayurveda College. He also directed the principals to take immediate action on pending proposals. Kavre was addressing the meeting virtually at Mantralaya today. Principal Secretary AYUSH Caralyn Khongwar Deshmukh was also present in the meeting. The preparations made keeping in mind the upcoming assembly session were also reviewed in the meeting. Kavre instructed the principals of the college to do effective work by paying special attention to sickle cell disease. He said that the Health and AYUSH Department of Madhya Pradesh is working together on the Gujarat model for the treatment of this disease. Kavre informed that the online counselling programme of BAMS, BHMS and BUMS in the state



is being done as per the scheduled time-table. Record verification will be done by February 10. The entire process of counselling will be completed by March 1. He asked to pay special attention to the counselling work. So far 3 thousand 900 students have registered for counselling in the state. Kavre said that the process of recruitment to the vacant posts in AYUSH colleges is being done expeditiously. Khongwar asked the principals to prepare a comprehensive action plan for the development of the colleges and send it to Bhopal, on which work would be done effectively. He informed about the efforts being made for PG courses in AYUSH colleges. The principal of Bhopal's Pt. Khushilal Vaidya Mahavidyal informed that Panchkarma Centre has been completed. Soon it will be started. In the meeting, the pay scale of academic personnel, hostel arrangement and Centre of Excellence scheme of the Central Government were also discussed.

CM PLANTS SAPLINGS OF GULMOHAR AND KARANJ

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Gulmohar and Karanj saplings in Smart Udyan on Wednesday. Narayavali MLA Pradeep Laria and Rakshita Welfare Society's Breeze Tripathi, Ashok Hindustani, Saifuddin, Gumaditya Tripathi accompanied the Chief Minister during plantation. With a view to encourage the participation of the society in the activities of plantation and environmental protection, Chouhan, plants saplings every day along with social organizations, voluntary organizations and people active in this direction. For the last more than 18 years, the works of service and improvement in the social sector is being done regularly by the society. The society is also active in the direction of Beti Bachao, women safety, environmental protection and social awareness. The society has planted about 11 thousand saplings in different parts of the state including Bhopal, Ashok Nagar, Lateri and is also continuously working for the conservation of plants. So far, the society has given free self-defense training to 19 thousand girls in the direction of awareness against sexual exploitation of children. Ex-Serviceman Para Commando Ashok Hindustani has travelled all over India by bicycle as a Swachh Bharat campaigner. He has been working for 25 years with the message of Clean India - Healthy India, Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao and Plant trees - Save environment. For almost 5 years, he has been giving the message of giving wet and dry waste separately and also supporting the government to make polythene free India and Bhopal number one in cleanliness. Sixty-five year old Saifuddin has been doing public awareness campaign towards cleanliness since 2nd October 2015 on his two-wheeler. Wearing the clothes with the message of cleanliness, he is spreading the message of cleanliness by travelling to many areas of the state besides Bhopal on a two-wheeler. Karanj plant is considered important in Ayurvedic medicine. It is also used in religious works. Gulmohar is considered one of the most beautiful trees in the world. Flowers blooming in big bunches between the leaves of Gulmohar, make this tree all the more attractive. In summer, Gulmohar trees are laden with flowers instead of leaves. It is also rich in medicinal properties.



Local people's committees will participate in government works: Chief Minister

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and the villagers of his home village Jait have taken a pledge that Jait will be made one of the best villages in the country. On Tuesday, Chouhan started the birthday celebration of all villages and cities of the state once a year, from Jait as Gaurav Diwas. Chouhan, while clarifying the concept of celebrating birthdays of villages and cities as Gaurav Diwas said that it is not possible to implement the schemes of the government properly without the participation of the local people. Therefore, it has now been decided that by forming committees of local people, everyone's participation in all government works will be ensured. He said that such people who have gone away from the village and city due to other business, should also come for one day and make a plan for the development of their town and village by sitting together. He said that local people can also cooperate in many works. On the initiative of Chief Minister, the Gram Sabha at Narmada Ghat in the village passed a resolution to complete more than a dozen works related to life in the coming one year with the consent of the villagers. Chouhan made a proposal in the Gram Sabha that no child



born in Jait would be malnourished. It was decided with the consent of the villagers that Poshan Matka would be kept in the village and the villagers would arrange nutritious food for the children by giving food grains as per their capacity. On the suggestion of Chief Minister, the Gram Sabha decided that now the IQ of all children will be tested through counselling. There will be no dearth of higher and excellent education for the promising children. A proposal was made before the Chief Minister in the Gram

MBBS course in Hindi to start in Bhopal college from next session: Sarang

▶ MADHYA PRADESH MEDICAL EDUCATION MINISTER VISHWAS SARANG SAID THE STATE WILL BECOME THE FIRST TO OFFER THE MBBS COURSE IN HINDI.

Team Absolute | Bhopal



The Madhya Pradesh government is all set to start the MBBS course in Hindi in Bhopal's Gandhi Medical College from the next academic session, state Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang said on Tuesday. The minister said the state will become the first to offer the MBBS course in Hindi. "Directives have been issued to start the MBBS course in Bhopal's Gandhi Medical College in Hindi from the next session starting within two months. A 14-member committee headed by Medical Education Director Dr Jiten Shukla has been constituted to prepare the work plan for the MBBS Hindi curriculum," he said. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had made an

announcement on Republic Day about teaching MBBS and other medical courses in Hindi, following which the department took this step, the minister added. "The minister had talked to the subject experts some days ago in order to get books prepared in Hindi for first-year MBBS students in the presence of Atal Bihari Hindi University and Gandhi Medical College functionaries. Lectures will also be delivered in Hindi," a state public relations department official said. "In the first phase, students who opt for Hindi as the medium of instruction will be taught in Hindi and English for two months each. Further steps will be taken after their assessment. In the second phase, supplementary books for Anatomy, Physiology and Biochemistry subjects will be prepared," he said. Three committees have been constituted to complete this work plan, the official added.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Congress banks on 'outsiders' in Amethi, Rae Bareli

The Congress, after the exodus of leaders from the party, is now banking on turn-coats to contest the elections in Rae Bareli and Amethi - once considered its bastions. In Amethi, the Congress has fielded Ashish Shukla who owed allegiance to the BJP before joining the Congress. In Jagdishpur assembly segment in Amethi, the Congress candidate Vijay Pasi, has come from the Samajwadi Party. However, Amethi is not the only assembly constituency where the Congress has fielded leaders from other parties. In Rae Bareli too, the party fielded candidates who do not belong to the party's cadres. In Harchandpur, where the Congress MLA Rakesh Singh joined the BJP, the party has opted for former minister Surendra Vikram Singh (who owed allegiance to the SP). It has fielded Sudha Dwivedi from Sareni assembly seat who was reportedly seeking a ticket from the BJP. The Congress candidate from Unchahar Atul Singh was also seeking a ticket from the BJP. Both agreed to contest on a Congress ticket after their claim was ignored by the BJP. Those fielded from within the Congress include Manish Singh Chauhan from Rae Bareli assembly seat and Sushil Pasi from Bachhrawan assembly seat. The Congress has fielded district Congress committee president Pradeep Singhal from Tiloi assembly seat of Amethi. Fateh Mohammad has been fielded from Gauriganj assembly seat of Amethi while Arjun Pasi will contest from the Salon assembly seat. Congress president Sonia Gandhi represents the Rae Bareli seat in the Lok Sabha while party leader Rahul Gandhi, who was the MP from Amethi from 2004 to 2019, lost to union minister Smriti Irani in 2019.

LATA MANGESHKAR-AN EVERLASTING NATIONAL TREASURE FOR INDIA

DC Pathak

When I was a teenager my eldest brother who was a poet at heart once said 'Lata Mangeshkar was the best thing that happened to India'. That for the legend, Basant Panchmi turned out to be the last day of her life was in a way the ultimate tribute to her as the singer with the 'gift of Saraswati' who would take the voice of India to all corners of the world. She was a Bharat Ratna who was also honoured with Legion of Honour by France -- a country symbolising the best in the European culture -- confirming the universality of Lata Mangeshkar's musical appeal and civilisational heritage. That she was cremated with national honour with Prime Minister Modi personally appearing for her last rites, was a dignified gesture of a grateful nation. India has produced great sons and daughters but what is certain is that there would not be another Lata Mangeshkar for this nation.

This uniqueness is both about her singing talent as well as her persona as a star nationally respected as Lata Didi. Her story was a fabulous illustration of the journey of a self-made person who began with shouldering the responsibility of the large family as a teenager and through a rare self-belief, commitment to a value system and the unwavering devotion to the goal in her life, rose to become the 'Nightingale of India'. At the height of her fame she lived a life on her terms, preserved her lively interest in cricket and cars and remained an embodiment of Indian womanhood in terms of generosity, innate wisdom that enabled her to be stable in success and a healthy interest in the state of the nation. What would remain unchanged about her was her white 'sari', a red 'bindi' and the two braids. It is remarkable that as a legend she carried this image of purity till the end in an effortless way. Her memory will always inspire respect, affection and admiration for her



singing genius.

Talking of her fame as a playback singer, there is no doubt that the haunting initial four lines of the famous song Ayega Aanevala rendered without a rhyming tune - 'Khaamosh Hai Zamaana' - established the unparalleled beauty of her singing. Some of the greatest songs of the genre of impactful sadness sung by Lata Mangeshkar include Mushkil Hai Bahut Mushkil, Ye Zindagi Usi Ki Hai and Tum Na Jane Kis Jahan Me Kho Gaye. Of the melodious tunes, songs like Bande Mataram of Anand Math, Jago Mohan Pyare of Jagate Raho and Gaaye Chalaja of Hamlog will remain in memory. And of course there are immortal romantic duets like Pyar Hua Ikarar Hua Hai, Kitana Hasin Hai Mausam and Yaad Kiya Dil Ne Kahan

Ho Tum with Manna Dey, Chitalkar and Hemant Kumar. Some youthful songs of lilting tunes have their own place for the fans- Ziya Bekarar Hai, Thandi Hawaain and Kare Badara Tu Na Ja Na Ja. And of course Lata Mangeshkar sang a number of songs totally based on classical music such as Thare Rahiyo, Raina Beeti Jaye and

Preetam Daras Dikhaa directed by Ghulam Mohammad, RD Barman and Madan Mohan. One can have a collection of her songs including duets for a spell of soothing music of one's choice. Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar's greatness lies in her exceptional contribution to national unity through her art and influence - bringing together Indians of all communities, classes and regions as her fans. She represented at the highest levels the universal beauty of Indian music rooted in our tradition and quickly became the cultural ambassador of India in distant lands beyond the subcontinent or the diaspora. That she was totally apolitical reinforces the civilisational strength of India which has to be preserved and fostered for the interest of all countrymen. The message of culture does not need a language and supersedes the lesser divides inflicted in the name of religion, language and ethnicity by politically motivated elements. Lata Mangeshkar leaves behind a legacy of how our national icons must carry forward India's image and prestige in the world outside and thus contribute to nation's strength and standing as a promoter of universal peace and human welfare. Cultural nationalism unites people at home and does not create conflict with the world outside- religion represents differing modes of worship but provides an input to culture that helped to socially unite people. It is the projection of religion into politics - mostly the doing of community leaders of the minorities - that induces divisiveness and impedes national unity. Lata Mangeshkar united India in a manner that was as effective as it was subtle and sublime.

Brewing in Bastar: Welcome to India's newest coffee-producing region

Sundeep Pouranik

Bastar, one of the districts in Chhattisgarh, well-known for its dense forests, is identified largely as a Maoist-dominated area. The state government, however, is set to give an overall makeover to the district by eradicating the Maoists from the area promoting the production of coffee to give the region a new identity in the country and at the global level.

There are widespread talks about promoting coffee cultivation in Bastar, after the recent state visit by Congress MP Rahul Gandhi.

He had a cup of coffee at the Bastar coffee stall at an exhibition held in the terror hotbed. In order to promote coffee in the Indian and international market, Congress MP suggested that state Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel sign an MoU of 'Bastaria' coffee with international coffee brands.

The life of the people in Bastar is completely dependent on agriculture and forest produce. Paddy is grown the maximum in terms

of agriculture, but now innovation is slowly taking shape. Coffee is being cultivated on several hundred acres of land in Darbha, Kakalgur and Dilmili villages under the Darbha block due to which the forest dwellers and farmers are earning huge profits. The reason for the cultivation of coffee in the Darbha block of Bastar is that this cultivation can be done only in those areas which are located several metres high above the sea level. People associated with realising this initiative say that three things are necessary for the cultivation of coffee -- height from sea level, rainfall between February-March and



area which is not under direct sunlight. The Darbha development block is located at an altitude of 600 to 1400 metres above sea level.

Two varieties of coffee are being grown in Bastar -- Coffee Arabica and Coffee Robusta.

Coffee was cultivated as an experiment, which has proved to be successful and now farmers have started cultivating it. Many other crops can be produced along with coffee cultivation.

Bastar Collector Rajat Bansal told IANS that the people from the tribal community, who depend completely on forest produce and traditional farming, are choosing coffee cultivation as a profitable and

viable option. Their life is undergoing a transformation with their income doubling. The state government has formed a coffee board to encourage the cultivation of coffee in the state. The coffee produced here has been found to be of high quality by the coffee board of the country.

Experts say that in a year, nearly Rs 30,000 to 40,000 per acre is the profit earned from the cultivation of coffee which is much more than other crops. In view of the adaptability of the climate in Bastar, coffee cultivation has been started on nearly 3,000 acre. The popularity of Bastar coffee is fast spreading in foreign countries as well. Coffee is currently being exported from the state to eight countries.

Coffee cultivation can be of immense help for increasing the income of farmers in the state, that is why an action plan has been prepared for the coming six decades which will benefit the farmers on a large-scale.

international

ISRAEL STRIKES SYRIA IN RESPONSE TO ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILE FIRE

Israel struck targets in Syria on Wednesday in response to an anti-aircraft missile launched from Syria, which exploded in mid-air, the Israeli army said.



language news outlet Ynetnews. There were no immediate reports of Israeli casualties.

The alerts in Israel came as the Syrian state media SANA reported the aerial defense systems in the Damascus area had been activated and

intercepted Israeli missiles.

Over the past years, Israel has carried out numerous airstrikes on targets inside Syria based on the theories that those targets are linked with Iran-allied militias, such as Hezbollah. Both Iran and Syria deny those charges.

PAKISTAN AIR FORCE TO INDUCT FIRST BATCH OF JF-17 BLOCK III FIGHTER JETS

The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is all set to induct a first batch of next generation JF-17 Thunder block III fighter jets built jointly with China to upgrade its fleet by the end of next month, a PAF spokesperson has said, Arab News reported.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is all set to induct a first batch of next generation JF-17 Thunder block III fighter jets built jointly with China to upgrade its fleet by the end of next month, a PAF spokesperson has said, Arab News reported.

JF-17 Thunder, an advanced, lightweight, all weather, multi-role fighter aircraft with air-to-air and air-to-surface combat capabilities, was developed as a joint venture between the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) and the Chengdu Aircraft Industry Corporation (CAC) in China. The aircraft will replace Pakistan's current



aging fleet, the report said.

The first JF-17 prototype aircraft (called FC-1) was rolled out in May 2003. Basic flight testing was completed in 2007, which marked the arrival of the JF-17 Thunder aircraft in Pakistan, formally presented to the nation as a Pakistan Day gift on March 23, 2007. PAC has delivered

nearly 120 JF-17 Block I and II fighter jets to PAF since 2009.

"JF-17 Thunder block III is the latest aircraft of this series and all taxi tests and flight tests have been completed," a PAF spokesperson told Arab News on Tuesday.

"It's first batch will become part of the PAF fleet by the end of March," he added, saying there would be a proper induction ceremony on the occasion, the report said.

The rollout ceremony of block III was held in December last year, the spokesperson said. The new JF-17 jets will also fly-past at the Pakistan Day military parade on March 23, he added.

Biden finally hails Elon Musk amid tough Chinese EV competition

In his first-ever public acknowledgement of Elon Musk-run Tesla's contribution to the world of electric vehicles (EVs), US President Joe Biden has said that the country is building a reliable national public charging network to counter Chinese challenge in the EV market.

"From iconic companies like GM and Ford building out new electric vehicle production to Tesla, our nation's largest electric vehicle manufacturer, to innovative younger companies, manufacturing is coming back to America after decades," he said late on Tuesday.

In a tweet on Wednesday, the US President added: "China has been leading the electric vehicle race, but that's about to change. We're building a convenient, reliable, equitable national public charging network. It'll make America more economically competitive and help us tackle the climate crisis at the same time".

Musk replied to his tweet, just saying "Tesla".

Last month, Musk said that Biden "is treating the American public like fools" after he met with executives from rival car companies General



Motors and Ford Motor. Biden invited GM CEO Mary Barra and Ford CEO Jim Farley to the White House along

with other business leaders to discuss his administration's \$1.75 trillion 'Build Back Better' legislation, which was stalled in the evenly split Senate after US Senator Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) refused to support the legislation.

The massive spending bill would bump up the \$7,500 tax credit to \$12,500 for union-made electric vehicles and would also make GM and Tesla eligible for the existing tax credit again after they hit the 200,000-vehicle limit for the credit. Biden touted GM's recent \$7 billion investment in Michigan to ramp up electric vehicle production. "Companies like GM and Ford are

building more electric vehicles here at home than ever before," the president tweeted after the meeting, prompting the response from Musk that Biden was treating the American public "like fools." Musk also tweeted that "Biden is a damp (sock) puppet in human form" and "Starts with a T, Ends with an A, ESL in the middle." It is not the first time that Musk took on Biden. The electric vehicle pioneer said in September last year that the US administration was "maybe a little biased" and "seems to be controlled by unions." 2021 was a breakthrough year for Tesla and for electric vehicles in general, as the EV maker ended the year with \$5.5 billion in net income, compared to \$721 million in 2020. For the full year 2021, the company delivered 936,172 vehicles, just short of the promised 1 million vehicles but still an increase of 87 per cent over the previous year. According to Gartner, six million electric cars (battery electric and plug-in hybrid) are likely to be shipped globally in 2022, up from 4 million in 2021.

Researchers on board for report on high-speed rail in Australia

A team of researchers from the University of New South Wales (UNSW) have come up with a new approach to making high-speed rail (HSR) cost-effective in Australia that involves factoring in the rise in land value among other "value uplifts."

Sydney | Agencies

A team of researchers from the University of New South Wales (UNSW) have come up with a new approach to making high-speed rail (HSR) cost-effective in Australia that involves factoring in the rise in land value among other "value uplifts."

The report released by UNSW's City Futures Research Centre on Wednesday showed that HSR stations along Australia's east coast, connecting the nation's three most populous cities Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, would generate a potential 140 billion Australian dollars (about US\$100 billion) in land value, Xinhua news agency reported. "There are a lot of oppor-



tunities around the HSR for Australia to build stronger connectivity between cities and inject significant wealth and job opportunities into the regions," said Director of UNSW City Futures Research Centre and lead author on the report Christopher Pettit.

In the past, proposed HSR projects have been ruled out given Australia's relatively small population -- compared to countries like Japan, China and Germany, which have established HSR networks. A report delivered to the Australian government in

2013 proposed HSR development on the east coast would cost 130 billion Australian dollars (about \$93 billion).

Past proposals have attracted no shortage of criticism. Experts have rebuked the idea as having a benefit-cost ratio that would barely break even, and huge emissions costs from the construction of thousands of kilometers of rail lines.

James Abbott, managing director at Abbott Advisory and reviewer of the UNSW report, told Xinhua: "I think that you need to consider the population we will have in 30 years versus the population we have today. Abbott said with the benefits far outweighing the costs, the only thing left was strong political leadership that looked beyond the short term.



Murder attempt case:

BJP MLA NITESH N RANE GETS BAIL



A court in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg on Wednesday granted bail to Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Nitesh Rane, the son of Union Minister Narayan Rane in an attempt to murder case.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A court in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg on Wednesday granted bail to Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Nitesh Rane, the son of Union Minister Narayan Rane in an attempt to murder case.

The development came after he spent two days in police custody following his surrender and arrest on February 2, and later getting sent to judicial custody for 14 days. Rane is a legislator from Kankavli, his hometown and the family political bastion in the coastal Sindhudurg district. He - along with 7 other

accused - was wanted and later gave himself up to the police in connection with a complaint by Shiv Sena activist Santosh Parab, accusing them of a murderous attempt on him on December 18.

Soon after the police case was lodged, Nitesh Rane was questioned by the police, later he moved various courts, got protection against arrest but failed to get any relief on the bail plea and was compelled to surrender.

While in judicial custody, he complained of certain health issues and was admitted to the Rajarshree Chhatrapati Shahu Maharashtra Government Medical College & CPR Hospital in Kolhapur.

The bail order of the court was greeted with cheers and

PRESIDENT KOVIND TO VISIT AMBEDKAR MEMORIAL



New Delhi: President of India, Ram Nath Kovind will visit Maharashtra and Telangana from February 10 to 14.

President of India, Ram Nath Kovind will visit Maharashtra and Telangana from February 10 to 14. The President will inaugurate a new Darbar Hall at Raj Bhavan at Mumbai on February 11, a communique from the Rashtrapati Bhavan said on Wednesday. On February 12, the President will visit Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Memorial at Ambadwe village in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. Then he will head to Telangana. On February 13, the President will grace the Sri Ramanuja Sahasrabdi Samaroham and unveil the gold Deity of Sri Ramanujacharyaji in Hyderabad, the communique added.

Pehle hijab fir kitaab: AIMIM puts up posters in Beed

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi condemned the Karnataka 'hijab' row.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amid the hijab controversy in Karnataka, All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) workers put up posters reading 'pehle hijab, phir kitaab' (first hijab and then studies) in Maharashtra's Beed district.

Speaking to the media, an AIMIM worker said that wearing a hijab or burqa is a centuries-old custom in Islam and Muslim women and girls venture out of their homes by wearing a hijab or a burqa.

These days girls are wearing very short dresses, we don't comment against it or stop them so we should also be allowed to follow our traditions in accordance to Islam, the AIMIM worker further said.

Earlier, AIMIM chief



Asaduddin Owaisi slammed the BJP government in Karnataka over hijab row saying that grave violations of the constitution are being committed in the state.

"I pray that our sisters fighting for their right to wear hijab are successful in their fight. Grave violations of the Constitution's Articles 15, 19 and 21 are being committed in Karnataka. I condemn this

decision of Karnataka's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government," said Owaisi while addressing a public rally in Uttar Pradesh.

Karnataka witnessed protests after some students were allegedly denied entry to college wearing hijab (a headscarf worn by Muslim women). The hijab controversy started after some girl students at the Government Girls

PU college in Udipi district who wanted to wear hijab inside the premises were allegedly barred from attending classes.

As per the order released by the pre-University education board students can only wear the uniform approved by the school and college administrations and no other religious practices will be allowed.

Meanwhile, the single judge of the Karnataka High Court hearing the hijab ban case in school-college campuses referred the matter to Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi.

"In view of the enormity of questions of importance which were debated, the court is of the considered opinion that the Chief Justice should decide if a larger bench can be constituted in the subject matter," Justice Dixit said.

Jilted suitor who burnt woman lecturer found guilty by Maha Court

A court in Wardha district pronounced the 'guilty' verdict on the prime accused in the sensational incident in which a young woman lecturer was doused with petrol and burnt by her spurned suitor on a road outside her college in Hinganghat town two years ago, a top law officer said here on Wednesday.

Team Absolute | Nagpur

A court in Wardha district pronounced the 'guilty' verdict on the prime accused in the sensational incident in which a young woman lecturer was doused with

petrol and burnt by her spurned suitor on a road outside her college in Hinganghat town two years ago, a top law officer said here on Wednesday.

"The Court has found the prime accused Vikesh Nagrale guilty of the offences committed two years ago. As per the Supreme Court orders, the quantum of punishment will be argued tomorrow after which the court will deliver its final verdict," Special Public Prosecutor (SSP) Ujjwal Nikam told mediapersons.

On February 3, 2020, the victim Ankita Pissude, 24, who was stalked



by Nagrale, 27, from her home to workplace, the MAK Mahila College, Hinganghat, where he committed the heinous crime in full public view, shaking the conscience of the people of Maharashtra. Sustaining severe burns, the victim was rushed to a Nagpur hospital where she succumbed on February 10, sparking outrage all over the state, a month before the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown was clamped in the country. The attacker was arrested hours later and subsequently

charged with murder and the case was assigned to a Fast Track Court in Hinganghat with the prosecution demanding the death penalty for Nagrale. After the investigations, the Wardha Police had filed a 426-page charge sheet, 29 witnesses were examined during 64 hearings held in the past two years of the pandemic lockdown. Interestingly, not a single witness turned hostile during the trial and the verdict will come exactly two years after Ankita Pissude's demise (February 10, 2020), in the prosecution charge directed by SPP Nikam. However, the accused Nagrale denied all the allegations, including that he had attacked or set afire the victim. The ghastly incident echoed twice in Parliament and was strongly condemned by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Maha Vikas Aghadi partners, women, youth and social groups.

TRIBUTE TO LEGEND RIP Lata Mangeshkar ji. SOME TRUTH IN LIFE ARE HARD TO ACCEPT, YOU WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN, REST IN PEACE. BRIGHT OUTDOOR MEDIA PVT. LTD.

Alliance Air flight engine cover falls at Mumbai airport, DGCA probing

IN A FREAK INCIDENT, THE ENGINE COWL (COVER) OF AN ALLIANCE AIR FLIGHT FROM MUMBAI TO BHUJ FELL OFF THIS MORNING AND WAS LATER FOUND ON THE MUMBAI AIRPORT RUNWAY POST-TAKEOFF, OFFICIAL SOURCES SAID ON WEDNESDAY.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a freak incident, the engine cowl (cover) of an Alliance Air flight from Mumbai to Bhuj fell off this morning and was later found on the



Mumbai Airport runway post-takeoff, official sources said on Wednesday.

The incident affected the Alliance Air 91 625 Mumbai-Bhuj service with 70 passengers, 4 crew persons and a

maintenance engineer on board the ATR aircraft, and the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation has ordered a probe. The airline confirmed the develop-

ment and said that all passengers and crew onboard the flight landed safely and there is no damage to the aircraft due to the "unfortunate incident" after it completed the two hour-long flight departing at 6.15 am.

Amid allegations of maintenance lapses, the airline said that it has put in place strict pre- and post-flight checks to ensure complete safety of the passengers and the aircraft.

"We have taken strict note of the incident and a thorough investigation has been initiated. The findings of the same shall be shared with the regulatory authorities and we shall ensure that all required corrective actions are put in place," said the airline.

Airport sources said that the loss of the engine cowl may not have major repercussions on the aircraft or its performance though the engine parts exposed could be affected adversely.

Sonu Sood rescues 19-year-old accident victim

BOLLYWOOD ACTOR SONU SOOD SAVED THE LIFE OF A 19-YEAR-OLD BOY AFTER THE LATTER WAS INVOLVED IN A SERIOUS ROAD ACCIDENT ON MONDAY IN MOGA, PUNJAB. THE ACCIDENT TOOK PLACE AT A FLYOVER WHERE SONU WAS PASSING THROUGH.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Sonu Sood saved the life of a 19-year-old boy after the latter was involved in a serious road accident on Monday in Moga, Punjab. The accident took place at a flyover where Sonu was passing through.

The actor, upon seeing the state of the crashed car, stepped out and rescued the boy,



who was in an unconscious condition. What made the matter tricky was that the car had a central lock. Hence, it took some time to get the victim out of the car but soon he was rushed to the nearest hospital.

The boy received timely medical treatment at the hospital and is now doing fine. Earlier too, Sonu worked to help the country fight Covid-19 during the hellfire of the second wave of the pandemic.

Why is dust turning Mumbai's air quality unusually bad?

Team Absolute | Mumbai

For three days in a row, Mumbai has been witnessing very high pollution levels - with Air Quality Index readings mostly above 300, almost matching Delhi's - with some places recording an AQI of even 400 plus.

And if the experts are to be believed, the two back-to-back dust storms induced worst air quality may continue to be so for two more days. That is, if Mumbai and western coast are not hit by a third.

Since Sunday, Mumbai's AQI has hovered above 300 ('very poor' as per meteorological classification in India) with even Tuesday morning recording 320, the Ministry of Earth Science's System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting Research (SAFAR) forecast and advisory said. But it is not just Mumbai. The western part of India - parts of coastal Maharashtra north of Mumbai, large parts of Gujarat including capital Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad, have been experiencing a peculiar air quality this winter. It is very unusual. During the last 15 days, there has been a second successive dust storm, which originated in the border areas of Rajasthan, Pakistan and some even to the extent of Afghanistan. It coincided with the Western Disturbances, so an upper air trough was formed. That elevated system entered somewhere near Ahmedabad," said SAFAR founder Director Gufran Beig. The



air quality in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, which normally remains moderate or average in this season, continued to remain very poor till Monday because of calm wind conditions and colder/lesser temperatures, he said. "Although the second dust storm related intrusion stopped three days ago, due to moist conditions and relatively cooler temperature in Mumbai, fine particles which were trapped due to the storm, are hanging and not being dispersed as air is still heavy," Beig said explaining why Mumbai's AQI is still very poor. "It will steadily but slowly start to improve as it gets warmer in coming days." But there is a rider. If that happens, local Mumbai wind speed may increase and likely sweep dust away faster, he said. This phenomenon, however, has alarmed the scientific fraternity. "We have started looking into the cause of these successive wind and dust storms coming from the West when the air is very heavy here as we suspect that this may be an impact of climate change.

'Asked By 'Bosses' To 'Fix' Me': Sena's Sanjay Raut's Sensational Charge

Raut made sensational claims, adding that he was threatened with imprisonment if he refused to help in forcing a mid-term election in the state.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Tuesday wrote to Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu alleging that the Enforcement Directorate has been harassing him and his family after he refused to help in toppling the Maharashtra government. He said that the ED and other investigating agency officials "are now reduced to puppets of their political masters" and added that the officials have even admitted that they have been "asked by their 'bosses' to 'fix' me."

Mr Raut made sensational claims, adding that he was threatened with imprisonment if he refused to help in forcing a mid-term election in the state.

"About a month ago, I was approached by certain people and was told to assist them in toppling the state government in Maharashtra. They wanted me to be instrumental in such endeavour so that the state could be forced into a mid-term election. I refused to be a party to any such clandestine agenda which was being pursued, upon which I was warned that my refusal could lead to my paying a very heavy price. I was even told that my fate could be like that of a former union railway minister who spent many years behind bars. I was even warned that apart from me, two other

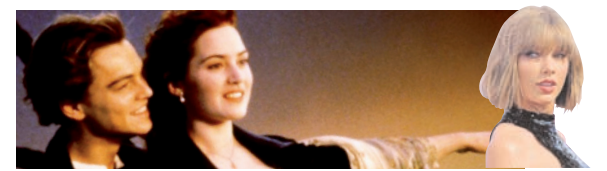


senior ministers in the cabinet of the state of Maharashtra as well as two senior leaders in Maharashtra would also be sent behind the bars under the PMLA Act which would lead to mid-term elections in the state of Maharashtra with all important leaders in the state being behind bars," he said.

The Shiv Sena MP said that his family owns some land, barely 1 acre, at Alibaug which was purchased about 17 years ago but those who sold the land, along with their family members, are being threatened by the ED and other agencies to give statements against him saying that they received some cash from him over and above the agreement value.

"This is also happening to other people who had sold a similarly small piece of land to me and my family in 2012-2013. Day after day, ED and other agencies personnel call these people and threaten them with jail and attachment of their personal properties unless they give their statements against me. All these properties are in the public domain and have been filed in all my affidavits filed along with my nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha. For all these years, there was no question asked of me. However, suddenly now everything has become a matter of 'concern' for the ED and other agencies. ED and other agencies have no business to "investigate" in respect of a property/properties acquired nearly two decades ago," Mr Raut said.

Raut claimed that 28 people have so far been picked up and "wrongfully confined" by the probe agencies and have been threatened with dire consequences if they don't give statements against him. Pointing to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act that was enacted in 2003, he alleged that the ED and other central agencies are threatening and harassing BJP's political rivals by using the Act retrospectively with ulterior motive "in the garb of investigation" for decades-old transactions "that have nothing to do with any money laundering" even when the Act can only be applied to transactions after 2003.



Oscar nominees share their joy over being on the coveted 'list'

Nicole Kidman, who has landed a Best Actress nomination for playing yesteryear's comedy queen Lucille Ball in 'Being The Ricardos', responded to her fifth nomination by saying the excitement to find her name on the coveted list has grown over the years for her. Kidman's fellow contender in the Best Actress category, 'The Eyes of Tammy Faye' actress Jessica Chastain is still processing the news.

'Tick, Tick... Boom!' actor Andrew Garfield, who received a nomination in the Best Actor category, told 'Variety': "It's incredibly exciting. I take none of it for granted. It's such a strange thing to be able to do what I love in my life. I know how lucky I am. This is really emotional."

'Belfast' director Kenneth Branagh, who received nominations across Best Picture, Best Director and Best Original Screenplay, said in his response: "It is hard to take in, but it just reminds me of a unique privilege that I have had in my career to be able to operate as a storyteller, which is how I regard myself."

Penelope Cruz, who received a nomination for her work in 'Parallel Mothers', said: "I've been crying for an hour nonstop. I am really speechless. I didn't expect it. It is such a strong year with so many incredible performances, so I really didn't expect anything."

'The Power of the Dog' director Jane Campion spoke about receiving 12 nominations across categories. The 94th Academy Awards ceremony, which will be held in-person on March 27 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, will honour the world's best talent in cinema as revealed in feature and documentary films released between March 1 and December 31, 2021.



CLAIRE FOY TO PLAY SHERYL SANDBERG IN HBO SERIES

Los Angeles | Agencies

Network HBO has picked up 'Doomsday Machine', the upcoming series starring Claire Foy as Facebook's chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg.

The series is adapted from Sheera Frenkel and Cecilia Kang's New York Times bestselling book 'An Ugly Truth: Inside Facebook's Battle for Domination', reports variety.com.

'Doomsday Machine' chronicles the political and social minefields Facebook has navigated on its relentless quest for growth.

The series examines how Sandberg and Mark Zuckerberg's work are shaping the way that billions of people around the world communicate and consume information.

The series is created by Ayad Akhtar and hails from Anonymous Content and Wiip.

Executive producers include Foy, Akhtar, Wiip's Paul Lee and Josh Stern, Anonymous' David Levine and Doug Wald, Adam Berkowitz, Elyse Cheney and Adam Eaglin. Andrew Marantz of the New Yorker is also a consultant on the project.

Foy's casting was first announced in October 2021. She is best known for playing Queen Elizabeth II in the first two seasons of 'The Crown' on Netflix. Her other prominent credits include playing Janet Shearon in Damien Chazelle's 'First Man' and Sawyer Valentini in Steven Soderbergh's 'Unsane'.

BHUTAN GETS FIRST BEST INTERNATIONAL FEATURE NOMINATION AT OSCARS WITH 'LUNANA'

Los Angeles | Agencies

The list of the five films in the running at the Oscars for the best international feature award includes one country that earned its first-ever nomination in the category - Bhutan with the film 'Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom'.

Its debutant in the international race is Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom, directed by Pawo Choyning Dorji. The other movies competing for the best international feature honour this year are Japan's 'Drive My Car', Italy's 'The Hand of God', Denmark's 'Flee' and Norway's 'The Worst Person in the World'.

Among the contenders, Norway is the only country that has been nominated several times before, but has never won the Oscar, reports hollywoodreporter.com.

In addition to Bhutan, two previously unrepresented countries had been on the shortlist of 15, meaning they were in contention to get their first-ever shot at the international feature honor by making it onto Tuesday's final list of nominees. They were Kosovo and Panama.

'Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom' stars a group of mainly non-professionals drawn from among the locals of the Himalayan village where the movie was shot.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Now that the much-awaited nominations for the 23 categories of the Academy Awards a.k.a. the Oscars have been announced,

reactions are coming in from those who have made the cut.

Kirsten Dunst, who earned a Best Support Actress nomination for her work in 'The Power of the Dog', told Variety: "It feels so good to be honoured by the community you've worked in for so long."

Kim's family unfollows Kanye on Instagram

Los Angeles | Agencies

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian's sisters have unfollowed rapper Kanye West following his constant attack on his estranged wife.

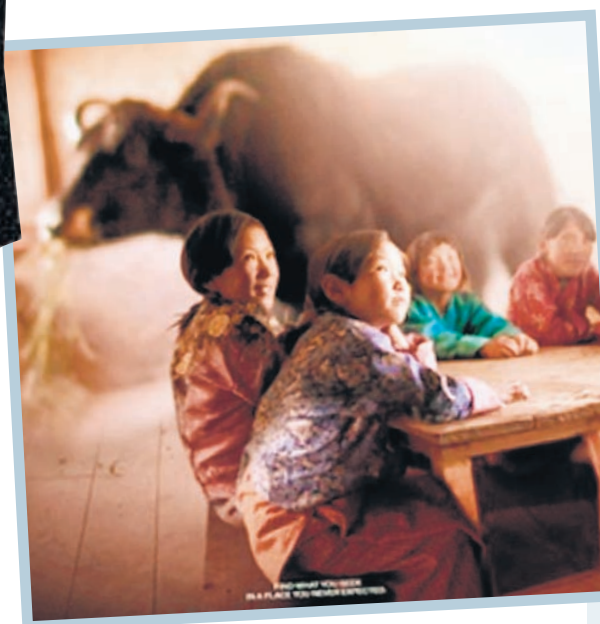
As of Tuesday, February 8, Khloe Kardashian, Kourtney Kardashian and Kendall Jenner are no longer following Ye on the photo-sharing platform, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The move comes after Kanye demanded a public apology from the Kardashians for reportedly snubbing him from his daughter Chicago's birthday party.

Taking to his Instagram page, the Yeezy designer shared a screenshot of an article about him being not invited to the bash. Alongside the snap, he argued, "I still need a public apology from the entire family for this."

"You (give) everything you got to someone then they try to bully you and then say they won't apologise. It's up till they all take accountability. Every woman there including Cory."

He also shared a screenshot of his text conversation with someone, possibly Kim, wishing each other "positive vibes" after he was able to meet his kids. At the end of the text exchange, he wrote back though, "I still need an apology for you not giving me the address to my..."



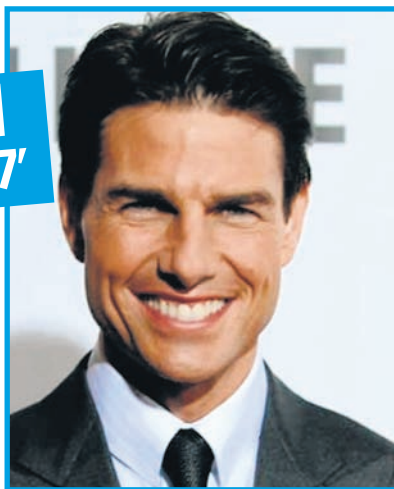
'MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 7'

HOW COVID BLEW UP BUDGET OF TOM CRUISE'S SPY SEQUEL

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Mission: Impossible 7' director Christopher McQuarrie talked up a sequence that saw actor Tom Cruise drive his motorcycle off a cliff in Norway. "This is far and away the most dangerous thing I've attempted," Cruise admitted, adding, "I wanted to do it since I was a little kid." But making this childhood dream come true has proved costly, considering this stunt and others like it had to be pulled off in the midst of a globe-rattling pandemic, reports variety.com. It has also left Paramount and Skydance Media shouldering a massive budget and an endless stream of unforeseen expenses. 'Mission: Impossible 7' cost \$290 million to produce, which is tens of millions more than the studio and its financial partner expected to have to shell out, multiple insiders with knowledge of the production told Variety. That eye-popping price tag includes the substantial tax incentives that the global production was able to leverage to rein in costs. In contrast, the most recent film in the series, 2018's 'Mission: Impossible - Fallout', cost \$190 million to make.

A significant factor in this budget escalation is that 'Mission: Impossible 7' was initially scheduled to begin shooting in Venice in February 2020, but it had to stop and start production seven different times, insiders said. Day one of principal photography, which was supposed to involve an elaborate action sequence staged during the Carnival Venice, an annual festival renowned for its elaborate masks, took place on the same day that Northern Italy went into lockdown. The production then scrambled to move shooting to Rome, only to once again be forced to shut down when cases spiked. The two films were originally scheduled to shoot concurrently, but that plan was abandoned. The eighth film is about to go into production in South Africa. Cruise and McQuarrie tend to shoot their films in real locations, not on soundstages or in front of green screens, which presents its own challenges in terms of keeping costs low and its sets COVID-free. They are also committed to giving audiences compelling, exotic locations for the on-screen action - past installments have unfolded in Prague, Dubai, Paris and New Zealand's South Island.



Robert Pattinson's skin turned green after filming 'Batman' in dark for so long

London | Agencies

Hollywood star Robert Pattinson says he spent so many hours filming 'The Batman' in the dark that he turned green.

The 'Twilight' star plays the Caped Crusader in a film shot mostly at night, reports mirror.co.uk. The 35-year-old says: "I was really, really, really dead afterward. I looked at a photo of myself from April and I looked green."

"The nature of the shoot was so kind of insular, always

shooting at night, and I felt very much alone. You're not really allowed out of the studio with the suit on, so I barely knew what was going on at all outside."

Still, at least he kept chipper on set as he got into character. "I have to really, really feel like I've hit rock bottom," he told GQ.

"Where right up until the moment I have to perform it's, 'Wow, I'm the most empty piece of s****'."



He adds: "You have to feel the pain. And suddenly it's like God gives you a little treat, 'Here's an idea you've never thought of before!'"

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Anastasia Karanikolaou



2ND ODI: INDIA BEAT WEST INDIES BY 44 RUNS, TAKE UNASSAILABLE 2-0 SERIES



Ahmedabad | Agencies

India beat West Indies by 44 runs in the second ODI, to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series at the Narendra Modi Stadium, here on Wednesday. Riding on some fine bowling performances, West Indies restricted India to 237-9 in 50 overs despite a gritty fifty by Suryakumar Yadav (64 off 83) after winning the toss and opting to field first. Apart from Suryakumar, KL Rahul (49), Deepak Hooda (29), Washington Sundar (24) also played some vital knocks but West Indies bowlers particularly Odean Smith (2/29), Alzarri Joseph (2/36) struck back with wickets at regular intervals to keep India under a below-par target. In reply, Shamarh Brooks (44),

Akeal Hosein (34), Shai Hope (27), Odean Smith (24) tried their best but it was not enough as West Indies were bowled out for 193, losing the match by 44 runs. Prasad Krishna (4/12) and Shardul Thakur (2/41) were the main wicket-takers for India. Earlier in the day, India in a surprise move sent Rishabh Pant to open the innings along with skipper Rohit Sharma. However, the opening stand didn't last long as Kumar Roach dismissed Rohit on 5 in the 3rd over. At 43-3 after 11.6 overs, India were in a spot of bother but KL Rahul and Suryakumar Yadav rescued India from the trouble. During the process, Rahul also got a reprieve by visitors. After spending enough time in the middle to assess the conditions, Rahul shifted gears and hit a few glorious shots, inching closer towards his fifty

but a misunderstanding in running between the wicket resulted in him falling short of his crease on 49 and the 91-run stand for the fourth wicket was broken. However, Suryakumar continued his well-paced knock to score his second ODI half-century, becoming the first player to cross 30 in each of his first six ODI innings. He needed to carry on and bat through to take India to a respectable total but Fabian Allen gave West Indies the big breakthrough by dismissing the batter in the 39th over. Soon, India lost another wicket of Washington Sundar (24), leaving India to 192-6 at 41.6 overs. From there on, it was Deepak Hooda's responsibility to finish well for India. He hit a much-needed boundary for India in the 45th over, to help India go past the 200 run mark.

Brief scores:
India 237-9 in 50 overs (Suryakumar Yadav 64, KL Rahul 49; Odean Smith 2/29, Alzarri Joseph 2/36) beat West Indies 193 all out in 46 overs (Shamarh Brooks 44, Akeal Hosein 34; Prasad Krishna 4/12, Shardul Thakur

BOPARA FINED 75 PER CENT MATCH FEES FOR BALL TAMPERING IN BPL MATCH



Sylhet: England all-rounder Ravi Bopara on Wednesday was fined 75 per cent of his match fees for ball tampering in a Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) match against Khulna Tigers on February 7, said The Daily Star citing a Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) release. The report also said that three disciplinary points have been added to the disciplinary record of Bopara, who was captaining Sylhet Sunrisers in the match against the Khulna Tigers. In the incident which happened during the ninth over of the match, TV cameras showed Bopara running his fingernails over the ball before bowling a delivery. The on-field umpires in the match, Mahfuzur Rahman and Prageeth Rambukwella, quickly inspected the condition of the ball and ordered for a replacement ball. Bopara and wicketkeeper Anamul Haque tried speaking to the umpires but to no avail. The Sylhet Sunrisers were eventually penalised five runs for trying to change the condition of the ball.

India Women lose one-off T20I to New Zealand by 18 runs

Queenstown | Agencies

Fine batting performance from New Zealand Women's top-order batters Suzie Bates (36) and Sophie Devine (31) helped the hosts defeat the Harmanpreet Kaur-led India by 18 runs in the one-off T20 International at the John Davies Oval here on Wednesday. Bates and Devine put on 60 for the opening wicket, scoring better than a run a ball, as New Zealand posted an impressive 155/5 in their allotted 20 overs. Jess Kerr (2/20), Amelia Kerr (2/25) and Hayley Jensen (2/25) then picked up two wickets each in a strong team effort with the ball as the tourists fell well short of the required target as they staggered to 137/8 in reply. Simran Bahadur (0/26) dropped Bates in the second over of the New Zealand innings and the Kiwi opener made her pay as she found the boundary with ease to help the hosts make a fast start. Devine fell for a well-compiled 31 in the eighth over and, when Bates was bowled by Rajeshwari Gayakwad (1/39) shortly after, the home side was reduced 80/2 in the



12th over. Some late hitting from experienced all-rounder Lea Tahuhu (27 off 14 balls) helped New Zealand to a big score, with Pooja Vastrakar's economical bowling of 1/16 from four overs the only Indian bowler that could stop the Kiwis from scoring at will. India opens Yastika Bhatia (26) and Shafali Verma (13) made a strong start in reply to cruise to 41/0 in the seventh over, but the duo fell to Amelia Kerr in the space of just three balls to put the hosts firmly in control. Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (12) and impressive middle-order batter Sabbhini Meghana (37 from 30 balls) tried hard to keep the visitors

in it, but the disciplined home side held their nerve to clinch the victory in style. The two teams will now focus their attention to a five-match ODI series that starts at the same ground on February 12, ahead of next month's Women's Cricket World Cup in New Zealand.

Brief scores
New Zealand Women 155/5 in 20 overs (Suzie Bates 36, Sophie Devine 31; Pooja Vastrakar 2/16, Deepti Sharma 2/26) beat India Women 137/8 in 20 overs (Sabbhini Meghana 37; Jess Kerr 2/20, Amelia Kerr 2/25, Hayley Jensen 2/25) by 18 runs.

Argentina Open: Emotional Martin del Potro loses in opener

Buenos Aires | Agencies

Playing for the first time since March 2019, the injury-hit Argentine Juan Martin del Potro lost 6-1, 6-3 to countryman Federico Delbonis in the first round of the Argentina Open. Following four right-knee surgeries, the former world No. 3 admitted he might have played his last match. However his name is enlistered in the draw of this month's ATP 500 Rio Open. Last week, the former US Open champion (2009) hinted that his appearances in Buenos Aires and Rio Open may mark his final ATP Tour tournaments. After leaving the court, he had this mes-



sage for fans hoping to see him play again, "I don't know if it's going to happen, because the pain in my knee is very high. But I will keep doing a big effort to fix the

knee, and if I get that, maybe I will have another chance to play." The world No. 42 Delbonis will meet Spaniard Pablo Andujar in the next round on Thursday.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The new Ahmedabad-based IPL team, owned by CVC Capital, will be called Gujarat Titans, the franchise revealed on Wednesday, days ahead of the

mega auction. The naming of the Ahmedabad franchise comes days after the Lucknow-based team announced its official name as Lucknow Super Giants. Both Ahmedabad and Lucknow are two new entrants to

AHMEDABAD-BASED NEW IPL FRANCHISE TO BE CALLED GUJARAT TITANS

the IPL and were bought by CVC Capital Partners (Irelia Company Pte Ltd) and RPSG Group respectively, last October. "Debating in the 15th season of the IPL, the Gujarat Titans will pay tribute to the state's rich cricketing legacy, which has seen it produce countless Indian international cricket legends over the years," the franchise said in a statement on Wednesday. "The franchise is inspired by the opportunity to represent and build on this deep cricketing heritage, as well as build on its future success on the pitch," it added. India all-rounder Hardik Pandya (Rs 15 crore) will lead the Ahmedabad team while they have also picked Rashid Khan (Rs 15 crore) and Shubman Gill (Rs 8

crore) via drafts ahead of the auction. It will be only the second IPL team for all three players, with Rashid coming over from Sunrisers Hyderabad, Gill from Kolkata Knight Riders, and Pandya from Mumbai Indians. This will also be the first time Pandya will lead an IPL franchise. Titans have also named their coaching staff comprising Ashish Nehra (head coach), Gary Kirsten (mentor and batting coach) and Vikram Solanki (director of cricket). The trio has worked together for Royal Challengers Bangalore previously. Titans' home stadium will be the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, the world's largest cricket stadium.



Career-best 66 gives Gaurika 5-shot lead on Day 1 of WPGT 2022

Hyderabad | Agencies

Gaurika Bishnoi gave the 2022 season of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour a flying start with a career-best 6-under 66 at the Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club that placed the 23-year-old Gurugram golfer on top of the leaderboard. Gaurika was five clear of the second placed trio, which included two amateurs, Sneha Singh and Jasmine Shekar along with pro Jyotsana Singh who all carded 1-under 71. Ridhima Dilawari, who had four birdies in a span of five holes, dropped three bogeys on the back nine as she ended with an even par 72. Gaurika, who was hit by Covid in January, opened with a string of five pars as she was in the first group to tee off. She then birdied three times

in the last four holes of the front nine to make the turn at 3-under. She added four more birdies on the back nine on 11th, 13th, 14th and 17th and her sole blemish came on the Par-4 12th. Pleased with her round, she said, "It was a good round today. My career best on WGAI and a personal best also. It definitely feels great to start the new year by breaking a personal record. I have been working hard and I'm glad to see that things are falling into place. Just need to stay committed to my process." She added, "In the off season I was focusing on some things that hadn't worked well for me in the LET Q-school. Then earlier in January I was also down with Covid. But I have worked hard on my game and am glad it is paying off." On the round, she went on, "The

game, all in all, was in a good shape and a combination of good putts, good drives and good wedge play." Amateur Sneha, who has tasted success on the Hero WPG Tour earlier, had three birdies on the front nine and two bogeys on the back nine. Another amateur Jasmine, starting on 10th, was 3-over through 11 holes. She then struck a purple patch with 4 birdies in six holes between the third and eighth. Jyotsana, also starting on 10th, had a bogey on 11th but then holed three birdies between 12th and 15th. On the second nine she birdied first but bogeyed second and third and parred the rest. Jahanvi Bakshi and Anisha Agarwalla shot 73 each and were Tied-6th while Hitaashee Bakshi, Shweta Mansingh and Nayanika Sangra were Tied-8th with 74 each.

England announce squad for West Indies Tests; Anderson, Broad left out

London | Agencies

England on Tuesday announced a 16-member squad for the three-match Test tour of the Caribbean starting next month, leaving out senior pros -- James Anderson and Stuart Broad. Apart from Broad and Anderson -- the country's two leading wicket-takers in Test cricket, England have also left out Dom Bess, Sam Billings, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler, Haseeb Hameed and David Malan from the squad that toured Australia for the Ashes recently. Notably, the humiliating 4-0 series defeat in Australia has already seen Ashley Giles, Chris Silverwood and Graham Thorpe lose their jobs as part of the support staff. Of those who were part of the squad in Australia, Joe Root and Ben Stokes will lead the squad in the Caribbean while young batters Zak Crawley, who impressed with a half-century at the MCG, Ollie Pope and Dan



Lawrence retain their places alongside the more experienced Jonny Bairstow, Chris Woakes and Craig Overton are the fast-bowling all-rounders while Ollie Robinson and Mark Wood complete the bowling stocks. Jack Leach partners Parkinson as the other spinner in the party. England men's selection panel, consisting of Andrew Strauss, interim head coach Paul Collingwood and head scout James Taylor, have given the maiden call-up to Durham opener Alex Lees and Yorkshire seamer Matthew Fisher. The touring party departs for the West Indies tour on Thursday 24 February. Squad: Joe Root (C), Jonny Bairstow, Zak Crawley, Matthew Fisher, Ben Foakes, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Alex Lees, Saqib Mahmood, Craig Overton, Matthew Parkinson, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Ben Stokes, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood

ISL 2021-22 Ortiz shines as FC Goa thrash Chennaiyin FC to keep playoff hopes alive

Vasco (Goa) | Agencies

FC Goa kept their slim playoff hopes alive with a five-star performance against Chennaiyin FC whose aspirations of a top-four spot were dealt a heavy blow, as they were humbled 5-0 in the Hero Indian Super League at the Tilak Maidan Stadium, here on Wednesday. Jorge Ortiz (20th, 41st, 53rd) scored a hat-trick after Makan Chothe (6th) opened the scoring for the Gauras with Narayan Das (45th OG) putting the ball in his own net, to sum up Chennaiyin's night. Goa snapped a five-game winless run to return to form in the best possible way, moving to 18 points from 16 matches and doing their goal difference a world of good. They remained in ninth spot. For Chennaiyin, it was their second consecutive loss, meaning the former champions remained on 19



points from 16 matches and placed eighth in the points table. It was all FC Goa from the start as they bossed proceedings from the start to finish, leaving Chennaiyin with little room to breathe. Chothe logged his first-ever Hero ISL goal after Edu Bedia slipped a pass to Aiban Dohling on the left flank for the young winger to serve a crisp cross at the far end for Chothe to volley the ball first time into the back of the net with aplomb. Ortiz made it 2-0 soon after, Dohling

involved again as he put the ball inside the area after Brandon Fernandes sent him in the clear on the left channel. Chennaiyin defence were left ball watching as they failed to clear the danger and the ball went to Ortiz who took a few touches before slotting home past Debjit Majumder in Chennaiyin goal. The second half saw more of Goa domination as Chennaiyin failed to muster any real opportunity in front of goal. Ortiz crowned his brilliant performance with a first hat-trick this season after the effervescent Dohling got past a few defenders to nudge the ball in the path of the Spaniard whose sublime first touch took the ball away from Narayan as he charged forward to rifle home from close. Chennaiyin tried hard to weather the Goa storm by bringing in Nerijus Valskis for the ineffective Lukas Gikiewicz but it was just not their day.

Australia-New Zealand T20I series abandoned due to travel restrictions

Auckland | Agencies

The T20I series between Australia and England, which was scheduled to be played in Napier next month, has been abandoned due to the ongoing travel restrictions between the trans-Tasman neighbours. The three-match series was set to take place at McLean Park in Napier between March 17 and 20 but the COVID-enforced restrictions at the New Zealand border have meant Cricket Australia (CA) and New Zealand Cricket (NZC) mutually calling off the mini-series. A statement issued by NZC



on Wednesday said, "The short, four-day-long series, set down for McLean Park, Napier on March 17, 18 and 20, was initially arranged on the basis of the New Zealand

Government's plan to relax restrictions at the trans-Tasman border. However, with those plans now substantially delayed, and no MIQ (Managed Isolation and

Quarantine) accommodation available for the Australian side on their scheduled arrival into New Zealand, NZC has been given no choice but to abandon the series. "As a consequence of this (and given the cancellations would have left the Hawke's Bay region with a substantially reduced international programme) the BLACKCAPS-Netherlands T20 on March 25, previously scheduled for Bay Oval, Tauranga, will now be played at Napier's McLean Park," the statement added. NZC chief executive David White said the move was inevitable given the border restrictions.



Twists and turns are essential to keep the audience intrigued: Simaran Kaur

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Simaran Kaur's performance as Niyati in 'Aggar Tum Na Hote' is being appreciated. The current track on the show sees her do much and the actress sounds keyed up talking about it.

"Niyati is trying hard to protect Abhimanyu (Himanshu Soni) and it is going to get even more difficult as there is someone in the house who is intentionally trying to harm him. It will be really exciting to see how Niyati is going to find the villain," she continues, "There have been some interesting twists in the story unravelling Niyati's past and how it is affecting her

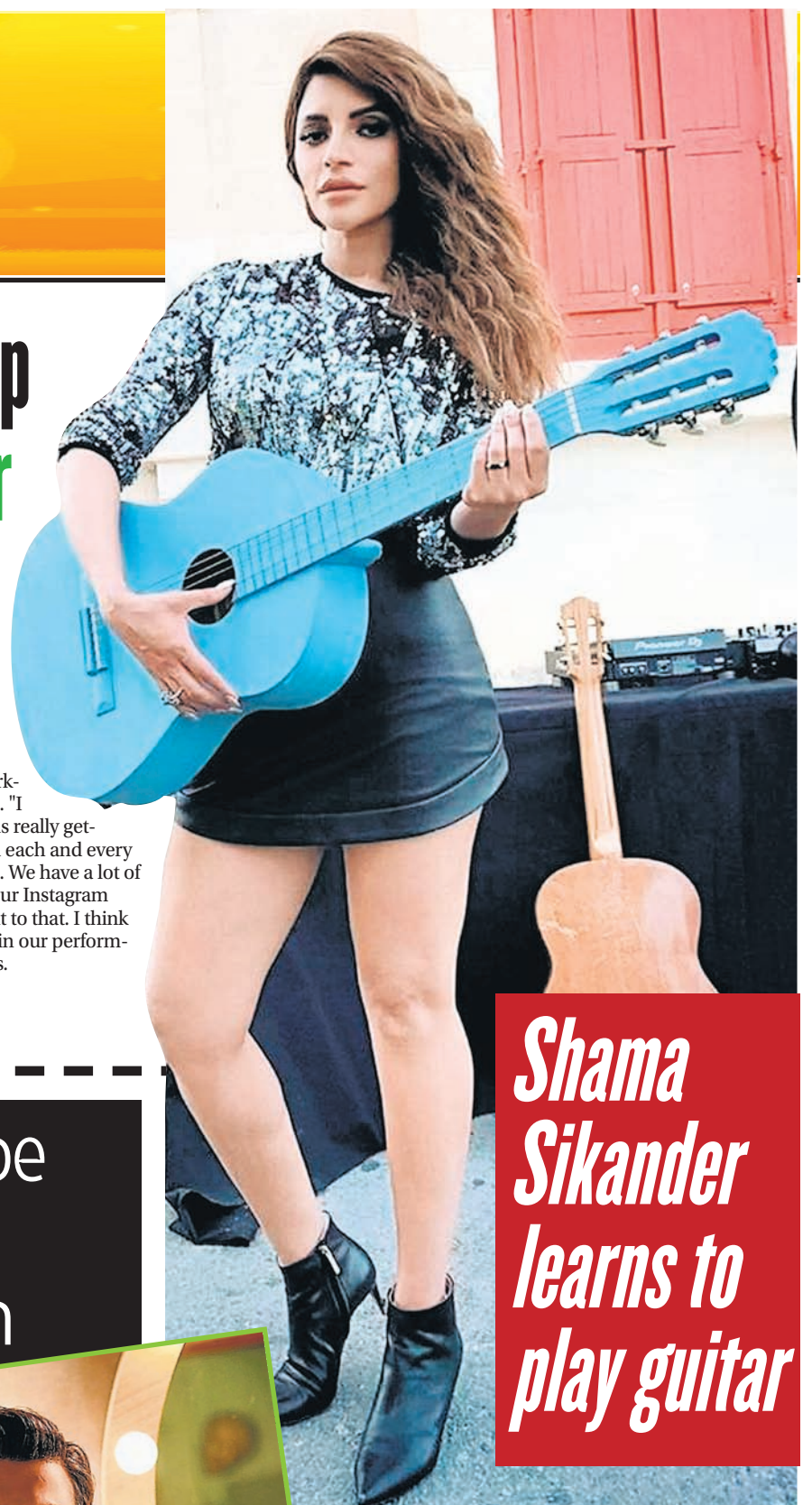
present. I guess such back stories and turn of events are essential in keeping the audience intrigued, and make the show enjoyable."

Simaran feels what the audiences love is Niyati's efforts to take care of her husband. "As a newly-wed girl she is fighting with destiny to heal her husband, make sure no one harms her. Her unwavering faith in love and her dedication towards healing him is making the audience love the show all the more," she adds.

On how much she relates to the character, the actor says: "It's really an amazing character to portray. Niyati is a girl who cares about her patients, she is a dedicated and an ideal wife who takes care of her husband and his family. I guess I can draw a lot of similarities between me and Niyati, as I also love taking care of my family and people around

me."

Ask about the experience of shooting the show, any fun incident that happened on the set, and Simaran begins by saying how it has been a pleasure working with a great cast. "I think the audience is really getting connected with each and every character quite well. We have a lot of fun on the set and our Instagram reels are a testament to that. I think that gets translated in our performances too," she adds.



Shama Sikander learns to play guitar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shama Sikander learned a bit of guitar for her upcoming song 'Majnu Remix' with Mika Singh.

'Majnu Remix' has been shot in various locales in Malta. It's a Mika Singh dance number. Shama shares: "I wanted to make it look comfortable while holding the guitar and understand the guitar and look of the character in the situation of the song. I did not have much time to really learn it though I would love to someday. But at least I needed to understand how to feel and hold the instrument. I am very excited to bring this song to everyone."

Shama, who was also seen in Aamir Khan-starrer 'Mann', adds further about the song and says: "It's very groovy and it's one of the most fun songs I've ever done. You can play it anywhere, at home, in public, or in the car. It's my first collaboration with Mika. I am very excited about this one. I love music that is upbeat and gets me started to dance and groove and this definitely is right up there."

'Manju Remix' is releasing on February 10 on Mika's official YouTube channel Music and Sound.

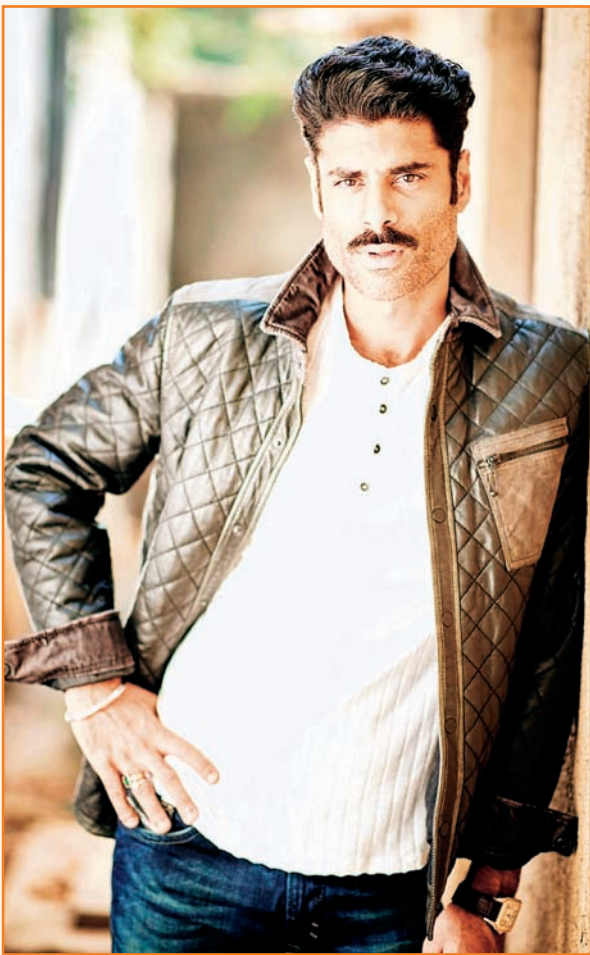
SIKANDAR KHER: I'VE ALWAYS FELT SOCIAL MEDIA ISN'T ABOUT DECEPTION

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Sikandar Kher, who is gearing up for his next venture 'Chidiya Udd', says he has always felt that social media isn't about deception. "I have always felt that social media isn't about deception, it's about showing the world what you really are. I think there's nothing more amazing for me than being 100 per cent authentic and I honestly have fun in doing so connecting with my fans, people on social media," Sikander said.

He added: "My digital presence is exactly who and how I am in real life. I am a person who likes to spend time with friends and family, and that's what reflects on my social media. I never have wanted to create an image for myself and cave into the pressures of projecting a part of me which I can't relate to." The actor said that is where the authenticity comes from, that's

where his fans get to be a part of his life. "I have been told several times to show myself a certain way, but as an actor and as a person firstly, I think this part of me should be as raw as it can get. I never planned to do this to earn praise or more following, I just did what I felt was the real side of my personality and I guess that's what people resonated with," he said.



Ranveer shares YouTube sensation lip-syncing Deepika's lines from film



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Ranveer Singh has shared a video of little social media sensation, Rashi Shinde, channelling the character of Leela, played by Deepika Padukone in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2013 film 'Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram Leela'. In the short clip from the Moj app, Shinde, who is said to have more than 10 million followers, sports a lehenga-choli and lip sync's Deepika lines from the film. She nails Deepika's expressions as she delivers the lines.

Sharing a lip-sync video on Twitter, Ranveer wrote: "Leela jaisi koi nahi (No one is like Leela)!" Ranveer, incidentally, played the leading role of Ram in the film loosely based on the 1961 version of 'West Side Story'. Tagging Deepika, Ranveer added: "Check out this mini version of you!" Describing Rashi as "chhoti Deepika", he gushed: "Love the expressions!"

HOW GAUHAH KHAN MANAGED HER COMPLEX CHARACTER IN UPCOMING SERIES?

Ila Sankrityayan | New Delhi

Actress Gauhar Khan calls her role in the web series 'Bestseller' as a dream role for her. She opens up about her character and the challenges faced by her to make it look more realistic. Gauhar says: "It's a dream role. If you think about the length of my character, Mayanka, she is there everywhere, in all the episodes and all the happenings of the story. If you see from a performance point of view, Mayanka has a multi-faceted character, you can say she is the craziest graph of the show. And she is somehow related to all the other characters of the show. She is not linear. She is not only Tahir's (Arjan Bajwa) wife, but she also has her own complexities in her work life. So, this role is something that came to me because of my prayers."

Gauhar's character is not simple and it has a lot of complexities. And making these kinds of roles appealing and realistic is always a challenging job for an actor. Gauhar shares all those challenges she faced while playing it.

"I think the biggest challenge was to keep it as real and not make it, you know, look filmy. I think in any kind of thriller, there will be screams and blood, there will be suspense, there will be shocks here and there. And for it to be

very realistic is a challenge that comes through with Mayanka's character. I understood her emotions while reading the script. I just wanted to keep her as real and relatable as possible."

She elaborates about the efforts put by her to get into the skin of character. The actress says: "We had a lot of table reads as a unit, all the characters knew exactly the parts and the relation and correlation with everything else that's happening on the show. Every time we asked our director Mukul Abhyankar a question, he knew exactly the answer and reason behind every situation. As to why something needs to happen, or why it doesn't need to happen."

"You know, film and television or any visual medium is actually a director's medium. So, you have to kind of take the director's lead and go with how he perceives it, because he sees an entire picture. Our director kept everyone together, and directed all of us into one particular direction, to make 'Bestseller' as believable and as thrilling as possible. I think that's what helped in making my character stay true to what she was."

She gives credit to director Mukul Abhyankar for trying to give his best to the project and thinking about the needs of every actor.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Kriti Sanon