

absolute india

VOL. 7, ISSUE 109, BHOPAL | MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2022 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI

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Belarus Prez says sanctions by West pushing Russia into World War 3

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has warned the West against imposing tough sanctions on Moscow, saying that such measures could push Russia into a "third world war", RT reported.



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Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has warned the West against imposing tough sanctions on Moscow, saying that such measures could push Russia into a "third world war", RT reported. "Now there is a lot of talk against the banking sector. Gas, oil, SWIFT. It's worse than war. This is pushing Russia into a third world war," Lukashenko said on Sunday, as quoted by local media. He added that a nuclear conflict could be the final outcome, the report said. Russia's military attack against Ukraine, ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin on February 24, has been condemned by Western nations and prompted a new wave of tough sanctions against Moscow. In the latest move against Moscow the EU,

UK, Canada and the US said "selected Russian banks" would be cut off from the SWIFT international payments system - a measure Russia has warned in the past would be regarded as a declaration of war. Despite the threat of further measures, Lukashenko stressed that both Russia and Belarus will "survive" any sanctions, RT reported. "We have experience. We discussed this theme with Putin more than once. We'll survive. It is impossible to starve us to death," he said. Retaliatory measures being developed by Moscow and Minsk will be "very tangible," but it is important to think them over "very carefully," Lukashenko said, not to self-harm, the report said. The Belarusian leader has also said if the West moved to put nuclear weapons in bordering countries, he would ask Putin to "return" its own nuclear weapons to Belarus.

UP RECORDS 54.53% VOTING IN FIFTH PHASE

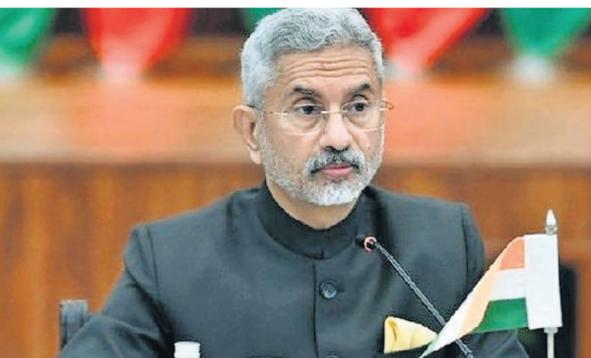
New Delhi: Approximately 54.53 per cent voter turnout was registered in the fifth phase of Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, as per the Election Commission.

The polling was held in 61 Assembly constituencies spread in 12 districts of Uttar Pradesh. The Election Commission said that 54.53 per cent voter turnout figure was an approximate trend as data from some polling stations takes time to reach. The highest voter turnout of 59.64 per cent was recorded in Chitrakoot district followed by Ayodhya 58.01 per cent and Shravasti 57.24 per cent.

The lowest turnout was registered in Prayagraj with 51.99 per cent, while Amethi registered 53.99 per cent turnout, Baharich 54.60 per cent, Barabanki 54.65 per cent, Gonda 54.66 per cent, Kaushambi 57.01 per cent, Pratapgarh 51.99 per cent, Rae Bareilly 56.06 per cent, and Sultanpur 54.88 per cent. Polling was held from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

JAISHANKAR CALLS UP HUNGARIAN, MOLDAVAN COUNTERPARTS FOR EXTENDING EVACUATION SUPPORT

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday spoke to his Hungarian counterpart Peter Szijarto in Hungary and expressed gratitude for providing support so far in evacuating Indians from the Hungarian-Ukrainian border.



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External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday spoke to his Hungarian counterpart Peter Szijarto in Hungary and expressed gratitude for providing support so far in evacuating Indians from the Hungarian-Ukrainian border. "Called up Hungarian FM Peter Szijarto. Thankful for the evacuation support provided so far. Requested further cooperation on the Hungary-

Ukraine border," he said, in a tweet. He also dialled his Moldovan counterpart Nicu Popescu to seek support for facilitating entry of Indian nationals on Ukraine-Moldova border. "Appreciate his ready response & strong support. MEA representatives will accordingly reach there tomorrow," he said, in another tweet. Poland, Romania and Hungary are allowing Indian students who escape from Ukraine to enter without any visa. So far, around 1,000 students have

been evacuated from Ukraine while more will be airlifted by Monday via neighbouring countries. The Ministry of External Affairs on Sunday said that till now four flights have come back with Indian students evacuated via Romania and Hungary and two flight sare likely to depart Sunday night or by Monday morning to evacuate more students. "The Government of India has launched 'multi-pronged' Operation Ganga to evacuate our citizens stranded in Ukraine. This evacuation process will be at government cost," Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Sunday. A special flight carrying Indian students stranded in Ukraine arrived at Delhi airport on Sunday evening from Romanian capital Bucharest. Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, who was at the airport to receive the returning Indian students, said that every student stuck in Ukraine is being brought back. "PM (Narendra) Modi is himself monitoring the situation and we have sent teams to the neighbouring countries of Ukraine. The MEA has also set up a control room regarding the ongoing situation," he added.

UN charter must be upheld by all countries: Congress on Ukraine conflict

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Congress on Sunday expressed grave concern on the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine and said that the UN charter must be upheld by all countries. "The outbreak of hostilities and military conflict between Russia and in Ukraine is a matter of grave concern for the world. The Indian National Congress, while expressing its anguish, is of the considered view that the international community must work together for cessation of armed conflict and early restoration of peace to save human lives and prevent

Congress on Sunday expressed grave concern on the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine and said that the UN charter must be upheld by all countries.

further aggravation of the crisis," Congress Foreign Cell Chairman and former Union Minister Anand Sharma said in a statement. "The path of diplomatic negotiations must be embraced in all sincerity for a negotiated resolution of all issues between Russia and Ukraine, respecting the Minsk Pact and Russia-NATO agreements and earlier understandings," he added. Meanwhile Russia said on Sunday that, after some back-and-forth, Ukraine agreed to dispatch a team to Belarus for talks to end the Russian military campaign in the country, RT reported. Kiev "confirmed" the planned talks in Gomel Region, which is close to the borders of both Russia and Ukraine, Russian chief negotiator Vladimir Medinsky told reporters.

More flights under 'Operation Ganga' to evacuate stranded Indian nationals in Ukraine

A total of three flights carrying stranded Indian nationals took off from Hungary's Budapest in the last 24 hours amid intensified Russia and Ukraine War.

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A total of three flights carrying stranded Indian nationals took off from Hungary's Budapest in the last 24 hours amid intensified Russia and Ukraine War. The evacuation operation named as 'Operations Ganga' is being extensively activated from Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. Camps have been set up in these countries at the borders with Ukraine. Minister

of External Affairs S. Jaishankar thanked his Hungarian counterpart for extending full support for 'Operation Ganga'. "Third flight of Operation Ganga with 240 Indian nationals has taken off from Budapest for Delhi. Koszonom szepen FM Peter Szijarto (Thank you very much) FM Peter Szijarto," said Jaishankar. The second flight from Budapest left for Delhi on Saturday carrying 250 Indian nationals. The first flight to Mumbai with 219 Indian nationals had also taken off



from Romania. Immediately after the flight took off, Jaishankar had stated, "Regarding evacuation of Indian nationals from Ukraine, we are making progress. Our teams are working on the ground round the clock. I am personally monitoring." Further, Indian Embassy in Ukraine is rescuing stranded Indian nationals from various parts of the war-torn country and sending

them to the borders with these four countries wherein Indian officials are waiting for them to cross the border. Also, Indian embassy in Ukraine have shared a list of temporary bomb shelters created by local administration for the stranded Indian students amid intensified bombing by Russia. The embassy in an advisory stated that Ukraine is under martial law, which has made movement difficult. "For those students who are stranded without a place of stay in Kyiv, Mission is in touch with establishments to put them up," the advisory stated.

NO PENALTY FOR PEOPLE WITHOUT MASKS RIDING PRIVATE VEHICLES

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The Delhi Disaster Management Authority on Saturday said people travelling in private four-wheeler vehicles will no longer be challaned for not wearing face masks. The order released by the Delhi administration will be implemented from Monday. The fine for not wearing masks in public places and not abiding by social distancing norms has also been reduced from Rs 2,000 to Rs 500. However, the relaxation from penalty will not be applied to people travelling together in cabs and taxis which

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority on Saturday said people travelling in private four-wheeler vehicles will no longer be challaned for not wearing face masks. The order released by the Delhi administration will be implemented from Monday.



are public transport vehicles. Meanwhile, in a separate order from the Directorate of Education, all the teachers, IT Assistants and District Education Officer of the Directorate of Education, who have been deployed for Covid-related duties in Revenue department of Government of National Capital Territory, and still

continue to work in Covid-related duties in the Revenue department are directed to report back on Monday to their parent school, branch of Directorate of Education where they are physically posted without waiting for any formal relieving from their present place of deployment. Meanwhile, the capital city continues to report a declining trend of Covid-19 cases. The national capital on Saturday reported a marginal decline at 440 fresh Covid cases as compared to 460 cases reported on Friday. The fresh Covid infections have pushed the overall tally to 18,59,054 in the city. In the last 24 hours, two deaths due to Covid-19 have also been reported, taking the death toll at 26,119 in the city, said the health release on Saturday evening.

Nadda's Twitter account briefly hacked, restored now

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Twitter account of BJP chief J.P. Nadda was hacked briefly on Sunday morning. The account, however, was restored later on. "BJP national president's account was compromised briefly. It is now under control. We are speaking with Twitter to ascertain the exact reason," BJP sources said. The hacker renamed the account as ICJ runs Jagat Prakash Nadda. The hacker separately tweeted seeking donation in crypto currency for Ukraine and Russia. At 9.52 a.m. the hacker tweeted, "Stand with people of Ukraine. Now accepting cryptocurrency donations. Bitcoin and Ethereum." Five minutes later, the hacker quoting the previous tweet said, "My account is not hacked. All donations will be given to

Ukraine government." At 10.02 a.m., the hacker tweeted, "Stand with people of Russia. Now accepting cryptocurrency donations. Bitcoin and Ethereum." "My account got hacked. Donate to Russia because they need help," the hacker tweeted again. In December last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Twitter account was compromised for a brief period and a post claiming that India had officially adopted bitcoin as legal tender was tweeted from it. "The Twitter handle of PM @narendramodi was very briefly compromised. The matter was escalated to Twitter and the account has been immediately secured. In the brief period that the account was compromised, any tweet shared must be ignored," PMO India had said in a tweet.

DON'T VENTURE TOWARDS RAILWAY STATIONS UNTIL CURFEW IS LIFTED: EMBASSY TELLS INDIANS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian citizens in areas of war-torn Ukraine where a curfew has been imposed were asked not to venture towards railway stations until and unless the curfew is lifted, the Indian Embassy in Ukraine said in its latest advisory. "Based on the latest input, intense fighting is underway in Kharkiv, Sumy, and Kyiv. It is reiterated, Indian nationals in these cities, and other cities wherever curfew has been applied, are NOT advised to venture towards railway stations until curfew has been lifted and consider-

able civilian movement is renewed," the advisory read. The armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine intensified in the early hours of Thursday after Russian forces launched a major assault on Ukraine, firing missiles on cities and military installations and posing a serious danger to the Indian citizens residing there. Since then, India began evacuating its citizens from the war-torn region. The Indian Embassy, in a separate advisory earlier, had asked its nationals to move out of regions of active conflict and proceed towards the western regions.

Role of Indian scientists in the fight against Corona is praiseworthy: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that the role of Indian scientists in the fight against Covid-19 was praiseworthy and due to their hard work, it was possible to manufacture the 'Made in India vaccine'.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that the role of Indian scientists in the fight against Covid-19 was praiseworthy and due to their hard work, it was possible to manufacture the 'Made in India vaccine'. "Today, I will like to praise the role of Indian scientists in the fight against Corona, and because of their hard work, the manufacturing of 'Made in India vaccines' was possible which gave a great relief to the world. This is the gift

of science to humanity," he said in his 86th episode of the monthly radio address of 'Mann Ki Baat'. Talking about the 'National Science Day' on February 28, he said that this day is also known for the discovery of the Raman Effect. "Along with CV Raman ji, I pay my respectful tribute to all the scientists who have contributed significantly in enriching our scientific journey," he said. Modi also said technology has secured an important place in our lives in the realm of ease and simplicity. "Which technology is good and what is the better use of that

technology, we are well acquainted with all these subjects. But, it is also true that the basis of that technology, the underlying science, is something that we neglect in conveying to the children in our families," he said. On this Science Day, I urge all the families to definitely start with small efforts to develop a scientific temperament in their children, the Prime Minister said. "Now, for example -- poor vision... after wearing glasses, vision improves with clarity... children can easily be explained on the science behind it. It's not that

one should restrict oneself to just looking at the glasses and enjoying. Now you can simply explain to the child on a small piece of paper," he added. Referring to the various mobile applications, he further said that nowadays, there are also many apps through which the children can locate the stars and planets, or can identify the star which is visible in the sky and can also know about it. "I will also tell our startups that you should employ your skills and scientific character in the work related to nation-building. This is also our collec-

tive scientific responsibility towards the country. Like, nowadays I see that our startups are doing very well in the world of virtual reality and in the era of virtual classes, one such virtual lab can be designed keeping children in mind." "We can also make children experience a chemistry lab sitting at home through virtual reality and request the teachers and parents to encourage all the students and children to ask questions and together with them find the right answers to those questions," Modi added.



From Parliament to Panchayat, women reaching new heights in different fields: Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that women in India are reaching new heights in different fields and they are dispelling old myths.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that women in India are reaching new heights in different fields and they are dispelling old myths.

Referring to the International Women's Day on March 8, he said that the women in the country have taken the lead everywhere whether it is Skill India, Self Help Group, small or big industries.

"From Parliament to Panchayat, women are reaching newer heights in different fields. In the Army too, daughters are now taking responsibilities in new and bigger roles and



are protecting the country," he said in his monthly radio programme 'Mann ki Baat'.

He also said that on Republic Day in January, the daughters were flying modern fighter planes. The country also lifted the restrictions on the admission of daughters in Sainik Schools, and daughters are

taking admissions in those schools all over the country, he added.

Noting that in the recent years, thousands of new startups began in the country and about half of these startups have women in director roles. "In the recent past, decisions like increasing maternity leave for women have been taken. The

country is trying to give equal rights to sons and daughters by fixing a common age for marriage," Modi said further.

"All these major changes happened because of our social campaigns like the success of 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'... today the sex ratio in the country has improved while the number of girls going to school has also improved and now it is our responsibility that our daughters do not drop out of school," PM Modi said.

Similarly, women in the country have got freedom from open defecation under the 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' while the social evil like triple talaq is also coming to an end, he further said.

"Ever since the law against triple talaq has come into being, there has been a reduction of 80 per cent in triple talaq cases in the country. This change is coming because women themselves are now leading the change and progressive efforts in our country," Modi said.

Jal Shakti Minister to chair conference of NE states on Monday

With focus on implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), Union Minister of Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat will chair a regional conference of ministers of the north east states on Monday in Guwahati.

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With focus on implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), Union Minister of Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat will chair a regional conference of ministers of the north east states on Monday in Guwahati. In a statement, the Ministry of Jal Shakti said that the Union Minister will be setting the roadmap for the north east States, keeping in line with the guidance received from Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Webinar on 'Post Union Budget 2022 - Leaving No Citizen Behind', held on February 23. During the webinar the Prime Minister had said, "A clear roadmap must be built so that States/UTs can achieve the target within



the stipulated time frame. Priority should be given to North-Eastern border States, hilly regions and aspirational districts." "Difficult terrain, heavy rain and snowfall coupled with erratic supply of construction material greatly impacts the progress of the mission work in the border regions of the north-east. Reaffirming the commitment towards public health and well-being of the people living in rural areas, the Union Budget 2022-23 fund allocation for JJM has been increased from Rs 45,000 crore in 2021-22 to Rs

60,000 crore in 2022-23. For SBM (G) Rs 7,192 crore have been allocated in the Budget 2022-23," the ministry said.

'Har Ghar Jal' is a flagship programme of the Union Government being implemented in partnership with States and Union Territory (UTs), aimed at providing tap water connection to every rural household in the country by 2024. Manipur, Meghalaya and Sikkim aim to achieve Har Ghar Jal in 2022. The deadline set by Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura and Nagaland is 2023, and Assam aims to meet the goal in 2024. Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) is another flagship programme being implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

CBI gets more evidence indicating that Subramanian could be Yogi Baba

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), probing National Stock Exchange Fraud case, has found more evidence that the mysterious "Himalayan yogi", whom then bourse chief Chitra Ramkrishna relied upon for "advice", could be the NSE's former Group Operating Officer Anand Subramanian only, as per sources.

A few locations of the mobile device of Subramanian were accessed by the CBI, and found to be from nearby Subramanian's Chennai residence, a source said. "A few electronic evidence have been found. We suspect that Subramanian used to edit the emails before sending them as the yogi. We are currently recording his statements," said the source.

CBI sources has said that since he had access to the emails sent to the yogi, they suspect they can be the same. However, the agency

did not officially confirm it.

Subramanian, who has been arrested after questioning, was sent to CBI custody till March 6 after the agency told a Delhi court that they needed custodial interrogation to confront him with seized articles and others involved in the case.

A source told IANS that his statements were recorded for three consecutive days at Chennai, but was found to be "evasive". Subramanian, who was brought to the NSE by its then CEO and MD Ramkrishna, reportedly had access to the email ID on which the emails were sent to the "Himalayan yogi" with whom the classified information was shared. The source added that another team of the CBI searched the SEBI office in Mumbai, and recovered some incriminating documents, evidences and digital documents.

"These are crucial documents and evidences nailing the lies of the accused involved in the case. We are in process of making a fool-

proof case against all the accused. These will help the prosecution in proving our case when it goes to court," said the source.

The CBI had on February 19 grilled erstwhile NSE director Ravi Narain, who held the post before Ramkrishna. "Narain was asked to join the investigation. He responded to our summons. He was called to the Delhi office where he was grilled. He is also a suspect in the case," said the CBI source, adding that he also "tried to evade a lot of questions". He also requested that his LOC against him be closed. Ramkrishna was questioned by the CBI in Mumbai recently, and asked her around 50 questions, including for how long she had been sending mails to the "yogi", was she given any cut for sharing classified information, if yes, where she invested this money. According to sources, she tried to play victim card, claiming she didn't know a lot of things.

IT dept searches premises linked to Siliguri based associate of Peeyush Jain

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a latest development in income tax evasion case related to perfume businessman Peeyush Jain, the Income Tax Department conducted search operation at 25 different locations belonging to his associate Narayan Aggarwal in Siliguri in West Bengal.

Narayan Aggarwal is reportedly deals into betel nuts. The Income Tax officials were scanning the associates of Piyush Jain who were also allegedly involved in Hawala and Tax evasion. The search operation on IT department is going on and as of now they haven't given any official statement. The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) had, on December 30, 2021, said that total cash recovered from the two premises of Kanpur Kannauj Businessman Peeyush Jain was 197.49 crore, it was a case property and he didn't show it as the turn over of his company.

The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) had in December last year conducted raids at Odochem Industries, being run by Peeyush Jain, a manufacturer of perfumery com-



pounds. The DGGI had recovered Rs. 197.49 crore, 23 kg of gold and offending goods of high value have from two premises belonging to Peeyush Jain.

Earlier it was said that the DGGI has decided to treat the cash recovered from the premises of Peeyush

Jain as the turnover of his company. It was also stated that after admitting his liability, Peeyush Jain has, with the approval of DGGI, will deposit a total amount of Rs 52 crore as tax dues and will be freed from all allegations. It was also learnt that the DGGI department has agreed with the deposition of Peeyush Jain and

finalised the tax liability accordingly. However, the DGGI made it clear that there was nothing going like that. The DGGI had refuted all the claims. "Based on his voluntary admission of guilt and the evidence available on record, Peeyush Jain was arrested on December 26 under section 132 of the CGST Act," DGGI had said.

Sporadic incidents of violence in Bengal municipal polls

Though there were sporadic incidents of violence, brisk polling was recorded in 108 municipalities spread over 21 districts across West Bengal in the crucial civic body elections on Sunday. According to the latest information, 65 per cent polling was recorded till 3 p.m.

Kolkata | Agencies

Though there were sporadic incidents of violence, brisk polling was recorded in 108 municipalities spread over 21 districts across West Bengal in the crucial civic body elections on Sunday. According to the latest information, 65 per cent polling was recorded till 3 p.m.

The voting started at 7 a.m. and will conclude at 5 p.m.. Early visuals from the polling booths showed long queues as people turned up to exercise their franchise. The voting is being held for 2,171 wards of the 108 municipalities and the counting of votes will take place on March 2. Over 95.6 lakh voters will be deciding the fate of 8,160 candidates.

East Midnapore recorded the highest polling



percentage of 75.7 followed by Murshidabad with 73.9 per cent polling, Birbhum and East Burdwan recorded more than 70 per cent polling till 3 p.m. Darjeeling recorded the lowest polling percentage with only 47.8 per cent reached the polling centres. Purulia also recorded a low polling percentage with only 58.7 per cent voting was recorded till 3 p.m.

The State Election Commission has deployed a total of 44,000 police personnel, with at least one, armed police at every booth. As many as 135 observers, including 10 special senior observers and 108 general observers are keeping a close watch on the polling.

The SEC said voting is not being held for 103 wards as only one candidate was in the fray. They were declared winners uncontested.

The BJP alleged that there were incidents of violence in several places in the state, saying that the ruling Trinamool Congress was responsible for booth jamming, proxy voting and threatening the opposition. Some outsiders were found in queues at some polling booths in Barrackpore and Dum Dum municipalities in North 24 Parganas district, the BJP alleged.

In Bhatpara municipality, the pocketborough of BJP MP Arjun Singh, the situation was tense as sporadic clashes erupted between TMC and BJP supporters. Singh had heated arguments with Trinamool Congress members when he went to some wards in Bhatpara Municipality.

A BJP candidate smashed an EVM, alleging rigging by TMC members, in one of the wards. The TMC denied the allegations of foul play.

Tej Pratap launches 'Nyay Yatra' for Lalu Prasad

Hasanpur MLA Tej Pratap Yadav on Sunday launched 'Nyay Yatra' (campaign for justice) for his father and RJD Chief Lalu Prasad who is currently in jail in connection with the fodder scam.

Patna | Agencies

Hasanpur MLA Tej Pratap Yadav on Sunday launched 'Nyay Yatra' (campaign for justice) for his father and RJD Chief Lalu Prasad who is currently in jail in connection with the fodder scam. Tej Pratap Yadav's youth wing Chhatra Janshakti Parishad (CJP) is using e-rickshaws for the campaign to gain sympathy of people of Bihar. The members of CJP will travel in e-rickshaws in every block of their respective districts seeking "justice" for Lalu Prasad. The e-rickshaws are decorated with the photograph of Lalu Prasad and a weighing scale 'taraju' with a caption 'Saja Nahi Shajish' (Conspiracy not punish-



ment). Though Tej Pratap Yadav had started several such campaigns in the state which were just limited to photo sessions, the members of CJP are claiming that as 'Nyay Yatra' is related to Lalu Prasad, it might achieve the aim.

"Opposition parties have conspired and sent Lalu Prasad to jail. We are reaching out to people of Bihar seeking support for a leader who always fought for the interest of marginalised sections of society," he claimed.

NYAY 2.0: CONG PREPARES TO REVERT TO JOBS AND PENSIONS PLANK

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After the Congress in Rajasthan announced that the old pension scheme will be implemented again in the state and the appointments made on or after January 1, 2004 will benefit, it has opened a new political debate. The Congress wants to attract people through the pension scheme, it had in 2019 promised to give Rs 12000 per month under the Nyay scheme but the Congress lost. The Central government in 2003 had announced discontinuation of the then pension scheme for all employees that were recruited from/after January 1, 2004. Congress General Secretary Ajay Maken said, "the Congress started it but the BJP discon-

tinued it and now we demand that the old pension scheme should be restored." After announcing the restoration of the scheme, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said, "Other states should also think in this perspective. If an employee gives 30-35 years of his service to an organisation, he should get security for his old age. In 2004, the then government might have taken the decision for some strong reasons but now we need to think on it again." The pension scheme for employees has already been an issue during the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls and Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav and UP CM Yogi Adityanath had engaged in a war of words over the issue. In 2022, a crucial



state like Gujarat will go to the polls while in 2023 Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh will hold elections -- the Congress is in power in two of these states. The Congress wants to shift the focus to the economic

prospects of the individual as it has not been able to counter the Bharatiya Janata Party on Hindutva even though its leader Rahul Gandhi had opened up a debate on Hindutva vs Hindutva and tried to corner the BJP. As per the gov-

ernment data the total number of Central government civilian employees in position as on March 2018, is 31.19 lakh as against the sanctioned strength of 38.02 lakh and approximately 17.97% of the posts were vacant. The Union government share in organised sector employment has been on the decline over the past 15 years. In 2012, the Union government employed 8.5 pc of the organised workforce. This was a decline of about 4 pc from 1994. In 2014, the central government employees numbered 47 lakh, including the armed forces. The military had 24 lakh, about 30% of the workforce, followed by the Railways with a 28% share in employees. This data pertains to the union government but the state govern-

ments too employ large numbers to run the government. Many posts are vacant and many governments have been hiring people on a contract basis. Rahul Gandhi has been attacking the government for growing unemployment in the country. "Why did employment opportunities disappear? Who creates employment? Employment is created by people who run small and medium businesses. Employment is created by small businessmen, small shop owners. Over the last eight years, the government in Delhi has attacked them," Gandhi said, blaming demonetisation and a flawed Goods and Services Tax for the phasing out of small businesses and industries. "GST was (also) not implemented in the correct manner.



Country and State Should Become Polio Free: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in the National Pulse Polio Campaign on "Polio Sunday" launched the vaccination programme being conducted in the urban and rural areas of all the districts of the state on February 27, 28 and March 2 by giving polio drops to children at his official residence. Health Minister Prabhuram Choudhary was also present on the occasion. Chouhan administered drops to 11 children including Akhil, Sanju, Disha, Aaradhy Dwivedi and Saanvi Malviya. Thanking Chief Minister Chouhan, a nine-year-old girl Priyanshi Shukla, urged him to give his autograph on a picture. Chief Minister had administered medicine to this girl five years ago.

Chouhan said that the Government of India and the Government of Madhya Pradesh have run this campaign continuously for many years. The state and the country have to be made polio free. This campaign is going on continuously under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In Madhya Pradesh, the campaign has been running smoothly for the last 15 years. The Health Department deserves congratulations for this. I myself have been associated with these campaigns. It is our resolve that Madhya Pradesh will also be free from polio, our country will also get rid of polio. This campaign is very important to achieve this. I would like to request all the citizens of the country that no child should be deprived of the polio dose. Health department teams are reaching every centre. No child should be deprived of Pulse Polio medicine, every child should get two drops of medicine. He/She will remain happy. He/She will be protected from diseases. congratulated the Health Minister and the entire team of the Health Department. Under the National Pulse



Polio Campaign, the campaign was launched by Chief Minister Chouhan by giving two drops of polio vaccine to the children, he has appealed to the parents of all those children, who are eligible for this dose, to give this dose to the children on February 27 and 28 and March 2. In Madhya Pradesh, one crore 11 lakh children up to the age of 5 years will be given "two drops of life dose". On the first day of the campaign, 83 thousand 261 booths, 4,252 transit booths, 12 thousand 996 high risk areas and migratory booths have been set up for Polio Sunday. Of these, one lakh 67 thousand 635 vaccinators will give polio doses to children.

The National Pulse Polio Campaign will be held on February 27, 28 and March 2. In Madhya Pradesh, one crore 11 lakh children in the age group of 0 to 5 years will be given "Two drops of life dose". In view of Mahashivratri festival in the state, transit booths have been set up at many fair sites for administering polio medicine. Apart from this, the mobile teams of the Health Department will reach out to the brick kilns, crushers, slums and nomadic population and give doses to the eligible children. Mobile teams will be active in all government institutions, Anganwadi centres, airports, railway stations, bus stands.

DEBT EXCEEDS BUDGET OUTLAY IN MP

Madhya Pradesh's debt, which has been increasing year-on-year, has mounted to over Rs 2.60 lakh crore, way more than the budget outlay, and the state government is facing a daunting task to make the state 'Atmanirbhar'.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh's debt, which has been increasing year-on-year, has mounted to over Rs 2.60 lakh crore, way more than the budget outlay, and the state government is facing a daunting task to make the state 'Atmanirbhar'.

The amount is excluding the debt of corporation boards in the state.

In 2020-21, the state had presented the budget with an outlay of Rs 2,41,000 crore.

With the mounting debt, the per capita income is decreasing. In 2019-20, the per capita income was Rs 62,233; in 2020-21, it decreased to Rs 58,425 per annum while the country's per capita income is Rs 86,456.

There is a possibility of more decline in the per capita income in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Education and medical facilities are in a dismal state in the state.

Madhya Pradesh ranks 17th in the country in terms of medical facilities.

The state houses 13 medical colleges and 11,500 primary health centres where the posts of specialists are lying vacant. Most of the educational institutions in the state do not have teachers or have just one as faculty for the entire facility.

In 1,587 schools in the tribal dominated districts of Alirajpur, Jhabua, Barwani, Singrauli, Sidhi, Mandla and Dhar, teachers are unavailable.

Employment is a major issue in the state. Every year, the government promises to provide jobs to one lakh people. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the first and foremost priority of his government is all-round development of the people.

The government's aim is to provide

jobs to the unemployed and make the people's life happy, he said.

On January 12 'Rozgar Diwas' (Employment Day), 5,26,000 people were provided jobs.

"We have decided that every month, employment day will be observed during which job opportunities will be provided. "On March 29, employment will be provided to lakhs of people," he said. However, State Congress chief Kamal Nath termed the government schemes and announcements as a farce. Talking on the issue of unemployment, Kamal Nath said the number of registered unemployed people has crossed 34 lakh and it is increasing day by day. More than 1.25 lakh posts are lying vacant in government departments. The number of unorganised workers has crossed 1.21 crore. Besides the announcement of several welfare

schemes for farmers, the state government has also announced concessions. It is aiming and making efforts to double the farmers' income.

Madhya Pradesh Agriculture Minister Kamal Patel stressed on natural farming, saying the state has immense potential in this field. However, Kamal Nath is of the view that farmers' condition in the state is very bad. The farmers are not getting seeds, manure, electricity and water for irrigation, Kamal Nath claimed.

Financial expert Kamal Rathi said that everyone knows about the state's financial condition. He pitched for better implementation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Ease of Doing Business.

For attracting investment to the state, the state government needs to focus on an area -- either education or medical, he said.

Child Falls Into 300-Foot Deep Well, 2nd Time This Week

A 7-year-old boy fell into the borewell dug up by his father at their farm in Damoh while playing outside in the afternoon.

Team Absolute | Damoh

A seven-year-old boy fell into an over 300-foot-deep uncovered borewell in Damoh district on Sunday, and efforts are on to rescue the child, a police official said. This is the second such incident in the state in four days. The latest incident took place in Barkheda village under Patera police station limits, about 45 km from Damoh district headquarters. The boy, Priyansh, fell into the borewell dug up by his father Dharmendra Athya, at their farm while playing at around 1 pm on Sunday, Patera police



station-in-charge Shyam Bihari Mishra said. The child was stuck at a depth of 10-15 feet in the borewell, he said. After being alerted, police officials reached the spot and started rescue operations. A team of local administration and health department officials also left for the spot, he said. On Thursday, a three-year-old boy fell into an over 200-foot deep borewell in Badarchhad village of Umariya district. He was pulled out on Friday after efforts for more than 16 hours, but was declared dead by doctors, an official earlier said.

CM INTERACTS WITH STUDENTS WHO RETURNED FROM UKRAINE

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan spoke to the students of the state who returned from Ukraine in New Delhi and inquired about their well being. Chouhan has instructed the residential commissioner of Madhya Pradesh government in New Delhi to provide necessary accommodation and other facilities to these students.

Chouhan said that Air India flight from Ukraine has reached Delhi. Welcoming the students, Chief Minister said that arrangements have been made for the students to stay at Madhyanchal Bhawan and other places in New Delhi as per their requirement. Other necessary facilities will also be provided to them. Chief Minister Chouhan encouraged some students of Madhya Pradesh by talking to them through phone and video calls. Chouhan asked Janisha Patel, daughter of Barwani city of the state, who had gone to Ukraine for studies, on her return to Delhi, whether there was any difficulty in travelling from Ukraine to India. You can stay at Madhyanchal Bhawan in Delhi. Chief Minister has directed the officers to make arrangements for other students as well to make them reassured and Tansion-free.

TRANSGENDERS ADOPT A CHILDCARE CENTRE

Generally the transgender community would be seen visiting houses and offices to get money ('badhai') at different festivals or traditional occasions, but a group of transgenders in Madhya Pradesh's Panna district have taken up the responsibility to run an Anganwadi centre.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Generally the transgender community would be seen visiting houses and offices to get money ('badhai') at different festivals or traditional occasions, but a group of transgenders in Madhya Pradesh's Panna district have taken up the responsibility to run an Anganwadi centre.

According to Madhya Pradesh's Public Relation department, a group of transgenders have adopted an Anganwadi centre -- a child care facility.

For this, they (transgenders) have earned praises from the local people, district administration but also from Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan,

said a Public Relation department official on Saturday.

"A group of 'Kinnars' (transgenders) have adopted an 'Anganwadi kendra' -- a child care centre in Panna district. A first such kind of step has come up in the state," the officer told IANS.

The transgender community came forward to adopt an Anganwadi childcare centre, nearly a month after Chief Minister Chouhan during a visit to Panna district, had appealed people to adopt Anganwadi centres.

Earlier, Chouhan had appealed affluent and educated people to adopt Anganwadi centres to make them bet-



ter.

A group of transgenders based in Panna district have come forward to adopt an Anganwadi centre and their initiative received praises.

Knowing about this initiative, the Chief Minister said, "Kinnar samaj's (transgender community) step to adopt an Anganwadi is praiseworthy and wonderful."

Shabnam Bano, popularly known as Shabnam Mausi, was the first Indian transgender who was elected as the MLA in Madhya Pradesh.

CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO MARTYR AZAD AND DESHMUKH



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan garlanded the portrait of freedom fighter Martyr Chandrashekhar Azad on his death anniversary at the Chief Minister residence hall. Chouhan remembered the contribution of martyr Chandrashekhar Azad.

Chouhan also paid homage by garlanding the nationalist thinker, eminent social reformer Late Nanaji Deshmukh on his death anniversary.

Health Minister Prabhuram Choudhary also paid homage by garlanding the portrait of martyr Chandrashekhar Azad and thinker Late Nanaji Deshmukh.

MAN, WOMAN TIED TO TREE, THRASHED BY HER HUSBAND

A man and a woman were tied to a tree and allegedly beaten up by her husband after he spotted them together.

Team Absolute | Rajgarh

A man and a woman were tied to a tree and allegedly beaten up by her husband after he spotted them together in Rajgarh district, police said on Sunday.

A video of the incident, which took place in Khanauta village on Saturday, surfaced on social media and the police later registered a case against the woman's husband and another person.

The video purportedly showed a large number of people watching the man and the woman tied to a tree.

Suthalia police station in-charge Ramkumar Raghuvanshi said they received information that the two were held captive in Khanauta village.

When the police enquired, it was found



that the woman's husband and other family members were allegedly involved in beating her and the man with whom they saw her, the official said.

Later, the police registered a case against the woman's husband and one another person under Indian Penal Code Sections 342 (wrongful confinement), 355 (use of criminal force intending to dishonour a person), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and other relevant provisions, he said.

No one has been arrested so far, he added.

CM PLANTED SAPLINGS WITH ENVIRONMENT LOVING CHILDREN IN SMART PARK



Bhopal: Along with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, office bearers of Kadam Sanstha, Vriksha Mitra (tree friend) Sunil Dubey and other members planted saplings. Today, saplings of Karanj and Cassia were planted. Chouhan presented cycles and appreciation letters to 4 environment-loving children. These children associated with Kadam Sanstha are residents of Bhim Nagar Basti of Bhopal. From time to time, these children have participated in creative activities along with planting saplings. Apart from Vriksha Mitra Dubey, Rachna David, Yogesh Gore and Rajiv Chaturvedi were present on the occasion of plantation.

Karanj is considered important in Ayurvedic medicine. Karanj is also used in religious works. The bark and leaves of Cassia Javanica are used in the preparation of Ayurvedic medicines.

SHIV JYOTI ARPANAM FESTIVAL ON MARCH 1

Ujjain city to light up on Mahashivratri

On Mahashivratri, Ujjain city, which houses famous Mahakaleshwar temple, the abode of Lord Shiva, will be lit up with 21 lakh diyas (earthen lamps).

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Shiv Jyoti Arpanam festival will be organised on the holy festival of Mahashivratri in Ujjain, the city of Lord Shri Mahakaleshwar. In this, on the banks of the Punya Salila Maa Kshipra, lamps will be lit from house to house in places of worship, temples and city. A target has been set to light 21 lakh earthen lamps on this auspicious occasion.

On Mahashivratri, Ujjain city, which houses famous Mahakaleshwar temple, the abode of Lord Shiva, will be lit up with 21 lakh diyas (earthen lamps).

The city will be illuminated at 7 p.m. on Mahashivratri, which is



falling on March 1 this year. All the diyas will be lit for about an hour. For this, training is also being given to the volunteers.

Giving this information, Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav said that this programme is being organised on the call of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. There will be participation of all sections of the society in this. 13 lakh earthen lamps will be lit on both sides on the banks of river Kshipra. Apart from this, lamps will be lit at city's places of worship Mahakal

Temple, Mangalnath Temple, Kaal Bhairav Temple, Garh Kalika Temple, Siddhavat Temple, Harsiddhi Temple and major public places in the city. The citizens of the city will also light 5 lamps each at their homes. Pledge letters have also been filled by the citizens through Ujjain Municipal Corporation.

Yadav informed that people have been connected with Shiv Jyoti Arpanam Mahotsav through a massive outreach campaign. More than 17 thousand volunteers have registered. These

include representatives of various voluntary organisations, students, sportsmen, professionals and social organisations, representatives of religious institutions, saints of all akhadas etc. Blocks and sectors were made for lamp lighting arrangements at Ramghat, the main venue. Volunteers have been appointed in each sector. There will also be a supervisors with them.

The Ujjain district administration is gearing up to script history by illuminating 21 lakh earthen lamps from Mata Mandir Ghat of the Shipra River to Ramghat.

The administration is planning to get the name of the city registered in the Guinness Book of World Records and Limca Book of Records.

As per the Ujjain district administration, three lakh earthen lamps will be installed at different places, houses and establishments. It will take 12,000 volunteers to light up the diyas. For this, the responsibility has been given to the District Panchayat, Education Department, Municipal Corporation and Smart City.

Ujjain District Collector Ashish Singh said that initially the plans were for illuminating 15 lakh

diyas but considering the people's enthusiasm, the number was increased to 21 lakh.

Singh claimed that a rehearsal was done by putting 1,000 diyas on the banks of Shipra river. "A person can light about a 100 diyas. Twelve lakh diyas will be lit at different ghats, 51,000 in Mahakal temple, one lakh at Freeganj tower, other temples including Mangalnath, Chintaman, Kalbhairav, Bhukhi Mata, Harsiddhi temple," Singh said.

In the Shiv Jyoti Arpanam Festival, the programme has been designed by targeting 'Zero Waste'. Identity cards of volunteers will be recycled through QR App. After the festival, the lamps will be used for home composting, making pots, kulhads (earthen vessels) etc. The oil remaining after the programme will be used in Gausshalas etc. Empty oil bottles will be reused through the 3-R process. Paper matchboxes will be used to light the candles. Only biodegradable cutlery plates will be used for food and drink. All the components of the event are being decided as per the guidelines issued by the Ministry (Zero Waste Programme Standard Operating Procedure SOP).



EDITOR'S SPECS

UP FARMERS AND ANIMALS

As you move from Lucknow towards eastern UP you can see herds of stray cattle roaming in the fields and on the roads which have become a menace to the farmers and people who are travelling on the road. On the outskirts of Barabanki which goes to the polls in the fifth phase, Ram Sumer Verma is sitting just outside his fields as wheat harvesting is to be done about a month. He is wary of the stray cattle who are destroying the crops and he has also put up barbed wire. Not only cattle, people are also battling wild boars and Neelgais in the area. In Balrampur Shrawasti and Bahraich and Dumariaganj, where the fields are in the periphery of the forests, the boars and the Neelgai mainly attack the fields during night. In the fifth and sixth phase of the elections the issue of cattle and wild boars is resonating in the polls. Both of them destroy crops as well as the economy of the villages. Though the government claims that it has established Gaushalas in the villages but the menace has not ended. Not only are the farmers suffering but many accidents also occur due to these animals. A 58-year-old farmer was attacked and killed by a stray bull while he was protecting his crops on a rented field in Uttar Pradesh's Etah district in the first week of February. Politics has heated up in the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a public meeting has assured that the government will open more shelters to protect the cows. Cattle have become an election issue but many farmers residing within 20 to 30 km of forests are facing the menace of these wild animals which has not drawn much attention, but in the Terai region it is an issue. It is going to the polls in the next phases.

WHY INDIA NEEDS TO PURSUE NEUTRALITY OVER UKRAINE?

Deepika Bhan

As pictures of wounded women, bombed buildings, rolling tanks, fighter jet strikes and desperate civilians in Ukraine flood the TV screens and social media, India was expected to condemn the perpetrator. After all, India continues to suffer because of the expansionist policies of China and Pakistan. Diplomacy, though, is not ruled by emotion or moral pressure; it is more about strategy and long-term prospects. India abstained from voting on the US-sponsored UN Security Council resolution that deplored in "strongest terms" Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The move did not come as a surprise. Maintaining a balance between the US-led front and Russia has always been the foremost part of India's diplomacy. And it rightly followed this tradition. India articulated the reason for the abstention in the Explanation of Vote by T.S. Trimurti, India's Permanent Representative to the UN. The note expressed "deep concerns at the turn of events in Ukraine", and said that dialogue was the only solution. Laying emphasis on dialogue rather than military action, India has reinforced its diplomacy that made it clear that pressure won't work on its age-old policies. Even on January 31, India abstained on a procedural vote on whether to discuss the issue of Ukraine, and had then put forth its "legitimate security interests". India has its own concerns and knows well who the time-tested friends are and understands the politics of the fair-weather ones. This is all the more relevant in these times of continuing standoff with



China in eastern Ladakh or Arunachal Pradesh. Although the US has supported New Delhi over the Ladakh impasse, India can never run the risk of annoying a dependable ally such as Russia, which is the main supplier of its defence weapon systems. But the changing geo-politics after the imposition of sanctions against Russia may present a grim situation for the Modi government. The embargos may affect much-needed defence supplies to India from Russia, whether these are missile systems, or Kalashnikov AK-203 assault rifles, spares and components, or stealth frigates and submarines. Although India has been buying weapons from the US as well, a balance has always been maintained

between purchases from Moscow and Washington. The balance will be put to test now. With India abstaining from voting against Russia in the UNSC, the risk of projecting a neutral stance may be challenging. The emerging situation in Ukraine may have put India's diplomacy to test, but so far New Delhi has not shown its ambiguity on choosing fronts. After the invasion, Ukraine has been seeking a much more proactive role from India in de-escalating the tension. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, knowing fully well the good chemistry between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin, made an appeal to Modi to help his country. Zelensky had a telephone

conversation with Modi, wherein he sought all support. Zelensky tweeted on Saturday around 6.20 p.m. (IST): "Spoke with Prime Minister @narendramodi. Informed of the course of (Ukraine) repulsing (Russian) aggression. More than 100,000 invaders are on our land. They insidiously fire on residential buildings. Urged (India) to give us political support in Security Council. Stop the aggressor together!" Before Zelensky's tweet, the Russian Embassy in New Delhi appreciated India's stance in the UNSC. The embassy's Twitter account "Russia in India" noted: "Highly appreciate India's independ-

ent and balanced position at the voting in the UNSC on February 25, 2022. In the spirit of the special and privileged strategic partnership Russia is committed to maintain close dialogue with India on the situation around Ukraine." Today, Ukraine is seeking help from India, but its relationship with India was not all that rosy in the past. Ukraine was one of the countries that opposed India's nuclear tests in 1998. It also pushed for UN intervention on Kashmir after the Modi government abrogated Article 370 in 2019. Ukraine has also been a regular arms supplier to Pakistan, despite India telling the world that Pakistan supports terror activities against India. In the present scenario, India has chosen to maintain a strategic diplomatic silence. With Zelensky openly seeking India's help, however, India can play a major diplomatic role between Ukraine and Russia. As the US and its allies are attempting to pound Russia with sanctions and providing arms and ammunition to Ukraine, it is India that can play the peacemaker in the given situation. India has much experience after dealing with aggression from Pakistan and China. Both the neighbouring countries have been threatening and trying to intrude into India's territory from time to time. India very well understands the tragedy of forcibly thrust wars. India has never been the aggressor or the intruder. Its policy has been to help democracies thrive and live peacefully. This history places India in an advantageous position of bringing peace and making guns go silent to help the common folk of Ukraine.

international

RUSSIA'S HISTORICAL GRIEVANCE TOWARDS WEST TRIGGERED INVASION OF UKRAINE

London | Agencies

The historical reason for Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine is his firm belief that the West, particularly the western military alliance North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the United States, violated the spirit of a 1990 treaty with Russia, and thereby betrayed it. Putin, addressing the Munich Security Conference in February 2007, said: "One state, the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way.... We're witnessing the untrammelled use of the military in international affairs." He was referring to NATO's post-Cold War expansion into former Warsaw Pact countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia (now split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia), which used to be under the Soviet Union's wings before the collapse of communism in 1989-90. A recent book by historian Mary Elise Sarotte, "Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of the Cold War Stalemate", catalogues private dialogue between Moscow and the West. The writer concludes that on paper NATO forces were not prevented from expanding to Eastern Europe to the borders of Russia, but that this was a recipe for conflict. In fact, Russian drafts of treaties to reverse NATO's extension eastwards were placed on the table as recently as last month at a NATO-Russia Council meeting. Putin claims then US President



George H.W. Bush's secretary of state James Baker on February 9, 1990 promised Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not move to Warsaw Pact countries if Russia accepted East and West Germany's reunification. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl apparent went a step further by indicating to Gorbachev that NATO could not even spread to 'the GDR' (German Democratic Republic or East Germany). On May 17 of the same year, NATO Secretary General Manfred

Worner echoed this pledge. The British Guardian newspaper wrote: "In his memoirs, Gorbachev described these assurances as the moment that cleared the way for compromise on Germany (being reunited)." But the promises were never converted into a formal, written pact. However, the final signed agreement in September 1990 on reunifying Germany contained an addendum which permitted non-German NATO troops stationed in West Germany to cover East Germany (hitherto east of the 'Iron Curtain') as well. The Guardian illustrates that in March 1991 British Prime Minister John Major was asked by the Russian Defence Minister Marshall Dmitry Yazov about Eastern Europe's interest in seeking NATO membership. "Major, according to the diaries of the British Ambassador to Moscow, Rodric Braithwaite, assured him 'nothing of that sort will ever happen', the paper cites. In 1993, Russian President Boris Yeltsin wrote to US President Bill Clinton saying any further NATO footprint eastward would breach the spirit of the 1990 treaty. Thereafter, in 1997 at the juncture of the NATO-Russia treaty to forge an alliance, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov once more flagged Baker's alleged duality. Meanwhile, however, Yeltsin in August 1993 conceded to the Polish leader Lech Walesa Poland's right to join NATO. At that point Russia foresaw potentially becoming a member of NATO. The US was opposed to this, but seemingly kept Russia in suspense.

Ukraine seizes on rumours of flying ace dubbed 'Ghost of Kiev'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ukrainian government has seized on unsubstantiated rumours that an unnamed MiG-29 fighter pilot dubbed the 'Ghost of Kiev' has downed several Russian jets by sharing a macho propaganda video containing footage from a videogame, Daily Mail reported. Twitter is alight with clips that allegedly show a Ukrainian jet soaring through the skies over several cities and shooting down six Kremlin planes in dogfights on the first day of Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggressive war against the former Soviet republic. However, one video which got nearly 5 million views and spawned the rumours has been thoroughly debunked as a clip from the 2008 videogame Digital Combat Simulator, Daily Mail reported. Despite this, Kyiv is now openly promoting claims that the unnamed



pilot exists, in an apparent bid to rally the besieged nation behind an urban hero and fuel support for Ukraine's war effort, the report said. Posting a 38-second video on Sunday, the government's official Twitter account said: "People call him the Ghost of Kiev. And rightly so - this UAF ace dominates the skies over our capital and country, and has already become a nightmare for invading Russian aircrafts." The video starts with a cartoon illustration of the "Ghost of Kiev", before using the debunked footage of a downed Russian jet. Text then appears on the video, which reads: "Ukraine probably got its first ace since World War II. This is the anonymous pilot of the MiG-29, nicknamed the Ghost of Kiev," Daily Mail reported. "In the first 30 hours of the Russian invasion in February 2022 he shot down six Russian military aircraft. As of February 26 - 10 military planes of the occupiers. To become an ace pilot, you need to shoot down five planes. And the Ghost of Kiev shot twice as many," the report said.

VOTING BEGINS FOR REFERENDUM ON AMENDING BELARUS CONSTITUTION

Minsk: The main voting for a nationwide referendum on amending the country's constitution began in Belarus on Sunday morning. The voting started at 8 a.m. local time (0500 GMT) and will last until 8 p.m. (1700 GMT). According to the Central Electoral Commission of Belarus, the turnout has already reached 42.93 per cent among those who voted early, Xinhua news agency reported. The referendum will be considered valid if more than half of the eligible voters cast their ballots. On January 20, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko signed a decree calling for a referendum on amending the constitution. The draft of the new Constitution states that the All-Belarusian People's Assembly becomes the highest representative power in Belarus. In addition, the clauses on the "non-nuclear" and "neutral" status of Belarus have been removed from the new draft.



South Korea expresses 'grave regret' over North's ballistic missile launch

Seoul | Agencies

The South Korea's presidential National Security Council (NSC) on Sunday expressed "grave regret" over North Korea's launch of a "ballistic missile", calling for Pyongyang to immediately stop acts that threaten peace on the Korean Peninsula. National security adviser Suh Hoon presided over the NSC meeting, shortly after North Korea fired a suspected ballistic missile that marked the North's eighth show of force this year, Yonhap news agency reported. South Korea's military said the North's ballistic missile flew around 300 km at an altitude of 620 km. NSC members "expressed



deep concern and grave regret over North Korea's launch of a ballistic missile today, despite the fact that South Korea and the US have made joint efforts for a diplomatic solution," Cheong Wa Dae said in a statement. "Firing a ballistic missile at a time when the world is striving to resolve the war in Ukraine is not desirable for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, region and the world," the NSC said. The NSC also called for North Korea to swiftly respond to offers for dialogue by South Korea, the US and the international community, according to the statement. The North's latest launch came at a sensitive time for

South Korea, which is set to hold a presidential election on March 9. The NSC emphasised that it will make utmost efforts to protect security ahead of the presidential election. In January, the North conducted seven rounds of missile tests, including an intermediate-range ballistic missile launch. Some analysts have said North Korea could engage in more provocative actions down the road as it issued a veiled threat last month to lift its yearslong self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests. North Korea appeared to have refrained from missile tests during the recently concluded Winter Olympics in Beijing, its traditional ally and key economic supporter.

CHINA'S NEW-GENERATION ROCKET SENDS 22 SATELLITES INTO SPACE



Wenchang: China launched a Long March-8 rocket to place 22 satellites in space on Sunday, setting a domestic record for the most spacecraft launched by a single rocket. The rocket blasted off at 11.06 a.m. (Beijing Time) at the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in the southern Hainan Province before sending the satellites into preset orbits, Xinhua news agency reported. These satellites will be mainly used for commercial remote sensing services, marine environment monitoring, forest fire prevention and disaster mitigation. The mission marked the 409th flight of the Long March carrier rockets. The Long March-8 rocket carrying 22 satellites blasts off from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in south China's Hainan Province, February 27, 2022.



SOUTH MUMBAI 'TRIPS' DUE TO POWER FAILURE, WR RESTORED

A major power outage occurred in large parts of South Mumbai, hitting the suburban local train services, officials said here on Sunday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A major power outage occurred in large parts of South Mumbai, hitting the suburban local train services, officials said here on Sunday.

The power department deployed teams and restoration work was taken up on a war footing, according to BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and BrihanMumbai Electric Supply and



Transport (BEST) spokespersons. "Due to some technical issues, there has been power supply failure in many parts of the city. Our team is on the field to resolve the issue. The power supply is expected to be restored in an hour. We regret the inconvenience," the BEST said.

Tata Power said that this morning the MSETCL Transmission Lines from Kalwa to Trombay had massive voltage fluctuations causing tripping of Trombay Salsette-1, and hitting South Mumbai.

Tata Power hydro plants were unaffected and the Bhira Hydro Plant got islanded, and synchronised power restored to essential services, with work going on towards full normalcy.

Some suburban train services on Western Railway (WR) were affected, but we restored them by 11 a.m., however, the Central Railway (CR) said its trains were running normally on all corridors.

There have been no other reports of major impact on any services owing to the powerblackout since it was a Sunday.

I-T recovers Rs 2 Cr from Shiv Sena leader's residence in Mumbai

The Income Tax (I-T) Department has seized around Rs 2 crore from the premises of family and associates of Shiv Sena corporator and Standing Committee chairperson of BMC, Yashwant Jadhav during raids.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Income Tax (I-T) Department has seized around Rs 2 crore from the premises of family and associates of Shiv Sena corporator and Standing Committee chairperson of BMC, Yashwant Jadhav during raids. The I-T department had on Friday (February 25) conducted search operations at the premises of Jadhav, his family members, associates and a few contractors of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). The house of one Bimal Aggarwal, an associate of Jadhav was also searched and cash was also recovered from the place. He (Aggarwal) had recently filed an extortion case against former Mumbai Police Commissioner Parambir Singh. It has been alleged that Jadhav allegedly received bribes and invested in shell companies between 2018 and 2020. Cooper castle, Mazgaon, Bhaykhala were the places where the I-T department conducted search operations. It was alleged that Jadhav took money from the

contractors to help them get tenders of the BMC during 2018 and 2020. Sources said that around Rs 15 crore was paid as a commission to Jadhav. The source said that this amount was termed as black money. "Jadhav gave this money to a few private firms, which later transferred the whole amount into his shell companies, which were incorporated in the names of his family members and relatives," sources had said. After complaints were filed against Jadhav, the I-T department initiated a thorough probe and found that around Rs 15 crore were allegedly collected by Jadhav. The I-T department had learnt during the preliminary inquiry that a few transactions were conducted into his account from some Dubai-based firms. The I-T officials had questioned Jadhav and his family members regarding this transaction. All the work related to passing of tenders and clearing the payments is done by the chairman of the BMC's standing committee. The opposition in Maharashtra had been raising the issue and demanded a thorough audit of all the tenders passed by Jadhav.

'Income and tax only in Maharashtra': Sanjay Raut's attack on Centre

Raut's latest attack on the Centre comes two days after the I-T department raided Shiv Sena corporator Yashwant Jadhav's premises on charges of tax evasion.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Sunday renewed his attack on the Centre over the tax searches against his colleague Yashwant Jadhav earlier this week. "I think there is income and tax only in Maharashtra and no income and tax in BJP-ruled states. The municipal corporation polls are here... so central agencies have work only in Maharashtra and West Bengal; no work in rest of India," Raut told reporters.

"We are seeing all this, heaven is also watching and let them do whatever they want to do," he added.

Raut's latest attack on the Centre comes two days after the I-T department raided Yashwant Jadhav's premises on charges of tax evasion. Apart from being a Shiv Sena corporator, Jadhav is also the standing committee chairman of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

On Friday, Raut said that the raids on Jadhav were carried out ahead of the BMC polls and the I-T department would also raid persons who work with the Mumbai civic body



as well because some of them wear the bow and arrow symbol of Shiv Sena."

Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar also slammed these raids by saying that the Modi government is using central agencies to "destabilise Mumbai and Maharashtra".

However, the BJP alleged on Friday that Yashwant Jadhav was involved in several non-transparent financial transactions.

The raids took place just days after Maharashtra minister and senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Nawab Malik was arrested in a money laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday in a case linked to the 1993 Mumbai blasts accused Dawood Ibrahim. The Shiv Sena also slammed the raids on Malik by saying that the Centre is taking such steps to defame the Maharashtra government.

Is Maharashtra Planning To Relax Face Mask Rule As Covid Cases Dip?

Earlier this week, the Maharashtra government stressed the need to continue to observe Covid-appropriate behaviour like wearing of masks, maintaining social distancing and frequently sanitising hands.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As the Covid cases wane in Maharashtra, the demand for the relaxation of face mask rule in the state rises. On Saturday, Maharashtra reported 893 cases and eight fatalities due to the infection. Owing to the dip in the covid cases, the Uddhav government had earlier announced a slew of relaxations. However, state Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Sunday said though the curve of the third wave almost flattened, the decision regarding the face mask rule will be taken carefully.

"Chief Minister (Uddhav Thackeray) is constantly saying that we cannot assume that pandemic is over. So the decision on mask liberty will be taken after careful consideration," said Rajesh Tope.

Earlier this week, the Maharashtra government stressed the need to continue to observe Covid-appropriate



behaviour like wearing of masks, maintaining social distancing and frequently sanitising hands. On Saturday, the Delhi govern-

ment decided that the people travelling together in private cars in Delhi without face masks will not be fined from Monday. "...in relation to the clause 3(h) (c) whereby not wearing of face mask/cover in all public places has been made an offence, the penalty under this provision will not be applicable to persons travelling together in private four wheeler vehicles from February 28," the order said.

The Delhi government said till now only single drivers were exempted from wearing masks while driving, but now all the people travelling in a private car have been given the exemption.

"Wearing of mask is not mandatory while travelling in a car. Till now only single drivers were exempted from wearing masks while driving, but now all the people travelling in a private car have been given exemption," the Delhi government said in the order.

In Maharashtra, no. of families given Covid ex gratia exceeds official death toll.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As of 25 February, the official Covid death toll in Maharashtra stood at 1,43,675. However, the state has so far approved 1,54,500 applications for the Rs 50,000 ex gratia payment set aside for each of the families of Covid deceased a figure 8 per cent higher than the official toll.

However, officials of the state's relief and rehabilitation department which is handling the disbursement of Covid ex gratia play down the discrepancy. According to them, the number of applications approved for ex gratia payment is higher since the Supreme Court (SC) widened the ambit of compensation in October last year.

Even experts cautioned that this discrepancy shouldn't be seen as an indicator of under-counting in the state's Covid deaths.

The SC had, on 4 October 2021, approved the grant of Rs 50,000 ex gratia to the next of kin of patients who died of Covid, which was recommended by the National Disaster Management Authority.

The court expanded the ambit of compensation, stating that any death occurring within 30 days of that person testing positive for Covid, or having been clinically determined to suffer from the infection, would be eligible for the ex gratia amount, even if the death occurred outside of a healthcare facility.

It had also said that the ex gratia amount should be disbursed within 30 days of submission of

application.

On 26 November 2021, Maharashtra released a government resolution (GR) accepting the SC guidelines.

The GR stated that the kin of deceased who had undergone RT-PCR tests and/or were clinically diagnosed with Covid would qualify as claimants of the ex gratia payment. Moreover, if the death occurred within 30 days of a clinical diagnosis of Covid or testing, the kin would be eligible to claim the aid.

"Since the scope of the compensation has widened, the number of applications received are more," an official from the state's relief and rehabilitation department, who did not wish to be named. "We are already in the process of giving the amount and

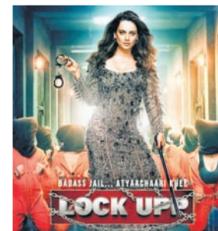
since it is a direct benefit transfer, careful scrutiny is required," the official added.

Concerned over the low number of applications and disbursement of amounts, the apex court had earlier this month pulled up some states, including Maharashtra, which had rejected over 60,000 claim applications.

"You are not doing charity. As a welfare state, it is your duty..." the bench had told the Maharashtra government. State Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Vijay Wadetiwar said that they were working towards expediting disbursements. "It is getting delayed because the right heir to the claim has to be properly finalised before disbursing the amount. But we are working towards expediting it," he said.

Court vacates stay order on Kangana Ranaut's 'Lock Upp'

A Hyderabad court has vacated a stay order and allowed the reality show 'Lock Upp', hosted by Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut, to stream as planned.



promo of the show and found resemblance to his story and script of the show called, 'The Jail'. According to him he had already shared the concept with Endemol Shine India's Abhishek Rege. It was written by Shaantanu Ray and Sheershak Anand. Sanober filed a legal complaint of plagiarism and so there was apprehension that the show won't air on scheduled date and time. But now viewers will be able to watch the show tonight. The show will have 16 contestants competing for basic amenities. Few confirmed names are comedian Munawar Faruqui, model and actress Poonam Pandey, wrestler Babita Phogat, actress Nisha Rawal and television actor Karanvir Bohra.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hyderabad court has vacated a stay order and allowed the reality show 'Lock Upp', hosted by Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut, to stream as planned. The fearless reality show 'Lock Upp', hosted by Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut is making headlines

these days because of its concept and recently it was challenged on allegations of plagiarism and City Civil Court of Hyderabad issued a stay order on its streaming date. However, much to the relief for the makers of the show, the court has now vacated the order and allowed the show to stream. It all started when Hyderabad-based businessman Sanober Baig saw the

MUMBAI, AHMEDABAD WITNESSING 3RD SUCCESSIVE DUST STORM IN ONE MONTH

A third successive dust storm in the past one month -- this time highly widespread but not intense -- has emerged and engulfed the entire Arabian sea with dust, an air quality researcher scientist said on Saturday.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A third successive dust storm in the past one month -- this time highly widespread but not intense -- has emerged and engulfed the entire Arabian sea with dust, an air quality researcher sci-

entist said on Saturday. As is evident from satellite imagery since past two days, there are slow but consistent intrusion owing to favourable winds and a push due to the westerly disturbance -- the same that brought hailstorm in NW India, including parts of Delhi -- has marked the entry of huge dust cloud with low density near Surat coast. This has prompted the Air Quality Index (AQI) of Ahmedabad and surrounding areas right up to Maharashtra coast plummet to a very poor category.

"The impact is felt in Mumbai for two days, but the relatively less AQI of Mumbai turned from satisfactory to poor since Friday. It is predicted that the same dust cloud will

further intensify with the clouds of Afghanistan and the upper edge of the Thar region of Pakistan and will further deteriorate the AQI for places along the Mumbai - Ahmedabad belt," said Gufran Beig, founder director of SAFAR. However, due to warmer local conditions, it is likely to subside by Monday, he said. SAFAR, the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research is part of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune under the Ministry of Earth Science. As per SAFAR data, on Saturday, Ahmedabad had PM10 concentration at 225 (moderate) while PM2.5 levels were at 120 (poor). For Mumbai, PM10 was 231 and PM2.5 125.

COVID-19: Maharashtra cumulative vaccination tally crosses 15.55 crore

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In the ongoing vaccination drive, Maharashtra, as of 7 am on February 27, has inoculated 15,55,74,372 people.

As per the state government data, 4,86,91,692 individuals aged between 18 and 44 years received their first vaccine dose and 3,60,61,098 received their second dose since the inoculation drive for this age group began on May 1. Similarly, 1,32,87,071 individuals above 60 years have received the first vaccine dose while 1,06,35,283 received their second dose. 9,07,137 of them received their precaution dose. Meanwhile, 35,93,226 individuals aged between 15-18 years have received the first vaccine dose, while 17,70,338 have received their second.

So far, 11,84,852 health care workers have been administered the first dose of the vaccine, while 11,84,782 of them have got their second dose. 2,97,438 health care workers have



received their precaution dose so far. Similarly, 21,49,219 front line workers in the state have till now received their first vaccine dose and of them, 19,89,214 got their second dose. 3,09,574 front line workers have received their precaution dose so far. Meanwhile, Maharashtra on Saturday added 893 COVID-19 cases to its tally, which reached 78,64,516,

while eight deaths took the toll to 1,43,695, an official said. The active caseload of the state was 7,811, he said, adding that 1,761 people were discharged in the past 24 hours, leaving the recovery count at 77,09,015. He said the recovery rate was 98.02 per cent and the fatality rate was 1.82 per cent, while the state's positivity rate, or cases detect-

ed per 100 tests, stood at 1.12 per cent. There are 1,40,942 people in home isolation and 743 in the institutional quarantine, while 85,602 tests in the past 24 hours took the overall number of tests in Maharashtra to 7,77,44,579, he added. As per data made available by the state health department, Pune circle reported 341 cases and two deaths in the past 24 hours followed by Mumbai circle, which added 180 cases and witnessed three deaths. In Nashik circle, the caseload went up by 141 and the toll by two, while Kolhapur, Aurangabad and Latur circles reported 28, 24 and 28 cases, though no death was reported in these three circles in the last 24 hours. The cases and toll in Akola circle increased by 63 and one respectively, and Nagpur added 88 cases but its fatality count remained unchanged. Total positive cases 78,64,516; fresh cases 893; death toll 1,43,695; recoveries 77,09,015; active cases 7,811; total tests 7,77,44,579.



AVRIL LAVIGNE SAYS TEENAGE STARDOM WAS REALLY AWKWARD

Los Angeles | Agencies

Pop star Avril Lavigne shot to fame during her teens, after releasing her debut album, "Let Go", in 2002, and the singer admits she wasn't comfortable with the attention that came her way.

"I was so young and so shy. Being on camera for the first time and talking was really awkward for a teenager. I envied bands - because all five of the guys get to do interviews together and travel together and go on stage together. But it's always just been me by myself for my whole career," she said.

Avril acknowledges that her early hits including "Sk8er Boi" and "Complicated" will always define her career, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She told the BBC: "It's quite an extraordinary thing that's happened. I look back and feel very humble. Honestly, all I really cared about as a little girl was just singing. I didn't even know what Hollywood was,

or a record deal, and it all came together." Despite this, Avril still lives her life in a relatively normal way.

The chart-topping star believes that fame has largely passed her by.

She said: "In a weird way, it didn't really hit me - and it almost still hasn't. I feel like I'm grounded and I'm normal. I cook, I go grocery shopping, I do normal things - and then I have my career."

"I kind of separate it. There's these crazy achievements that have happened, but I don't think about them."

She also admires the teenage stars of today, like Olivia Rodrigo.

The singer reflected: "It's cool seeing other female artists out there at the same age I was when I started out. They're writing about the things they're going through at that age - dating for the first time, breaking up for the first time, all those intense emotions."

"I love seeing them and the success they've had as singer-songwriters."

SAG-AFTRA stands in solidarity with Ukrainian people

Los Angeles | Agencies

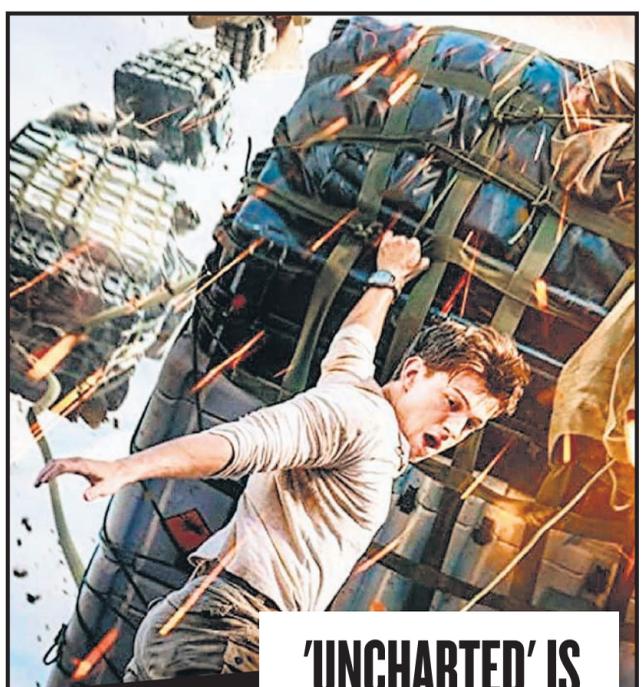
The US Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) says that it stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, who are under attack by Russian forces; with their fellow performers in the war-torn country; and with the television journalists, many of who are SAG-AFTRA members, who are covering the "war of aggression."

"In these dark and uncertain times, with war returning to the European continent, SAG-AFTRA stands in solidarity with our colleagues in Ukraine, and all those suffering the effects of this war of aggression," the union said in a statement, reports deadline.com.

"It is heartbreaking to see the stories of civilians coping with the loss of family members, friends, homes and livelihoods. Watching the humanitarian crisis unfold, it's easy to feel despair and helplessness. But if you wish to help, there are organisations, including Unicef and many others, that use your donations to aid those impacted by this war."

"We insist that all nations recognise and respect the freedom of the press and ensure that our members and journalists of all nations working in the war zone are kept safe from harm."

"The union also stands with the brave Russian anti-war protestors who are risking their own freedom to call for an end to the violence. SAG-AFTRA fervently hopes for a swift return to peace in the region. Solidarity always."



Los Angeles | Agencies

Tom Holland-starrer 'Uncharted' has an easy path to staying on top of domestic charts in its second weekend as there is still some time for the release of 'The Batman' featuring Robert Pattinson.

The adaptation of Sony's series of PlayStation games is holding well, with the studio projecting a \$23 million gross for its sophomore outing.

According to Variety, that's a 45 per cent drop from its \$44 million opening "a debut that already beat initial expectations. Big-budget spectacles and adaptations of well-known properties can tend to be front-loaded in terms of box-office grosses, so a drop of less than 50 per cent is a marked victory for 'Uncharted'."

Last weekend, the Tom Holland action vehicle enjoyed the domestic box office's biggest opening since the star's last film, 'Spider-Man: No Way Home', which dominated the holiday season to become the third highest-grossing domestic film release in history.

Directed by Zombieland duology helmer Ruben Fleischer, 'Uncharted' stars Holland as treasure hunter Nathan Drake. The rest of the cast includes Mark Wahlberg, Sophia Ali and Antonio Banderas.

In terms of new releases for the weekend, neither of the weekend's two biggest debuts is making much noise in its opening.

Open Road Films' 'Studio 666' is projected to earn \$2 million from 2,306 theaters through Sunday. The film is a bit of an odd duck: a comedy horror film that stars members of Foo Fighters as themselves.

Based on a story by the band's frontman Dave Grohl, the genre film follows Foo Fighters as they battle supernatural forces while attempting to record their next studio album. While "Studio 666" likely won't make much of an impression in its somewhat bewilderingly wide theatrical release, its extremely specific material means that it probably should find some sort of second life among Foo Fighters' fanbase.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's 'Cyrano' is projected to earn somewhere between \$1 million to \$2 million from 797 theaters. After a December theatrical engagement exclusive to Los Angeles to qualify for awards, Joe Wright's musical adaptation of the classic romantic tragedy was battered around the release calendar, with MGM ultimately landing on a late February release date, likely banking on Oscar nominations that didn't come (though the film did land a best costume design nod).

'UNCHARTED' IS NO. 1 AS DOMESTIC AUDIENCES AWAIT 'THE BATMAN'



'The Simpsons' raise the Ukrainian flag in new commissioned image

Los Angeles | Agencies

Popular animated sitcom 'The Simpsons' has released a commissioned image of the animated cartoon family in support of Ukraine's fight against Russia. A photo tweeted from the official account of 'The Simpsons' depicts Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and baby Maggie holding Ukrainian flags in unison with a caption reading, '#TheSimpsons #Simpsons #Ukraine'.

All Jean, Simpsons' executive producer, said the creation of political images isn't common in the animated sitcoms repertoire. However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine

proved to be an appropriate exception, reports deadline.com. "We don't do this very often, only very rarely when there's something extremely important for a cause that could not be bigger," Jean said.

The cartoon was drawn by animator and director David Silverman who has been with the show since its inception in 1989.

Show producer Jim Brooks called creator Matt Groening, Jean and Silverman to create the image to express their solidarity with the independent Eastern European nation. "It's meant to show we care about what's going on and have enormous sympathy for the people of Ukraine and want this to stop,"

Jean added.

The animated Fox sitcom has gained a reputation in recent years for predicting historical events with uncanny accuracy years, even decades, ahead.

Recently, Twitter users unearthed a clip from an episode titled 'Simpson Tide' from 1998, joking the Soviet Union never dissolved and that the Berlin Wall magically resurfaced.

The longest-running American sitcom has also forecasted events like Donald Trump's presidency, the Disney-Fox merger, Super Bowl victors, and even Tom Hanks endorsing the United States government.

PETE DAVIDSON TO SKIP BROADCAST OF 'SNL' FOR MOVIE ROLE

London | Agencies

Comedian and actor Pete Davidson won't be live on 'Saturday Night Live' from New York due to his other work commitments.

The 'Saturday Night Live' cast member has been cleared to work on the production of 'The Home', the Miramax horror movie being directed by James DeMonaco, according to two people familiar with the matter, reports variety.com.

A spokesperson for 'SNL' could not be reached for immediate comment. Cast and crew just completed the show's regular dress rehearsal in Studio 8H in NBC's New York headquarters, part of the series' much-followed broadcast ritual.

Davidson is the latest member of the venerable NBC programme's cast to take a leave of absence to tend to other projects, part of a recent overhaul by executive producer Lorne Michaels. In decades past, cast members kept close to the show in most instances. Since last season, however, Michaels has granted the cast, several of whom have been with him for multiple cycles, new leeway to tackle other pursuits - many of them under the aegis of his Broadway Video production company.

The show in the 2020-2021 season was the most-watched entertainment program on TV among viewers between 18 and 49, the demographic most preferred by advertisers.

In 'The Home', Davidson plays Max, a troubled worker at a retirement home who discovers terrible secrets about the facility. Production on the movie was scheduled to start in January. DeMonaco was also director of 'The Purge'. This week's 'SNL' broadcast is expected to be hosted by comedian John Mulaney, marking his fifth turn in that role since 2018. Mulaney was a writer at 'SNL' for four seasons.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Nadiya Bychkova



3RD T20I: INDIA BEAT SRI LANKA BY 6 WICKETS, COMPLETE 3-0 SWEEP

India produced a clinical all-round performance to beat Sri Lanka by six wickets in the third T20I to complete the 3-0 clean sweep, at the picturesque HPCA Stadium, here on Sunday.

Dharamsala | Agencies

India produced a clinical all-round performance to beat Sri Lanka by six wickets in the third T20I to complete the 3-0 clean sweep, at the picturesque HPCA Stadium, here on Sunday.

With this win, India extended their winning streak to 12 matches in T20Is.

After winning the toss and opting to bat first, a fighting fifty from skipper Dasun Shanaka (74 not out off 38) helped Sri Lanka post 146/5 in



20 overs. The likes of Avesh Khan (2/23), Mohammed Siraj (1/22), Harshal Patel (1/29), Ravi Bishnoi (1/32) picked wickets at regular intervals to keep Sri Lanka on the backfoot before Shanaka played a solid knock to help his post a fighting total. In reply, Shreyas Iyer continued his sizzling form and

smashed third consecutive fifty (73 not out off 45) of the series while the likes of Ravindra Jadeja (22 not out off 15), Deepak Hooda (21 off 16), Sanju Samson (18 off 12) also contributed well with the bat as India chased down the target in 16.5 overs. Lahiru Kumara (2/28) was the most successful bowler for Sri Lanka.

Brief scores:

Sri Lanka 146/5 in 20 overs (Dasun Shanaka 74 not out off 38, Dinesh Chandimal 25; Avesh Khan 2/23) lost to India (Shreyas Iyer 73 not out off 45, Ravindra Jadeja 22 not out; Lahiru Kumara 2/28) by 6 wickets

IND vs SL: Rohit Sharma becomes most-capped player in T20I cricket

Adding another feather to his cap, India captain Rohit Sharma on Sunday became the most-capped T20I player after taking part in his 125th game during the third and final match against Sri Lanka at the picturesque HPCA Stadium, here.

Dharamsala | Agencies

Adding another feather to his cap, India captain Rohit Sharma on Sunday became the most-capped T20I player after taking part in his 125th game during the third and final match against Sri Lanka at the picturesque HPCA Stadium, here.

The 34-year-old went past veteran Pakistan batter Shoaib Malik (124 T20Is) for the historic feat.

Rohit is also the only Indian cricketer to have played more than 100 T20Is. Former captains Mahendra Singh Dhoni (retired, 98 games) and Virat Kohli (97) follow him at second and third position respectively among Indian players.

In the overall list, Malik's former teammate Mohammad Hafeez (119) is at the third spot, England captain Eoin Morgan (115) and Bangladesh's Mahmudullah (113) follow the



Pakistan duo at fourth and fifth spot.

Rohit, who was named the skipper of the Indian T20I side in November, is yet to lose a game since taking over the full-time leadership role. After taking 2-0 unbeaten lead against Sri Lanka in the ongoing T20 series, he is eyeing a third-successive series clean sweep, having earlier white-washed New Zealand and West Indies in three-match home series.

The stylish batter, who made his T20I debut at the T20 World Cup in 2007, has scored 3308 runs, in the shortest format of the game.

World Archery Para C'ships: Pooja storms into finals; India women's doubles pair to vie for bronze

Indian archers continued to smash records at the Dubai 2022 World Archery Para Championships as promising Pooja Jatyan cruised into the recurve women's individual finals here on Sunday.

Dubai | Agencies

Indian archers continued to smash records at the Dubai 2022 World Archery Para Championships as promising Pooja Jatyan cruised into the recurve women's individual finals here on Sunday.

In doing so, Jatyan became the first Indian para-archer to enter individual finals of a World Archery Para

Championships. The 24-year-old from Gurugram, Haryana will also play the women's doubles bronze medal match alongside Paralympian Pooja Khanna, also a first for the country.

In the individual semi-finals, Jatyan rallied back from one set down to defeat the 49-year-old British Paralympian Hazel Chaisty 6-2. The young Indian produced her best in the second set where she shot two 9s and an X. She led 28-24, 25-24 and 24-21 to win the last three sets and the match.

Later in the evening, Jatyan will next face Italy's Tokyo 2020 Paralympic silver medalist Vincenza Petrilli in the individual final, after the doubles pair of Jatyan and Khanna meet Mongolia.

"I have no words to express myself. I am so happy. This is my best ever performance at a major championship. I am

just focused on playing well in the finals," Jatyan told the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI). Earlier, Jatyan, who has had polio since as a kid, also had to overcome her senior compatriot Khanna, thrashing her 7-1. However, India's campaign in the individual recurve men's open ended after Tokyo 2020 Paralympic bronze medalist Harvinder Singh lost his pre-quarter-final match to South Korea's Park Jun Beom 6-4 earlier on Sunday. Down two sets, Singh put up an impressive show to make a rally back into the match winning the next two sets only to falter in the last one. "It's disappointing. Being a Paralympic medalist, there's a lot of expectation and pressure on me to perform. And I couldn't live up to it. I need to work on my shooting once returning back," said Singh, promising to come back stronger.

Ranji Trophy: Uttarakhand, UP, Punjab, Himachal, Jharkhand register wins in round two

Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand registered wins in round two of 2021/22 Ranji Trophy to solidify their chances of making the knock-outs stage.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand registered wins in round two of 2021/22 Ranji Trophy to solidify their chances of making the knockouts stage.

Delhi, despite a brave attempt to chase 335, fell short by 15 runs to Jharkhand and are virtually out of contention for the knockouts.

Uttarakhand made themselves overwhelming favourites to be group toppers as they thrashed Rajasthan by 299 runs in Thiruvananthapuram.



Resuming the final day from 58/3 to chase 455, Rajasthan never seemed to be in the chase and were all out for 155. In the other match, Andhra Pradesh took the first innings lead over Services. Andhra's C R Gnaneshwar made 125 while Shaik Rasheed, India's vice-captain in U19 World Cup winning campaign, made 43. Punjab eased to being table-toppers after defeating Haryana by ten wickets in New Delhi. Mandeep Singh made an unbeaten 159 with Anmol Malhotra's century helping Punjab reach 444. Despite a 149 from Himanshu Rana, Haryana were 282

all out. Punjab imposed the follow-on and Haryana were dismissed for 203. Punjab then cruised to 45/0 and earned a bonus point with the ten-wicket win. In the other match, Himachal Pradesh defeated Tripura by an innings and 30 runs. A 147 from Ankit Kalsi took Himachal to 365. Tripura's batting never stepped up to the challenge, dismissed for 202 and 133 in both innings. Himachal's left-arm spinner Mayank Dagar took 5/55 and 4/30 to bamboozle Tripura batters. In the standings, Punjab have 10 points while Himachal are second with eight points. Vidarbha grabbed three points from their drawn match against Maharashtra at Gurugram, thanks to their first-innings lead. On the back of veteran batter Ganesh Satish's career-best 275, Vidarbha had posted a massive 570/5 in their first innings. Left-arm spinner Aditya Sarvate took 6/79 to dismiss Maharashtra for 328. Asked to follow-on, Maharashtra were 60/4 before the match ended with them taking just one point. In the other match at Lahl,

Uttar Pradesh defeated Assam by six wickets. After taking a slender lead of nine runs, Yash Dayal and Ankit Rajpoot took 4/37 and 4/56 respectively to bowl out Assam for just 120. Uttar Pradesh chased down the target of 111 easily with first-innings top-scorer Samarth Singh making 51 not out. In the points table, Maharashtra are on top with eight points followed by Uttar Pradesh at seven and Vidarbha at six. A counter-attacking 136 off 177 balls from opener Dhruv Shorey wasn't enough for Delhi to avoid a 15-run loss to Jharkhand in Guwahati. Chasing 335 after Jharkhand declared at 307/7, apart from Shorey, Jonty Sidhu made 54 while Lalit Yadav and Pradeep Sangwan tried to keep Delhi in the hunt. But Yadav's run-out turned the situation in Jharkhand's favour with left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem taking 5/83, following up from the 5/58 he took in the first innings.

In the other match, Tamil had to be content with a first innings lead against Chhattisgarh.

Nikhat, Nitu clinch gold medals at 73rd Strandja Memorial Boxing

Indian boxers Nikhat Zareen and Nitu clinched gold medals at the 73rd Strandja Memorial Boxing Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria on Sunday.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian boxers Nikhat Zareen and Nitu clinched gold medals at the 73rd Strandja Memorial Boxing Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria on Sunday.

According to information received here, Nikhat bagged her second gold medal at the Europe's oldest international boxing tournament with a 4-1 win in the women's 52kg final. She had previously won the Strandja Memorial title in 2019.

Nitu outpunched the reigning Youth World Championships bronze medalist Italy's Erika Prisciandro 5-0 without breaking a sweat in the women's 48kg final. With Nandini



also finishing on the podium in the +81kg category and signing off with a bronze medal, the Indian contingent concluded their campaign with three medals at the tournament, which was part of India's first exposure trip this year. Up against Ukraine's Tetiana Kob, Nikhat did not have the best of starts to the match as her experienced opponent went aggressive from the word go. The 34-year-old former World Championships bronze medalist Kob used all her experience to

push Nikhat on the back foot. But as the bout progressed, the Indian grew in confidence and fought back well to secure a 4-1 lead in the opening round. The 25-year-old Telangana boxer Nikhat, who has been in a red-hot form in the tournament and beat Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Turkey's Buse Naz Cakiroglu in the semi-finals, made a strong start and looked in a complete control in the remaining part of the bout as she landed some sharp scoring punches

before completing a convincing win.

Earlier, Nitu, who hails from Haryana, made a cautious start and took time to settle down. She maintained distance and tested the strength of Italy's young boxer Prisciandro. There was hardly any power-hitting but the contest was more engaging in the close second round with both the boxers exchanging the punches. High on confidence, the two-time youth world champion Nitu, who sent the former world championships silver medalist Hanna Okhota of Ukraine packing in the last encounter, was more aggressive between the two and surprised her Italian opponent with a combination of punches and her speed. Having titled the first two rounds in her favour, Nitu made Prisciandro work hard for a point in the last three minutes and secured the gold medal comfortably, winning a lop-sided bout by unanimous margin. The prestigious tournament, the first from the Golden Belt Series and a testing event for International Boxing.

AFC confirms Kolkata as venue for AFC Cup Group D matches

The South Zone Group D matches of the AFC Cup 2022 will be hosted at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Kriangan (VYBK), Kolkata as one of the chosen centralised venues, the Asian Football Confederation has officially confirmed in a letter to the All India Football Federation on Sunday.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The South Zone Group D matches of the AFC Cup 2022 will be hosted at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Kriangan (VYBK), Kolkata as one of the chosen centralised venues, the Asian Football Confederation has officially confirmed in a letter to the All India Football Federation on Sunday. The group will comprise of Gokulam Kerala FC, Bangladesh's Bashundhara Kings, Maziya Sports and Recreation of the Maldives, and the winner of a six-team South Asian contest in the preliminary and playoff Stages, from wherein ATK Mohun Bagan is expected to qualify to the Group D final phase after playing the quali-



fiers on April 12, and April 19.

The match on April 12 is to be held at the VYBK Kolkata, and if ATK Mohun Bagan win it, the match on April 19 will also be held in Kolkata. Meanwhile, the matches of the group have been scheduled from April 18-24. "We thank the Asian Football Confederation for their belief in our organisational capabilities, and confirming Kolkata as one of the centralised venues for the AFC Cup 2022. This makes great sense

because Gokulam Kerala will be in Kolkata till finishing the Hero I-League on May 15, and preparatory camp for the Blue Tigers is also scheduled for Kolkata," Kushal Das, General Secretary, AIFF said. "In fact, it is a double celebration time for the passionate fans in Kolkata as the AFC Cup Group D matches will be followed by India's final round matches of the AFC Asian Cup qualifiers from June 8-14, 2022," the General Secretary added.

CWG 2022: 12 INDIANS WEIGHTLIFTERS SEAL BERTHS

Twelve weightlifters including Tokyo Olympics silver medal winner Mirabai Chanu (women's 55kg), Bindyarani Devi (women's 59kg), Vikas Thakur, Ragala Venkat Rahul (both men's 96kg) and others have qualified for the Commonwealth Games 2022 after bagging medals at the Singapore Weightlifting International.

Singapore | Agencies

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Vikas Thakur and Venkat Rahul Ragala clinched the gold and bronze medals respectively in the men's 96kg event on Sunday, while Popy Hazarika (women's 64kg), Usha Kumara (women's 87kg), won medals to book their spots at the Commonwealth



Games. India concluded its campaign at the event with a haul of eight medals,

including six golds and a silver and bronze each. On Friday, Mirabai Chanu,

participating in new weight category (women's 55kg), along with Bindyarani

Devi (women's 59kg), Sanket Mahadev and Chanambam Rishikanta Singh (both men's 55kg), had also qualified for the CWG 2022 after bagging medals.

The results mean all eight Indians who registered for the Singapore International won medals and secured their spots at the Birmingham 2022 Games, to be held in July-August. India now have 12 weightlifters qualified for the Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham. Jeremy Lalrinnunga, Achinta Sheuli, Ajay Singh and Purnima Pandey had secured their spots by winning gold medals in their respective categories at the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships 2021 in December last year.



RASIKA DUGAL SHOOTING FOR 'LORD CURZON KI HAVELI' IN UK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Rasika Dugal has started the shoot of 'Lord Curzon Ki Haveli' in the UK. She will be stationed in the UK for a month. The film will be headlined by Rasika and 'Made In Heaven' actor Arjun Mathur.

Earlier, Rasika took to her social media handle and shared the news of having commenced its shoot with her fans and followers.

She posted a picture with her co-actor Arjun Mathur and the rest of the team. Sharing the picture on Instagram, Rasika wrote, "While the monkey is merely bored, man has boredom plus imagination. 'Lord Curzon Ki Haveli' NOW FILMING."

The Out Of Love actor piqued our curiosity with the quirky caption and made us wonder about its relevance to the film.

Rasika will be seen stepping into the shoes of a volleyball coach for a series titled 'Spike'. The actor was shooting for the project in Palampur, Himachal Pradesh.

She awaits the streaming of 'Delhi Crime 2.'

Arun Vijay-starrer 'Yaanai' to hit screens on May 6

Team Absolute | Chennai

Director Hari's eagerly-awaited Tamil action entertainer 'Yaanai', featuring Arun Vijay and Priya Bhavani Shankar in the lead roles, will release on May 6 this year.

Actor Samuthirakani made the announcement on Twitter.

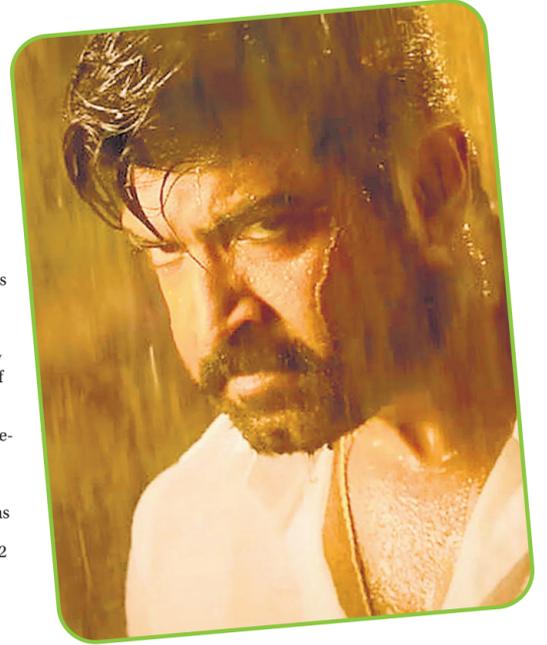
He tweeted, "The most awaited project #Yaanai hitting screens on May 6th. Summer Release."

The satellite and digital rights of director Hari's eagerly-awaited Tamil action entertainer 'Yaanai', featuring Arun Vijay and Priya Bhavani Shankar in the lead roles, have

already been bought by the Zee group. Produced by Drumstick Productions, the film features actress Priya Bhavani Shankar as its female lead, and is primarily targeted at 'B' and 'C' centre audiences.

In an earlier interview, Arun Vijay had disclosed that the protagonist of the film seeks to protect his family just like how elephants protect their families and surroundings, and therefore, the film has been named 'Yaanai', which in Tamil means elephant.

The film has raised expectations as this is the first rural script that Arun Vijay is doing after a gap of almost 12 years.



VIKRAANT SINGH, MONALISA OPEN UP ON REALITY SHOW 'SMART JODI'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Popular couple Vikraant Singh and Monalisa are excited to be part of the celebrity couple reality show 'Smart Jodi'. Monalisa says: "We are very excited to be on 'Smart Jodi'. The show will have heart-warming as well as challenging moments. We've been going strong in our marriage for years and this is a great opportunity to show the strength of our love. We look forward to having fun together and entertaining the audience once again." Vikraant and Monalisa had participated together in 'Nach Baliye 8'. The duo tied the knot on national television in 'Bigg Boss 10'. The couple has done several Bhojpuri films and have been acting in TV shows as well.

Vikraant shares further: "We will be representing the Bhojpuri entertainment industry on Star Plus and it feels great to be participating together once again after Nach Baliye. We are rehearsing very hard for our high voltage entry in the show and the other couples need to watch out for a tough competition."

The show, which is being hosted by Manish Paul, brings real life celebrity couples to face different challenges and showcases their unseen chemistry, stories and romantic moments. 'Smart Jodi' will feature famous power couples including Bollywood actress Bhagyashree Patwardhan and her husband Himalaya Dasani, former Bigg Boss contestant Rahul Mahajan and his wife Natalya Iliina, 'Ghum Hai Kisikey Pyaar Mein' actors and real-life couples Neil Bhatt and Aishwarya Sharma, Arjun Bijlani and his wife Neha Swami Bijlani among many others.



'Arabic Kuthu' is a 'Beast'

Team Absolute | Chennai

'Arabic Kuthu', the first single from director Nelson's eagerly-awaited action entertainer 'Beast', featuring actor Vijay in the lead, has just shattered another record on the Internet. The lyric video of 'Halamithi Habibo' has garnered a whopping 100 million views.

The video, which garnered a sensational 25 million views within 24 hours of being released on YouTube, also became the first Tamil song to be on the Spotify Daily Top 50 India chart.

It didn't stop there. The song went on to garner 35 million views in 48 hours, with over 2.6 Million people liking it. It crossed the 50 Million views mark in four days flat and went past the 70 Million mark in a week's time. And now, the immensely popular number has breached the 100 Million mark in 12 days.

Set to tune by Anirudh, who also has sung the peppy number along with Jonita Gandhi, the song has lyrics by actor Sivakarthekeyan.



NILAM KENIA ON WORKING WITH MADHURI DIXIT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Celebrity make-up artiste and hairstylist Nilam Kenia, who has worked with Bollywood actresses like Deepika Padukone, Sara Ali Khan and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, has now done the hair for Madhuri Dixit in the series 'The Fame Game'.

Speaking about her experience Nilam says: "I got the opportunity to work with Madhuri Dixit on this series through my mentor, well known hair and makeup artist Florian Hurel. The hair looks

were decided on the costumes and mood of the scene. And there were variations too - some places it was glam, some places it had to be messy and haggard."

Nilam also shares the feedback she has been receiving for Madhuri's hairdo. She adds: "The response has been fantastic. I hope people like the series as the entire team has put in a lot of effort and hard work on the project. We had to ensure that it was designed to

compliment the mood of the scene." Nilam also has high regard for Madhuri Dixit.

She says, "Madhuri Dixit is a true star in a real sense. Working with her was sheer pleasure and memorable. At the same time a big learning experience as well. I was pretty nervous but she made me very comfortable and now it's super fun to work with her. I can't

wait to work with her again."

Nilam also feels now every medium gives great attention to the look part as every role has a different look.

"Working for films and OTT is not very different. Nowadays every character is charted out keeping hair, makeup and costume in mind. And even prosthetic make-up is needed for certain roles."



'BIGG BOSS TAMIL' FAME SAMYUKTHA IN SUNDAR C'S NEXT FILM

Team Absolute | Chennai

Actress and 'Bigg Boss Tamil' participant Samyuktha Shanmuganathan has announced that she is a part of director Sundar C's upcoming family entertainer which is now being shot in Ooty.

Taking to Instagram, Samyuktha, who shot to fame after her participa-

tion in the Tamil television reality show 'Bigg Boss (Tamil)', said, "I'm so happy and grateful to be a part of such an amazing team captained by our Sundar C sir along with our incredibly handsome heros Jiiva, Jai and Srikanth and our pretty darlings DD Neelakandan, Aishwarya and more of our fantastic crew. Ooty. Shooting in progress. This is going to be sooo lit."



Ankita Lokhande: I was never a good actor, but one keeps learning

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Ankita Lokhande, whose performances in shows such as 'Pavitra Rishta' and film 'Manikarnika: The Queen Of Jhans' swept the audiences off their feet, has talked about how she has evolved as an actor since her debut in 2009.

Ankita, who today is a household name courtesy her effortless performance as Archana from the TV show, felt she was never a good actor but she learned on the sets and gained more knowledge of the craft while shooting for the film.

Talking about how she has evolved as an actor since 2009, Ankita in a conversation with IANS said: "Pavitra Rishta' has taught me so many things that I could go out and do different kinds of actors. Television teaches you so much itself. If

you have done television you can do anything. That is what I feel because television when you are even doing a show."

"Film and OTT people have this thing in their mind that they get scripts before anything and I was a new actor before this I was not an actor. It's not an easy job. I was never a good actor. You keep learning things."

The actress added: "So when I did Manikarnika after Pavitra Rishta I learned more things. It is a process of learning that can never stop."

Season 2 is centered around Manav, played by Shaheer Sheikh and Archana, and how their marriage, which was based on a sham, falls apart only for them to realise that their 'Pavitra Rishta' was never bound by just vows and responsibilities.

The show first aired in 2009 on television. It also starred late actor Sushant Singh Rajput as Manav. It went digital in 2020.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Saiyami Kher