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PM distracting Goans by blaming Nehru: Rahul Gandhi...



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DELAY IN INFORMING OF VEHICLE THEFT NOT GROUND FOR REJECTION OF INSURANCE CLAIM: SC

CLAIMANT HAS TO BE PAID

SUPREME COURT BENCH SAID

▶ "WHEN THE COMPLAINANT HAD LODGED THE FIR IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE THEFT OF THE VEHICLE, AND WHEN THE POLICE AFTER THE INVESTIGATION HAD ARRESTED THE ACCUSED AND ALSO FILED CHALLAN BEFORE THE CONCERNED COURT, AND WHEN THE CLAIM OF THE INSURED WAS NOT FOUND TO BE NOT GENUINE, THE INSURANCE COMPANY COULD NOT HAVE REPUDIATED THE CLAIM MERELY ON THE GROUND THAT THERE WAS A DELAY IN INTIMATING THE INSURANCE COMPANY ABOUT THE OCCURRENCE OF THE THEFT."

▶ THE BENCH SAID THE ACCUSED WERE ALSO ARRESTED AND CHARGE SHEETED, HOWEVER, THE VEHICLE COULD NOT BE TRACED OUT. "OF COURSE, IT IS TRUE THAT THERE WAS A DELAY OF ABOUT FIVE MONTHS ON THE PART OF THE COMPLAINANT IN INFORMING AND LODGING ITS CLAIM BEFORE THE INSURANCE COMPANY, NONETHELESS, IT IS PERTINENT TO NOTE THAT THE INSURANCE COMPANY HAS NOT REPUDIATED THE CLAIM ON THE GROUND THAT IT WAS NOT GENUINE," IT NOTED.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday held that an insurance company cannot reject a claim on the basis that there was a delay in communicating the theft of a vehicle to it. The top court set aside an order by the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), which was passed on a petition by Oriental Insurance Company Ltd challenging the direction to pay the insured sum to Jaina Construction Company Ltd in connection with the theft of Tata Aiva Truck. The insurance company disowned the liability on the claim, saying there was a breach of condition number one of the policy, which mandated immediate notice to the insurer of the accidental loss or damage. The company said the theft was intimated to it after the lapse of more than five months. Rejecting this contention of the insurance company, the top court said in the instant case also, the FIR was lodged immediately on the next day of the occurrence of theft of the vehicle by the complainant.

HEARING ON COMMON SYLLABUS, CURRICULUM FOR CHILDREN DENIED

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday declined to entertain a PIL seeking introduction of a common syllabus and curriculum for children across India. Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, representing advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, submitted before a bench headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao that there has to be a national curriculum. Counsel contended that the exclusion of the Right to Education (RTE) Act on certain institutions was creating a religious impression on the children as eight to 16 years was a crucial age. After a brief hearing in the matter, the bench, also comprising Justice B.R. Gavai, told the petitioner's counsel that it is not keen on entertaining the plea and allowed Upadhyay to approach the high court.



'DON'T SPREAD THESE THINGS TO A LARGER LEVEL', SC ON PLEAS CHALLENGING HC ORDER ON HIJAB

New Delhi: Chief Justice N.V. Ramana on Friday orally told the counsel of a petitioner, challenging the Karnataka High Court interim order in the Hijab matter, to think whether it is proper to bring the issue at the national level. Senior advocate Devadutt Kamat mentioned the plea challenging the Karnataka High Court before a bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana. Kamat submitted that the high court has restrained the students from disclosing their religious identities, which results in suspension of Article 25 and this will lead into larger consequences. The Chief Justice said: "Court is already hearing the matter. Don't spread these things to a larger level...we don't want to express anything on it."

SC GETS TOUGH ON RECOVERY NOTICES AGAINST ANTI-CAA PROTESTORS

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday pulled up Uttar Pradesh for taking action on the recovery notices issued to the alleged anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protestors in December 2019. The bench said, "Withdraw the proceedings or we will quash it for being in violation of the law laid down by this court." The apex court made these observations during the hearing of a plea by Parwaiz Arif Titu, who sought quashing of notices sent to alleged protestors and claimed such notices have been sent in an arbitrary manner. The district administration had sent these notices to recover losses caused by damage to public properties during the anti-CAA agitations in Uttar Pradesh. The plea cited that a notice was sent to a person, who died six years ago at the age of 94.

Airtel internet services suffer outage, firm says 'technical glitch'

The users faced major issues with the Airtel network in most parts of the country on Airtel Wifi as well as with Xstream Fiber and broadband services.

"Our internet services were disrupted for appx 5 minutes today morning due to a technical glitch. This was immediately tackled, and the network was fully normalized within the next 10 minutes. We deeply regret the inconvenience caused to our customers."

Spokesperson, Airtel



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Bharti Airtel broadband services experienced a mega outage on Friday as millions of students and workers across the country, including Delhi and Mumbai, were left without internet amid ongoing online classes and work meetings for several minutes before it started appearing back for some users, albeit slowly. The company said in a statement that the disruption was caused by a technical glitch. On the internet outage detector platform Downdetector, the map showed widespread outages across the country, including Metros, that started at around 11 a.m. While 50 per cent users reported facing total blackout, 34 per cent had problems with

mobile internet and 16 per cent had no signal, according to Downdetector. The company was yet to ascertain and reveal the cause of the mega outage. "Airtel Fiber is down, along with their app and website. #AirtelDown," posted one user on Twitter. Telecom operator Bharti Airtel's consolidated net profit fell 2.8 per cent during Q3FY22 to Rs 830 crore on a year-on-year basis, the company announced this week. In the same quarter of the previous fiscal, the consolidated net profit of the company stood at Rs 854 crore. On the other hand, the total revenues during Q3FY22 grew 12.6 per cent to Rs 29,867 crore, as against Rs 26,518 crore in the same quarter last fiscal.

Maha Minister gets 2 months jail, fine in election case

Amravati | Agencies

In an embarrassment for Maharashtra's Maha Vikas Aghadi government, a Minister of State was on Friday convicted in an election case and sentenced to 2 months simple imprisonment along with a fine. The Chandurbazar Court in Amravati district has found Minister of State for Water Resources and Education Omprakash Baburao alias Bacchu Kadu guilty in a complaint pertaining to his 2014 election as MLA from Achalpur. The court has pronounced a two-months simple imprisonment plus a fine of Rs 25,000, but has granted 30 days' time to appeal against the order. The 3-time legislator was



re-elected again as an Independent MLA from the same constituency and later elevated as MoS from the Shiv Sena quota in the MVA government headed by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. According to a complaint lodged in 2017 by a local

Bharatiya Janata Party leader, Kadu had allegedly suppressed information about owning at least one flat in Mumbai in his 2014 election affidavit, and hence violated the provisions of the Representation of The People Act.

INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN RURAL INDIA GROWING AT FAST PACE: SITHARAMAN

New Delhi | Agencies

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said that internet connectivity in rural India is increasing at a fast pace and will soon surpass urban connectivity. Responding to the debate on the General Budget 2022-23 in the Rajya Sabha, she said that as per the report of Internet and Mobile Association, the rural internet user base is growing three times faster and is likely to surpass the urban user numbers soon. "Data consumption through Bharatnet optical fibre surpassed 13,000 terabytes in June 2021 while the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) report in August 2021 said that the total number of internet subscribers has gone up to 82.5 crore," she said. Sitharaman also said that, in the Budget she announced, the contracts for laying optical fibre connections in rural and remote areas will be awarded this year and will be completed by 2025. Replying to the Opposition's comments on Bangladesh growing faster than India, she informed the House that India's economy is 10 times bigger than Bangladesh, so if Bangladesh grew at 10 per cent and India grew just at 1 per cent, the absolute number in terms of growth will be the same.



Russia All Set For Military Move On Ukraine: Norway



Oslo | Agencies

Russia is operationally ready to conduct a wide range of military operations in Ukraine and the Kremlin just needs to make the call, the head of Norway's military intelligence service said Friday. The Russians "have all they need to carry everything out, from a minor invasion in the east to minor attacks here and there in Ukraine, or a complete invasion, with, possibly, an occupation of all or parts of Ukraine", vice admiral Nils Andreas Stensones

said. "Now, it is up to President Putin to choose if he wants to proceed or not", he said. Stensones made his remarks at the presentation of the Norwegian intelligence services' annual threat assessment report. According to him, Russia has "more than 150,000 combat troops" massed at the Ukraine border, along with the country's "most advanced weapons" and all the necessary logistics. "It's very difficult to say if (an offensive) is likely or unlikely,

because it is solely up to the Russian president to make the decision", he said. Western nations believe Russia is preparing an imminent invasion of Ukraine, though Moscow has denied it. Conflict has been festering in eastern Ukraine since 2014 between Russian-backed separatists and Kyiv forces. Meanwhile, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Friday warned again of the "real risk for a new armed conflict in Europe", while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said a Russian invasion could come "any time".

COP KILLED, 4 SECURITY PERSONNEL INJURED IN J&K GRENADE ATTACK

Srinagar: A Special Police Officer (SPO) of Jammu and Kashmir Police was killed and four other security forces personnel were injured after terrorists lobbed a grenade on a joint police-BSF party in Jammu and Kashmir's Bandipora district on Friday, officials said. Senior officials told reporter that the grenade was hurled by terrorists on a party of security forces, resulting in injuries to five security forces personnel, and the SPO later succumbed to his injuries. The condition of four injured security forces personnel is said to be stable.

TATA SONS BOARD RENEWS CHANDRASEKARAN'S TERM AS EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Board of Tata Sons on Friday approved the reappointment of N. Chandrasekaran as the Executive Chairman for the next five years. The decision took place during a board meeting held on Friday. Accordingly, the Board reviewed the last five years' performance of the group and considered the reappointment of Chandrasekaran. In a statement, Tata Sons said that Ratan N. Tata, who was a special invitee to this meeting, expressed his satisfaction on the progress and performance of the Tata Group under



the leadership of Chandrasekaran. "He recommended his term be renewed for a further five-year period," the statement said. "The Board members commended the performance of the Executive Chairman and unanimously approved the reappointment of Mr. N Chandrasekaran as the Executive Chairman for the next five years." Tata Sons is the principal investment holding company and promoter of Tata companies.

COVID VACCINES HAVE REACHED JUST HALF OF WORLD POPULATION: REPORT

Public health experts, including the World Health Organisation, have been warning that vaccine inequity is prolonging the pandemic. However, about 100 million Covid-19 vaccines, offered to third world nations were near expiry which the countries were forced to dump, according to the UN's children's fund Unicef.

More than 9.4 billion vaccine doses have now been administered globally. But 90 countries did not reach the target of vaccinating 40 per cent of their populations by the end of last year, and 36 of those countries have not yet vaccinated 10 per cent of their populations." Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Chief

New York | Agencies

Even after more than a year of Covid vaccine drives, just over half the world's population has been fully vaccinated, media reported. According to Our World in Data, nearly 54 per cent of the world's population is fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, Washington Post reported. Nearly 62 per cent have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine. However, the figures show a stark global divide. The data shows that less than 11 per cent of people have received at least one dose against Covid in low-income countries. That number jumps to about 55 per cent for lower-middle-income countries



and nearly 80 per cent for both upper-middle-income and high-income nations, the data showed. The US, countries of the European Union and others were criticised for buy-

ing up most of the early global supply of coronavirus vaccines, the report said. Covax, a UN-backed global vaccine-sharing initiative, was created in April 2020 to ensure vaccine access to countries that cannot afford. The initiative struggled in the beginning as rich countries stockpiled them. In January, this year, Covax shipped its billionth dose in mid-January, and according to the WHO, African countries were sent twice as many vaccine doses in January as six months ago. Meanwhile, the WHO has also said that Africa is on track to end the pandemic. But, "continued vigilance is key" to dealing with outbreaks and monitoring the possible emergence of new variants, it said.



PRIME MINISTER DISTRACTING GOANS BY BLAMING NEHRU: RAHUL GANDHI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rahul Gandhi has accused the Prime Minister of distracting the attention of Goans from the actual issues.

Rahul was responding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remark in which he "blamed Jawahar Lal Nehru for delay in liberation of Goa".

The Congress leader said, "Every party has a particular role, like I see my role as to ensure that Goa gets a government that represents its voice. The Prime Minister also has a role, he cannot come to you and say, I gave you jobs. I have fixed your problems, he can't say that to you, so he has to distract you, his role is to distract."

"His role is to take you away from your issues and distract you. Now the fact of the matter is that this is an issue that has come up before, academics and freedom fighters have commented on this. The sad fact is



that the Prime Minister doesn't quite understand the history of those times. He doesn't understand in details what was going on post World War-II," he added.

Rahul also said that the party would look to rejuvenate the state's tourism sector and also restart the mining industry at the earliest. "This time we are going to get a

solid majority and we are going to act immediately to ensure that we have a government in Goa. We won't fall short. I think we'll be well above the majority mark with ease," Gandhi said. To form government, victory over 21 seats is required in the 40-member state Legislative Assembly. In the last elections, in 2017, the Congress had emerged as the single-largest party, but the delay in cobbling together the required numbers had resulted in the BJP forming a government in the coastal state.

He also said that the Congress would focus on turning Goa into an IT hub in order to address the issue of unemployment in the state.

"We propose to focus on transforming Goa into an IT and knowledge hub so that many young Goans can get jobs in the IT industry and get connected to the rest of the world," the Congress leader said.

No ban on mobiles at educational institutions, says K'taka Min

BENGALURU | Agencies

Karnataka's Higher Education Minister C.N. Ashwath Narayan on Friday said that it would not be possible to ban the usage of phones in colleges as digital learning has become part and parcel of the study process.

Replying to a query by reporters about speculation that usage of mobiles will be banned in schools and colleges against the backdrop of hijab row, he said:

"Nowadays modern gadgets such as mobile, computer, laptop, tab, etc have become an integral part of the teaching-learning process. When such is the situation, how usage of mobiles can be banned?" Neither students or parents should believe such rumours. The government's aim is to provide quality education to students



MY HIJAB MY IDENTITY

at all levels using modern gadgets. Accordingly, usage of mobiles in institutions will be continued."

Meanwhile, Karnataka Police have conducted flag marches in various districts, including Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, Vijayapura, Dharwad, and Hubballi as a precautionary measure amid tension against the backdrop of hijab row. Two teams of armed policemen have taken out flag march in sensitive areas of Hubballi to send out a strong signal to the anti-

social elements and instil confidence among parents as high schools are reopening from Monday. The police also took out march in communally-sensitive Vijayapura.

Flag march was undertaken in arterial roads and sensitive pockets of the historical city.

Police march was also taken out in Udupi, from where the hijab row started.

The Karnataka High Court has given interim order banning both hijab and saffron shawls until its final orders.

6 killed in two road accidents in Andhra

AMARAVATI | Agencies

Six people were killed in two separate road accidents in Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool district on Friday, police said.

Three persons were killed and three others were critically injured when a car in which they were travelling rammed into a parked truck at Ulandikonda on Bengaluru highway.

The victims belonged to the same family.

According to police the collision occurred early in the morning. The deceased were identified as Srinivasulu, Adilakshmi and Bhagyalakshmi. Injured persons Kumar, Anjaneyulu and Dharani were admitted to a hospital in Kurnool.

The family from Dharmavaram was coming to Kurnool to visit an ailing relative undergo-



ing treatment in a hospital. In another accident, two persons were killed when a car collided head-on with a private bus at Damagatla Cross Road. Fifteen passengers of the bus were also injured. In the third accident, a person was killed when a motorbike he was riding hit a tree in Atmakur.

MYSTERIOUS BLAST ON OUTSKIRTS OF JAMMU CITY

Jammu: A mysterious blast rocked outskirts of J&K's Jammu city on Friday, police said. Police sources said a mysterious blast rocked Sanjay Nagar area on the outskirts of Jammu city. "A vehicle passing through the area sustained minor damage due to the blast. A team of the forensic science laboratory has been called to ascertain the nature of the blast." It is not a blast linked to militant activity as per preliminary investigation, a source said.

Will pray that everyone gets child who enters politics: Lalu Prasad Yadav on PM's remark

PATNA | Agencies

Targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, RJD chief Lalu Prasad on Friday said that he will pray to God to give children to "everyone" and they should come into politics.

The remark was made after the Prime Minister praised Nitish Kumar for not indulging into dynasty politics and termed him a "great socialist leader". He also referred Ram Manohar Lohia and George Fernandes as great socialist leaders.

"What can I do if Prime Minister



Narendra Modi does not have a child. Everyone knows Nitish Kumar has a son who does not want to enter politics. He

(Nitish's son) is not capable of handling politics and contesting elections. In these cases, who will be seen on the dais of the election campaign. I pray to god to give children to everyone and they should come into politics," Lalu Prasad has said. The Prime Minister's statement came a day before the first phase of polling for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election. He was targeting the Samajwadi Party, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav for dynastic politics. Lalu Prasad said that a successor is "essential" to carry forward the political legacy of the family and party.

Unnao Dalit woman died of strangulation: Autopsy report

UNNAO (UTTAR PRADESH) | Agencies

The autopsy report of the Dalit woman whose decomposed body was found in a farmhouse, has revealed that she was strangled.

The post-mortem report also showed that her neck was broken.

The woman had gone missing two months ago and her body was finally recovered on Thursday in Unnao.

The victim's mother has alleged that former minister Fateh Bahadur Singh's son, Rajol Singh, was behind the murder.

The decomposed body was found wrapped in a blanket and dumped in a septic tank.

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya has slammed Akhilesh Yadav since the former chief minister belonged to Samajwadi Party and has accused him of protecting the guilty.



He tweeted: "Shri Akhilesh Yadav ji, the body of a Dalit girl was found in the field of an SP leader. Her mother was pleading in front of your car, but you did not listen to her and protected the leader. In the new SP (govt), you will forgive all crimes of

SP leaders and leave no stone unturned to ensure the guilty are not punished."

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati also lashed out at the Samajwadi Party over the issue. She tweeted: "The recovery of the

buried dead body of a Dalit girl in an SP leader's field in Unnao district is very sad and a serious matter. The family had been suspecting the SP leader in the abduction and murder of the girl. The state government should immediately take strict action against the culprits and get justice for the victim's family."

The woman had been missing for two months and her mother had lodged a missing complaint on December 8.

However, the police allegedly did not take the matter seriously, and on January 24, the mother jumped in front of Akhilesh Yadav's car in Lucknow.

When the matter came up in the media, the police sent Rajol Singh to jail. He was questioned, but the missing woman could not be traced. Later, based on evidence, the police found the girl's body on Thursday.

9-year-old girl among 4 killed in Delhi building collapse

A building collapsed in north Delhi's Bawana area on Friday afternoon, killing four people, including a woman and a nine-year-old girl, the police said.

Two women were pulled out of the debris of the building and rushed to a hospital. Their condition is out of danger, they said.

The deceased have been identified as Rukaiya Khatun, Shahzad, Afrina (9) and Danish, the police said.

The fire department officials received information about the incident at 2.48 pm, following which three to four fire tenders rushed to the spot. The police were informed that the building



near the Delhi Jal Board had collapsed and four to five people are reportedly buried under debris. The police rushed to the spot and found that the collapsed building was the part of Rajiv Ratan Aawas in which there were about 300 to 400 flats, a senior police officer said.

Three JCBs, one hydra machine and two ambu-

lances reached the spot and rescue operation was started, they said.

"Two women -- Fatima and Shahnaaz -- both residents of JJ Colony, Bawana were taken out of the debris and sent to MV hospital Pooth Khurd," Deputy Commissioner of Police (outer north) Brijender Kumar Yadav said.

After Modi, Shah, now Nadda blames Nehru for delayed liberation of Goa

PANAJI | Agencies

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the blame for the "delay" in Goa's liberation from Portugal at India's first PM Jawaharlal Nehru's door, BJP president JP Nadda on Saturday followed the suit.

Speaking at an election rally in Marcela village in North Goa, Nadda said that the Central government at the time, led by Nehru did not have the will to liberate Goa, as a result of which the state's liberation was delayed till 1961.

"Because of the Indian



National Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru, your independence was delayed. The rest of the country gained independence in 1947. You became independent later. The country's leaders did not have the will to liberate you. You earned the liberation through your struggle," the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president said. "When I see the people of Goa,

I feel pride and honoured. I feel pride and a sense of honour because you have tolerated foreign forces for a long time. You kept on fighting and your struggle has not been a small one. The struggle went on for 451 years," Nadda said. In his speech at an election rally in Mapusa town in North Goa on Friday, PM Modi had said: "The first Prime Minister of the country Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru spoke from the Red Fort and you can listen to his speech on Youtube. He said from the ramparts of the Red Fort, that he could not send the army to help the Satyagrahis."

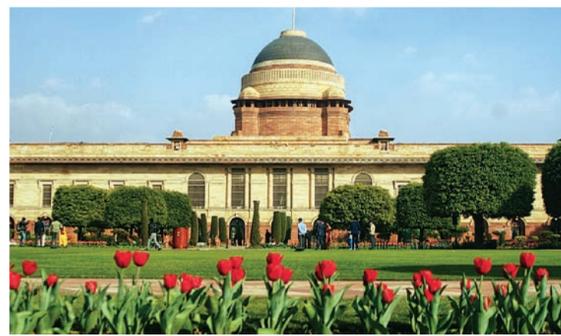
Mughal Gardens to open from Feb 12; entry through online booking only

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Eleven varieties of tulips in six colours, 138 kinds roses, over 20 types of creepers and 70 different seasonal plants are awaiting for the visitors at the annual 'Udyanotsav' at Mughal Gardens at the Rashtrapati Bhavan that will be opened for public from February 12.

The much awaited winter-spring event of the national capital will be opened for common public on all days from February 12 till March 16 except Mondays.

Earlier on Thursday morning, President Ram Nath Kovind, opened the annual 'Udyanotsav' at the Mughal Gardens that is spread over 15 acres complete with geo-



metrical pattern. "There are 10,000 bulbs of tulips

of 11 varieties in six colours. These come from Netherlands. We have

stocks in blue, white and pink, all from Japan. And we have Inca Marigold from Germany. But we get these from local vendors," said Rashtrapati Bhavan's Horticulture Consultant P.N. Joshi.

Apart from these, there are 'Flower Carpets' in magnificent designs on display in the Central Lawns. The dominant colour scheme of this year's ornamental flowers is white, yellow, red and orange. A small cactus corner has also been landscaped along with some air purifying plants in the gardens.

Other attractions include Long garden, circular garden, Musical Garden and Herbal Garden with over 100 shrub varieties.

Delhi doctors save woman who suffered 4 cardiac arrests in 1 week

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A 51-year-old female here has been given a new lease of life after suffering about four massive heart failures due to severe Tuberculosis, doctors said.

The patient was admitted to Fortis Escorts Heart Institute's emergency ward with severe breathlessness and body swelling.

An ECHO and initial clinical examination revealed massive fluid accumulation around the heart which impacted its pumping capacity and further led to drop in blood pressure.

Looking at her deteriorating health condition, the doctors introduced her to medicine therapy to control the blood pressure.

At this stage, it was really important to improve the heart's pumping capacity which was possible only by draining the fluid. As the first step, she was given anti-tubercular therapy. An early diagnosis had confirmed that the patient was suffer-



ing from TB.

"Managing the comorbidities, while simultaneously ensuring the patient remained stable was challenging," said the team of doctors, led by Dr. Vivudh Pratap Singh, Consultant of Interventional Cardiology, at the hospital.

"During the anti-tubercular therapy, we faced another challenge, when the patient started having incessant fast heart rate (ventricular tachyarrhythmia). She had already suffered four cardiac arrests within the week. The patient was given cardiac massage and shocks and she was successfully resuscitated without any ventilator support," Singh said.

She was implanted with an LCD -- a special type of pacemaker which gives shock in fast heart rate.

"Tuberculosis is mostly considered a common ailment associated with fever, as the only symptom, but in our country where it is still prevalent; its effect on heart mostly goes undiagnosed. With timely diagnosis and correct line of treatment, TB can be managed," Singh said.

Two PNB officials, five others sentenced to jail for loan fraud

HYDERABAD | Agencies

Special CBI court in Hyderabad on Friday sentenced seven persons including the ex-Chief Manager and senior manager of Punjab National Bank, Secunderabad Branch, to varying jail terms after convicting them in a bank loan fraud case.

The court sentenced B Sathya Rao, the former Chief Manager, PNB, and its ex senior manager Machavaram Venkata Krishna Rao to three years rigorous imprisonment each and also slapped a fine of Rs 80,000 on them.

The other who were awarded jail terms were Veli Shrinivas, the owner of Spectrum Mercantiles, Veli Vanaja, M. Abdul Manan, M.

Reddy Koti Reddy, and Manoj Kumar.

The CBI had on May 24, 2010, registered a case against Sathya Rao and others on the allegations that the accused had obtained cash credit facility in connivance with the bank officials using forged and fabricated title deeds as genuine pertaining to immovable properties, audited balance sheets and financial documents.

Due to this the bank had suffered a loss of Rs 2.6 crore. The CBI, after lodging the FIR, formed a team to probe and filed a charge sheet on December 14, 2012.

The court noted that the CBI had proved its case beyond reasonable doubt and held all the accused guilty.



PREZ INAUGURATES REFURBISHED 110-YEAR-OLD DARBAR HALL IN RAJ BHAVAN

President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the historic, 110-year-old Darbar Hall of the Maharashtra Raj Bhavan at Malabar Hill on the shores of the Arabian Sea, here on Friday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the historic, 110-year-old Darbar Hall of the Maharashtra Raj Bhavan at Malabar Hill on the shores of the Arabian Sea, here on Friday.

The President was flanked by his wife Savita Kovind, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, Bombay High Court Chief Justice Dipankar Datta, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Maha Vikas Aghadi ministers, and top dignitaries.

This is the first major renovation of the glittering Darbar Hall which is the traditional venue for top state events like swearing-in ceremonies of Governors, Chief Justice, Chief Ministers and Cabinet Ministers, Lokayuktas, investitures, meetings of large delegations, mega-cultural



events, hosting important foreign VVIPs, etc.

In its new dazzling 'avatar' both inside and outside, the Darbar Hall seating capacity has been enhanced by more than triple, from 225 to 750, though all the heritage features of the place have been retained.

The renovation works started in 2019 and was completed in December 2021 with a new balcony and a viewing gallery being added for a magnificent view of the Arabian Sea and surroundings.

The President said that the modern concept of 'darbar' promotes

transparency and is becoming popular as a mode to connect people and the public authorities.

He also paid rich tributes to the memory of the late Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar, who died on February 6 in Mumbai, saying he experienced an "emptiness", for, a genius like her is born only once in a century and her music is immortal.

The Darbar Hall was designed by architect George Wittet and built in 1911 to welcome Great Britain's King George V and Queen Mary.

The inauguration function was originally scheduled for December 8, but was cancelled as a mark of respect to the victims of the helicopter tragedy in Tamil Nadu which left at least 13 killed, including the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Bipin Rawat and his wife Madhulika, other army personnel and civilians.

Never visited Raj Bhavan daily while in opposition: Maha CM Uddhav Thackeray

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray taunted former ally BJP over its proximity with Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, pointing out to the opposition party leaders' "almost daily visits" to the sprawling Raj Bhavan in south Mumbai.

"While in opposition, we used to visit Raj Bhavan maybe once or twice a year, but not daily," Thackeray said, without naming any BJP leader. The relations between the Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government and the governor have been strained from the start after the coalition came to power in 2019. Thackeray and Koshyari were together at a function at the Raj Bhavan where President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the newly-reconstructed Durbar Hall. The air at the Raj Bhavan is always "cool irrespective of



political air," the chief minister quipped. The "dialogue" with the Raj Bhavan has not been broken off, he said. Koshyari and the Thackeray-led government have clashed on many occasions. Recently, the governor disallowed election to the Assembly Speaker's post during the winter session, taking exception to the government's decision to hold it through a voice vote. Koshyari had earlier asked

the chief minister as to why the state government was not reopening temples in the state after the Covid-19 lockdown ended.

He had also questioned Thackeray's Hindutva ideology over the issue. The governor is yet to approve the 12 names forwarded by the state government for nomination to the Legislative Council from his quota even though more than a year has passed.

COVID-19:

Maharashtra records 5,455 new cases, 63 deaths, 14,635 recoveries

THE RECOVERY RATE IN THE STATE IS 97.34%. THE CASE FATALITY RATE IN THE STATE IS 1.82%.

CURRENTLY, 6,10,718 PEOPLE ARE IN HOME QUARANTINE AND 2,392 PEOPLE ARE IN INSTITUTIONAL QUARANTINE.



The Mumbai circle which consists of MCGM, Thane, TMC, Navi Mumbai, KDMC, Ulhasnagar MC, Bhivandi Nijampur MC, Mira Bhayandar MC, Palghar, Vasai Virar MC, Raigad, Panvel MC--recorded 738 new cases.

The Nashik circle--which consists of Nashik, Nashik MC, Malegaon MC, Ahmednagar, Ahmednagar MC, Dhule, Dhule MC, Jalgaon, Jalgaon MC, Nandurbar--reported 959 fresh COVID-19 cases.

The Pune circle--which includes Pune, PMC, PCMC, Solapur, Solapur MC, Satara recorded 1578 new cases. The Kolhapur circle which includes Kolhapur, Kolhapur MC, Sangli, Sangli MC, Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri reported 240 new cases. The Aurangabad circle--which consists of Aurangabad, Aurangabad MC, Jalna, Hingoli, Parbhani, Parbhani MC-- reported 174 fresh cases.

NO DISCUSSION HELD ON MAHARASHTRA GOING MASK-FREE: PAWAR

THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION IN THE CABINET MEETING ON STOPPING THE USE OF MASKS AND WE MUST CONTINUE TO USE MASKS TILL COVID-19 IS ERADICATED, SAID AJIT PAWAR.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday said the state cabinet had not held any discussion about going mask-free, and people must continue to wear the protective gear till coronavirus is eradicated.

"There was no discussion in the cabinet meeting on stopping the use of masks. We must continue to use masks till the COVID-19 disease is eradicated," Pawar said while speaking to the media in Mumbai.

People will be informed if any decision about going mask-free is taken, he said.

Pawar made the comments after he inspected developmental works carried out by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in Worli, Dadar and Mahim with Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray. Maharashtra has witnessed a decline in COVID-19 cases over the last few days. The state reported 6,248 infections on Thursday, which raised the infections to 78,29,633. However, health minister Rajesh Tope has said on Thursday that the state government has sought



information from the Central and the state task forces on the measures to be adopted to make mask-free at the earliest. The appeal incidentally came on a day Mumbai's test positivity rate dropped to 1% after 56 days of rising to over 25% on some days.

Tope said that several countries now allowed their citizens to stop wearing masks, which had emerged as the best protection against the Covid-causing SARS-CoV-2 virus.

"In the recent cabinet meeting, we discussed making the state mask-free. Several countries such

as the UK have finally asked their citizens to stop wearing masks. We have requested the Central and the state task forces to provide us with information on how they achieved it," he said. However, he underlined that the mask rule will continue for some time in Maharashtra as "our demography is huge." On Thursday, Maharashtra's daily Covid caseload dropped to 6,248 as against 7,142 on the previous day. Mumbai's cases rose marginally to 429, but still remained below 500 for the fourth consecutive day. The daily toll almost halved in a 24-hour period, with the state registering 45 deaths, including two in Mumbai. BMC commissioner I Chahal said, "Ever since Mumbai's Covid positivity rate increased to touch 1% on December 21 last year today after 56 days, the positivity rate is back to 1% again."

He said that the city had registered 2.85 lakh Covid cases and 312 deaths in the 56 days of the third wave so far. Stating that Mumbai had seen an average of 5.5 deaths per day during this 56-day period, Chahal said that "this is one of the lowest single-digit mortality rate in the third wave for any comparable city at the national or international level." Active cases in the state dropped to 70,000 on Thursday, while less than 4,000 cases are under treatment in the city.

Senior Maharashtra government officials said that the state government will be reviewing the restrictions that have been in place in the wake of falling numbers and soon, more relaxations will be given. "At the moment restaurants, theatres are running at 50% capacity, more relaxations to these establishments are on the cards," the official said.

Plea In High Court Against Maharashtra Allowing Supermarkets To Sell Wine

The Maharashtra cabinet had last month allowed the sale of wine in supermarkets and walk-in stores across the state.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A public interest litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Bombay High Court to challenge the decision taken last month by the Maharashtra government, allowing the sale of wine in supermarkets and walk-in stores in the state.

The petitioner, who claims to be working closely with teenagers, young adults and underprivileged children, who are either orphans or unable to receive parental care, said such children are susceptible to social vices like alcohol or drug addiction and gambling.

In its meeting held on January 27, the state cabinet allowed the sale of wine in

supermarkets and walk-in stores across the state. A minister had then said that the decision was taken to give a boost to fruit-based wineries which provide additional income to farmers.

The petition filed in the high court claimed that the state's decision was contrary to a government resolution of August 2011 that adopts a de-addiction policy. The PIL claimed that the aim of the de-addiction policy adopted by the state government was to curb proliferation of addictions among youth, and to take efforts to discourage people from indulging in drinking habits.

"The resolution casts a duty upon the state to prohibit consumption of intoxicating drinks and drugs, which are injurious to health, and to improve the standard of living and improve the public health at large," the PIL said. The government resolution says that there shall be no sale of alcohol near educational, government offices, parks, hospitals, religious places and state and national highways, it added.

"Unfortunately, the said cabinet decision of the Maharashtra government is directly contrary to this resolve of the government itself and it speaks loudly about making available an elaborate market for wine products and effective

marketing of wine in Maharashtra and to popularize wine drinking," the PIL said.

It added that the January 2022 decision only bars sale of wine in stores near educational and religious institutions. The petitioner is likely to seek an urgent hearing of the plea next week.

Buyers will need drinking permit to buy wine from smaller retailers

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Liberalising the sale of wine by allowing it to be sold from smaller retailers (with areas 100 sq metres and above) does not mean that the buyer doesn't need a drinking permit.

Buyers not having a drinking permit

will have to buy a daily permit of Rs 5 from the shop before carrying it home, said excise officials. For those consumers who have already taken annual or lifetime drinking permit from excise department, the buying gets easy as always. For this daily permit will have to be kept and issued by shops to buyers without fail while sell-

ing bottles. It may be mentioned that mild beer is the only liquor that does not require drinking permit and those with 21 years of age and above can consume it. However, for all other forms of liquor the drinking permit is required which can be obtained by those with 25 years of age and above.

In a move to provide for a larger domestic market for wine producers and grape farmers state has allowed walk-in stores and supermarkets of over 100 square metres to sell wine stored on their shelves (store space 2.5 cubic meters with locking). To do this shops need a wine sale license costing Rs 5000 a year.

Until now, supermarkets with a liquor license had been allowed to sell wine and beer in the state. However, these had to be displayed inside a separate enclosure. Several large supermarket chains have been selling wine in this manner for several years.

The current decision will allow smaller shops to also sell wine. Shops selling wine will have to be located at a distance from educational and religious institutions. State has 70 wineries and around 10,000 people involved in the trade.



CONGRESS WORKERS PROTEST NEAR GADKARI'S HOUSE, SEEK APOLOGY

Nagpur: A group of Congress workers on Thursday staged a protest in front of the residence of Union Minister Nitin Gadkari here to protest against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks that coronavirus spread due to Congress. They demanded apology from the Union Minister for PM's remark. Gadkari is a member of parliament from Nagpur.

The protest was led by Congress city President Vikas Thakre. Holding placards and banners, Congress workers shouted slogans against BJP and PM Modi.

They said that PM Modi during debate in the Lok Sabha had said that Congress is responsible for the spread of coronavirus in the country which is an 'insult' to Maharashtra. Countering the Congress, BJP workers led by former Standing Committee chairman of BJP ruled civic body NMC, also held demonstrations. They were joined by local MLA Krishna Khopde. Congress workers were picked up by the police but later released.

HIJAB ROW: MUMBAI MLA MEETS K'TAKA GIRL, GIFTS IPHONE

Karnataka college girl Muskaan Khan who confronted a crowd by raising slogans of "Allah hu Akbar" during protests that broke out on hijab row, continues to be in news.

Bengaluru | Agencies

Karnataka college girl Muskaan Khan who confronted a crowd by raising slogans of "Allah hu Akbar" during protests that broke out on

hijab row, continues to be in news.

Congress MLA from Mumbai's Bandra Zeeshan Siddique came all the way from Maharashtra on Friday and paid visit to Muskan's residence in Mandya city. The MLA appreciated her "courage", assured support and gifted her an iPhone and smart watch.

"I came from so far to meet the girl from our community who showed exemplary courage. I am happy for her courageous act," he stated. "Today whole of Karnataka, entire country is taking pride of her act. She has shown what is

the real power of woman. After seeing her brave act, other women who are being pressured, subjected to harassment and whoever is meted with injustice, they can also confront such acts," he asserted. Her act against those zaalims (cruel people) is commendable, he added.

"Wearing hijab is a constitutional right. One can wear clothes of her choice. You have problem with her hijab or with the fact that she is getting educated," the Congress MLA said.

"There are cores of brothers behind Muskaan to protect her right of wearing hijab. I felt

happy after meeting her family," he added. Muskaan Khan, the student of PES College of Arts, Science and Commerce in Mandya district was allegedly heckled by a group of students in the college premises for wearing 'burka'. The group raised slogan of 'Jai Sriram' while surrounding and following her. Muskan confronted the crowd with slogan of 'Allah hu Akbar'. The video is now viral on social media. Later, she was safely escorted inside the classroom by authorities. Muskaan has later stated that she will abide by the court order and thanked college authorities.

10th Mumbai Gallery Weekend Begins

New Delhi: The Mumbai Gallery Weekend (MGW), which began in 2012 to breathe new life into Mumbai's art scene, returns with the goal of engaging audiences through a series of exhibitions highlighting art from India and around the world. The three-day event will provide visitors with the opportunity to participate in a variety of art-related affairs, all of which are open to the public and free to attend. This year's weekend will feature 23 galleries and design venues from across Mumbai. This art-focused weekend has established itself as one of Mumbai's most important cultural events over the last ten years. MGW's mission has evolved over time to include new galleries and cultural spaces. The goal has remained the same, to bring together potential art collectors and aficionados in order to expand the reach and importance of contemporary art. You can log on to www.mumbaugalleryweekend.com



EDITOR'S SPECS

Vaporous Himalaya

Water vapour exhibits a positive radiative effect at the top of the atmosphere (TOA), suggesting an increase in overall warming in the high-altitude Himalayas due to it, a study has shown. Precipitable water vapour (PWV) is one of the most rapidly varying components in the atmosphere and is mainly accumulated in the lower troposphere. Due to the large variability in space and time, mixing processes and contribution to a series of heterogeneous chemical reactions, as well as sparse measurement networks, especially in the Himalayan region, it is difficult to accurately quantify the climatic impact of PWV over space and time. Moreover, aerosol-cloud-precipitation interactions over this region, which are one of the most climatic-sensitive, are poorly understood, apparently due to a lack of proper observational data, a release from the Ministry of Science and Technology said. However, the recent research has showed that PWV exhibits a positive radiative effect at the top of the atmosphere in high-altitude remote locations in the order of about 10 watts per square metre at Nainital (altitude 2,200 metres, in central Himalaya) and 7.4 W per square metre at Hanle (Altitude 4,500 metres, in western Trans Himalaya). The research published in the Journal of Atmospheric Pollution Research, Elsevier shows that the atmospheric radiative effect due to PWV is about 3-4 times higher compared to aerosols, resulting in atmospheric heating rates of 0.94 and 0.96 K Day⁻¹ at Nainital and Hanle, respectively. The researchers assessed the combination of aerosols and water vapour radiative effects over the Himalayan range that is specifically important for regional climate and highlighted the importance of water vapour as a key greenhouse gas and climate forcing agent over the Himalayan region. The team believes that this work will provide a comprehensive investigation of the combined impact of aerosols and water vapour on the radiation budget.

How profit-driven algorithms are disconnecting public from real news

In the misinformation age of social media, what evidence reaches which parts of the audience is increasingly up to automated algorithms curated by social media platforms rather than scientists, journalists or users of the platforms themselves, warn scientists.

This competition for public attention has produced at least three urgent lessons that the scientific community must face as online information environments rapidly displace traditional, mainstream media, according to an opinion published in Journal Science late on Thursday. "Rules of scientific discourse and the systematic, objective, and transparent evaluation of evidence are fundamentally at odds with the realities of debates in most online spaces," wrote Dominique Brossard and Dietram Scheufele of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "It is debatable whether social media platforms that are designed to monetise outrage and disagreement among users are the most productive channel for convincing skeptical publics that settled science about climate change or vaccines is not up for debate," he added. Micro-targeted information increasingly dominates social media, curated and prioritised algorithmically on the basis of audience demographics, an abundance of digital trace data, and other consumer information. Partly as a result, hyper-polarised public attitudes on issues such as Covid-19 vaccines or climate change emerge and grow in separate echo chambers. "Unfortunately, social science research suggests that rapidly evolving online information ecologies are likely to be minimally responsive to scientists who upload content -- however engaging it may seem -- to TikTok or YouTube," said the scientists. We have recently witnessed a bombardment of fake news around serious topics like Covid-19, elections, religion and what not, and social media platforms have failed to curb the spread of misinformation as billions get hooked to various platforms. According to the opinion piece, the unscientific nature of using anecdotal data or scientific authority figures is partly driven by 280-character con-



straints on platforms like Twitter and partly by generations of science communication training programs urging scientists to tell more engaging stories. Unfortunately, this arms race over the most effective narratives has its risks. "Decades of communication research indicate that anecdotal accounts on social media of breakthrough severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infections or severe adverse reactions to Covid-19 vaccines, regardless of how rare both are, will be imprinted in people's memories much more effectively than pages of sound statistical data documenting herd immunity," the scientists lamented. Currently, algorithms that select and tailor content based on an audience member's social context, personal preferences, and a host of digital trace data increasingly determine what scientific information an individual is likely to receive in Google searches, Facebook feeds, and Netflix recommendations. "For audiences that engage less with credible science content, artificial intelligence, if left unchecked, might eventually slow the stream of reliable information about Covid-19 to a trickle, drowning it out by a surplus of online noise". At present, there is little that science can do to escape this dilemma. The same profit-driven algorithmic tools that bring science-friendly and curious followers to scientists' Twitter feeds and YouTube channels will increasingly disconnect scientists from the audiences that they need to connect with most urgently. "Moving forward, conquering this challenge will require partnerships among the scientific community, social media platforms, and democratic institutions," said the scientists.

GLOBAL KASHMIRI PANDIT DIASPORA EXPERT PANEL RELEASES HISTORIC HOMELAND MANIFESTO

At a global public event, GKPD released the results of a two-yearlong study by eminent, international scholars and human rights practitioners on the way forward for the just and sustainable return of Kashmiri Pandits to their homeland. While commending the present government for removal of Article 370 and making progress on the 6,000 Prime Minister jobs package, there was universal agreement that the state had abandoned the Kashmiri Pandit community which was now facing extinction. Notwithstanding occasional rhetoric, the continuing official tag of 'migrants' showed that the State had not only not classified the Pandits as Internally Displaced Persons but instead disclaimed them as Internally Disgraced People. The Kashmiri Pandit community has had to fend for itself for the last 32 years while the genociders have gained a windfall economic benefit estimated by the GKPD task force of over \$30 billion in money, land, buildings, agricultural assets, art, livelihood, and other assets. This does not count the impact of lives lost. Professor Aurobindo Ogra, the lead author of the study, who is based at the University of Johannesburg and has twenty years' experience in urban planning stated, "Our study zeroed into the neighbourhood of Anantnag Division which historically has been a centre of Kashmiri Pandit land holdings and temples where the Autonomous Administrative Division would be carved out. This University township Hub would incubate industry, hospitals, health services and tourism and would be designed to scale up to house one hundred thousand Kashmiri Pandit families." Virinder Kaul, GKPD International Coordinator, based in India who is co-author and a civil engineer with deep expertise in large scale projects stated, "Moving 6000 Kashmiri Pandits into interim housing in the Valley is subjecting them to further inhuman conditions including risk of life. As second-class citizens they are left with nothing at the end of their tenure. A permanent solution is long overdue. There is clear precedent in the thirty autonomous zones that have been set up so far in India under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution to administer micro cultures like the Kashmiri Pandits. Financing of the Hub can be obtained by creating Special Purpose Vehicles which can club the previously announced welfare schemes for new homes and job creation and gain advantage of critical mass including Transfer of Development Rights. Besides the tax base that the AAD Hub will have, there is an opportunity to reposition the 500 plus temples in key spokes such as Varahamulla, Kupwara and Srinagar to their historic role of serving the religious tourists who would come and stay at the lankars and help generate revenues." Dr. Shafalica Bhan, GKPD UK, a psychiatrist and mental health specialist, based in London, UK stated: "The proposed solution builds on the earlier GKPD MOU which was signed by all Kashmiri Pandit organisations and over sixteen thousand five hundred civil society members. It will meet the security needs of the long-traumatized Kashmiri Pandit community who will be able to live with their families without fear in their homeland."



international

Pakistan blames India for Balochistan unrest

In a classic case of the pot calling the kettle black, Pakistan which is widely acknowledged as a terror sponsor is blaming India for the unrest in Balochistan.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a classic case of the pot calling the kettle black, Pakistan which is widely acknowledged as a terror sponsor is blaming India for the unrest in Balochistan. The Pakistan Foreign Office made it clear that there was strong evidence that India was involved in unrest in Balochistan, The News reported. Islamabad blamed New Delhi for its 'sinister campaign' to sabotage CPEC and also rejected the "unwarranted" and "preposterous" remarks it made on the Pakistan-China joint state-

ment of February 6, the report said. "Pakistan categorically rejects the unwarranted and preposterous comments made by the spokesperson of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs on the Pakistan-China Joint Statement of 6 February 2022, and we also strongly reject India's persistent propaganda against China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Pakistan has shared irrefutable evidence of India's sinister campaign to sabotage CPEC through its dossiers released in 2020 and 2021," said the Foreign Office. "We expect the parties

concerned not to interfere in matters that are internal affairs of India," the MEA had said. The Pakistan Foreign Office reminded India that there is strong evidence of Indian involvement in recent sinister attempts to stir up unrest in Balochistan by supporting anti-state elements, the report said. "Besides, Naval Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav is a living and irrefutable proof of how India has been seeking to sponsor and patronise subversive activities in Pakistan and the region," said the Foreign Office, as per the report.

SKorean diplomat attacked in NY

A South Korean diplomat beaten and had his nose broken on a street of New York City in a random attack which has drawn wide attention to the deterioration of public safety and persistent hate crime in the city.

New York: | Agencies

A South Korean diplomat beaten and had his nose broken on a street of New York City in a random attack which has drawn wide attention to the deterioration of public safety and persistent hate crime in the city. The victim, who has not been named, was walking with a friend at 8.10 p.m. on Wednesday in Midtown Manhattan when the incident happened, according to media reports citing New York Police Department (NYPD) as saying on Thursday. The diplomat suffered a broken nose from the "unprovoked" attack while the unidentified attacker fled on foot without saying a word, Xinhua news agency quoted the reports as saying. "This unprovoked attack is horrific



and absolutely unacceptable. In light of this horrific violence, we must not only condemn hate and discrimination, but prioritize public safety," said New York City Councilman Keith Powers on his social media account on Thursday. "It is paramount that New Yorkers are safe on our city's streets," said Powers, who represents the neighbourhood where the incident happened. "We are outraged by this senseless and deplorable violence and look forward to a swift resolution of this unfortunate incident,"

said a report by the Hill, quoting Hyun-seung Choi, consul and press attache for the South Korean Consulate General in New York. So far, no arrests have been made and the investigation into the incident is ongoing. According to a survey released by Quinnipiac University Poll, 39 per cent of voters in New York City said their neighbourhood safety has deteriorated compared to five years ago. As much as 74 per cent of voters in New York City said crime is a very

serious problem in the city, reaching the highest level since the topic was included in the Quinnipiac University Poll in 1999, according to the recent survey covering 1,343 New York City registered voters. New York City saw a 38.5 per cent year-on-year increase in the overall index of crimes in January, according to statistics issued by the NYPD. "Every major index crime category saw an increase for the month of January 2022, with the exception of murder, which fell by 15.2 per cent," the NYPD added.

EU ECONOMY SHOULD BE BACK ON TRACK AFTER WINTER SLOWDOWN: OFFICIAL

The European Union's (EU) economy should be back on track in 2022, after a slowdown in winter due to the spread of the Omicron Covid-19 variant, European Commissioner for Economy Paolo Gentiloni said while presenting the European Commission's Winter 2022 Economic Forecast.

Brussels | Agencies

The European Union's (EU) economy should be back on track in 2022, after a slowdown in winter due to the spread of the Omicron Covid-19 variant, European Commissioner for Economy Paolo Gentiloni said while presenting the European Commission's Winter 2022 Economic Forecast. "The EU as a whole reached its

pre-pandemic level of GDP in the third quarter of 2021 and all Member States are projected to have passed this milestone by the end of 2022," said a statement on the forecast. The EU's economy grew by 5.3 per cent in 2021. According to the Winter 2022 Economic Forecast, it should grow by 4 per cent this year, and 2.8 per cent in 2023. In autumn last year, the EU's economic growth was hampered by the emergence of the Omicron variant. Mild restrictive measures were introduced, which affected services particularly, according to Gentiloni. More supply constraints and high energy prices also affected the manufacturing sector, driving inflation



higher. This led the EU's economy to grow by only 0.4 per cent in the last quarter of 2021, compared to 2.2 per cent in the previous quarter. While the slowdown had been expected, it was stronger than projected. Factors straining the economy, such as labour shortage and supply bottlenecks, are expected to ease out in the second half of 2022. Energy prices, however, should stay elevated for a longer period, according to Gentiloni. However, the fundamentals remain solid, the commissioner said, and the EU's economy will regain traction. The current wave of infections should pass and inflation pressure should moderate. Labour

markets have improved, household savings are high, and the financing conditions are still favourable. Moreover, the full deployment of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), an investment instrument put in place by the European Commission to facilitate the post-pandemic economic recovery of the bloc, should sustain a "prolonged and robust expansionary phase". Inflation picked up in the last few months, driven by the price of energy and supply bottlenecks. "After reaching a record rate of 4.6 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year, inflation in the euro area is projected to peak at 4.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2022 and remain above 3 per cent until the third quarter of the year," said the statement. Inflation should then decline to 2.1 per cent in the last three months of the year, and then go below 2 per cent in 2023. That is the desired inflation rate that the European Central Bank wants to maintain.

New Zealand to increase wages for lowest paid workers

The New Zealand government will raise the minimum wage for the lowest paid workers by increasing it to NZ\$21.2 (\$14) per hour from April 1, a move expected to benefit approximately 300,000 workers, Workplace Relations and Safety Minister Michael Wood said on Friday.

Wellington | Agencies

The New Zealand government will raise the minimum wage for the lowest paid workers by increasing it to NZ\$21.2 (\$14) per hour from April 1, a move

expected to benefit approximately 300,000 workers, Workplace Relations and Safety Minister Michael Wood said on Friday. The government remains committed to supporting New Zealanders by raising their wages, as the country continues to recover and rebuild from the Covid-19 pandemic, reports Xinhua news agency. New Zealand's current minimum wage is NZ\$20. The 6 per cent growth is just above the annual inflation recorded in the last quarter. The minimum wage has increased steadily from NZ\$14.75 in April 2017. Wood said in a statement that with the arrival of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, frontline workers, such as

cleaners, supermarket workers, and security guards, have contributed greatly to the response and deserve a pay rise. Raising the minimum wage will help many households that have been most impacted by the effects of Covid-19, he said, adding that for people working a 40-hour week on the minimum wage, this increase will see them earning an extra NZ\$48 a week, and almost NZ\$2,500 more each year. Despite some Covid-related disruptions to the labour market in New Zealand, the latest statistics show employment is increasing across most sectors thanks to the wage relief and resurgence packages to support people and businesses, the Minister said.



'Students must wear prescribed uniform,' Usha Thakur on Hijab row

► **MADHYA PRADESH SPIRITUAL, CULTURE AND TOURISM MINISTER USHA THAKUR SAID THAT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE THEIR OWN DISCIPLINE AND STUDENTS IN THESE INSTITUTES MUST WEAR THE SET UNIFORM.**



sy while speaking to reporters here. Without using the term hijab or alluding to the controversy, she said, "Educational institutions have their own discipline. Students in these institutes must wear the set uniform. Even the Constitution says so." Incidentally, the MP government had to issue a statement that it had no plans to ban hijab in educational institutions after remarks by school education minister Inder Singh Parmar indicating support to the ban as well as enforcing a dress code caused controversy. Parmar had later claimed his statements were presented in the wrong context.

Team Absolute | Indore

Amid protests in Karnataka over some colleges not allowing girls to wear the hijab in the campus, a Madhya Pradesh minister on Friday batted for uniforms in educational institutions. Madhya Pradesh Spiritual, Culture and Tourism Minister Usha Thakur was replying to a query on the hijab controver-

FIRST MUCORMYCOSIS REPORTED CASE IN THIRD WAVE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A 37-year-old female resident of Khargone district was detected with Mucor mycosis - a fungal infection as post Covid-19 complications after virus infection in third wave.

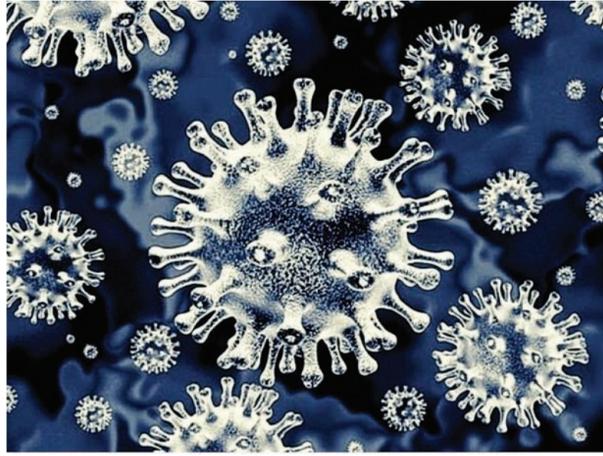
She was the first in the state to get infected with fungal infection as post Covid complications in third wave, claimed doctors. The female was infected with Covid-19 on January 15 this year and got treated for it.

She developed swelling in her jaws, mouth ulcers, and other issues around a couple of days back. She consulted the doctors in a private hospital, who asked her to immediately come to Indore for treatment after seeing her photographs.

ENT Surgeon, CHL Hospitals Dr Ajay Rishi Khanna said, "The female a resident of Khargone was having high diabetes and initial tests confirmed mucormycosis - fungal infection."

"After controlling her diabetes level, the surgical procedure was performed to remove fungus from both of her nasal cavity", "said Dr Khanna. On fungal infection Dr Khanna said, "In third wave, there is very less hospitalisation and not any other case of fungal infection was found."

"The high diabetes among patients



remained a major cause for this fungal infection in them. This is the reason in this case also," said Dr Khanna. Dr Khanna added, "In any of the Covid-19 recovered patients, if swelling in facial areas, deposition of black layers in nasal cavity, sensitivity in teeth and invisibility is developed, he/she immediately consult a doctor."

In Indore, over 1000 patients suffering with Mucormycosis as post Covid-19 complications were treated in different hospitals. Of those 1000 patients, 731 were treated in MY hospital. The rest of them were treated in private hospitals.

Madhya Pradesh records 2,612 COVID-19 cases; three more fatalities

At least 5,995 patients were discharged from hospitals, taking the count of recoveries to 9,84,500, leaving the central state with 26,179 active cases, the official said.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

As many as 2,612 persons tested positive for coronavirus, while three died of the infection in Madhya Pradesh in the last 24 hours, raising the tally to 10,21,361 and toll to 10,682, an official from the state health department said on Friday.

The positivity rate in the state has dropped to 3.4 per cent from 3.67 per cent recorded on Thursday, he said. At least 5,995 patients were discharged from hospitals, taking the count of recoveries to 9,84,500, leaving the central state with 26,179 active cases, the official said.

Bhopal and Indore, the worst-hit cities of Madhya Pradesh, registered 549 and 228 cases respectively in the last 24 hours, he



said. With 74,848 samples examined during the day, the number of tests conducted in the state has reached 2,67,50,556, the official said.

As per a government release, 11,19,77,443 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered so far in the state, including 1,08,734 on Friday. Coronavirus figures in MP are as follows: Total cases 10,21,361, new cases 2,612, death toll 10,682, recoveries 9,84,500, active cases 26,179, number of tests so far 2,67,50,556.

Indore-Mumbai Duronto should be named after Lata Mangeshkar: Indore MP

► **THE INDORE-MUMBAI DURONTO EXPRESS TRAIN SHOULD BE NAMED AFTER LEGENDARY SINGER LATA MANGESHKAR FOR HER SERVICE TO THE MUSIC INDUSTRY AND ENTHRALLING GENERATIONS WITH HER MELODIES FOR MORE THAN SEVEN DECADES, INDORE MP SHANKAR LALWANI SAID ON THURSDAY.**

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Indore-Mumbai Duronto express train should be named after legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar for her service to the music industry and enthralling generations with her melodies for more than seven decades, Indore MP Shankar Lalwani said on Thursday. "Lata Mangeshkar was born in Indore and what better way to symbolise her musical journey from here to Mumbai. I have raised this issue in Parliament. Have also written a letter to the Railways Minister in this regard," Lalwani told IANS.

Asked, is there a provision to name a train after an individual, Lalwani said that the contribution of a



colossal personality like Lata Mangeshkar should be acknowledged with such a gesture, so he has approached the Ministry, and now, its upto the Ministry to take a call. "I have conveyed the demand of my constituency people to the government," Lalwani added.

Lalwani also sought a chair and fellowship in her name in the state university department of music. Besides, a statue, an annual music show and a state level music academy in her name can also be considered.

"I have already spoken to Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan regarding this and he has expressed his willingness as a token of respect to the Indian 'Nightingale'," he added.

MP High Court To Resume Physical Hearing From Next Week

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Considering the sliding intensity of COVID-19 in the state, the High Court of Madhya Pradesh has decided to resume with physical hearing from 14.02.2022.

In pursuance to the resolution of the Special Committee of the High Court of Madhya Pradesh, the Court has issued the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), which shall be applicable to the Principal

Seat at Jabalpur and also the Benches at Indore and Gwalior, with effect from 14.02.2022.

With respect to Mention Memos, the SOP specified - It is noticed that almost every day huge numbers of lawyers keep coming for submitting Mention Memos before DVB-I, it may aggravate the Covid situation in the Court. Therefore, for the time being, the mentioning of cases will continue in physical form through Drop Boxes

until further orders.

As per the SOP, Advocates/Parties-in-person, aged 65 years and above, may make oral request to the Bench for taking up their case for hearing through virtual mode and the concerned Bench may consider the request accordingly. The Court has also made it necessary for Advocates/Parties-in-person entering its premises to have themselves vaccinated/inoculated by at least first dose of vaccination.

Ward Boy Shoots Nurse Dead In ICU, Surrenders: Police

Following the incident, the nursing staff of the hospital has struck work, demanding better security at the facility, an official said.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A 26-year-old nurse was shot dead by a ward boy, who had been stalking her, in the intensive care unit (ICU) of the district hospital in Bhopal, police said on Friday.

Following the incident, the nursing staff of the hospital has struck work, demanding better security at the facility, an official said.

Nurse Neha Chandel was shot in the head point-blank

by ward boy Ritesh Shakya using a country-made pistol in the ICU on Thursday night. Bhopal Superintendent of Police Shalendra Singh Chauhan told news agency PTL. The accused surrendered before the police after the shooting, he said, adding that the victim's body was sent for post-mortem.

According to the police, Shakya, a father of four, wanted to marry the victim, whose marriage was fixed with another man.

Acquaintances of the dead have claimed that the accused had been pestering the victim to marry him for months, but she had rebuffed his offers.

Meanwhile, more than 100 nurses were staging a sit-in at the district hospital demanding security, an official said.

District Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr Ajit Mishra said that arrangements were being made to ensure that patients are not inconvenienced due to the protest.

SOS Children's Village Bhopal holds State Level Consultation on Status of Aftercare Youth and Care Leavers

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Children's Villages Bhopal conducted a state level consultation on status of aftercare and care leavers. The consultation was held in collaboration with the Centre for Urban Studies at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis, Madhya Pradesh.

The participants at the consultation included D. Jalaja, Advisor, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis, Ram Gopal Yadav, Asst. Director, Women & Child Development, Breeze Tripathy, CWC member and Deepa, Child Protection Officer, Non-Institutional Care, WCD. Many eminent professionals working in the domain of child welfare and youth care also joined the consultation. The purpose of the consultation was to discuss policy level



changes for care leavers, so that their transition from adolescence to adulthood, in society, is smoother. The pandemic has added to the challenges that care leavers face in making this transition. Aftercare is a crucial component of the continuum of care for care leavers to realise their full potential and become a contributing member of society. The consultative meet-

ing was proposed based on a study conducted by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis on "Childcare Institutions and Aftercare Interventions (Madhya Pradesh)".

The study, which was conducted in the year 2020, included recommendations on improving the quality of the aftercare programme in Child Care

Institutions (CCIs). The agenda of the consultation was to review the status of the recommendations, to look at the gaps and to recommend a future course of action for 2022.

Sumanta Kar, Secretary General, SOS Children's Villages of India said, "Care leavers face challenges, more so because of the pandemic. They experience many challenges in transitioning from childhood to adulthood, such as pursuing higher education or finding a job. Integrating with society is not easy and they could suffer from self-worth issues. While these challenges have always existed, the pandemic has made it worse. We, at SOS Children's Villages of India, have been working at resolving some of these challenges. The consultation based on a detailed study by Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis was quite productive.

CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO PANDIT DEENDAYAL UPADHYAY

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has paid tribute to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay on his death anniversary. Expressing the views of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya in his own words in the tweet, Chouhan has written that "the most important thing is that we think about our national identity, without which freedom has no meaning." Chouhan has tweeted that - "Paying humble tributes at the feet of revered Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Ji on his death anniversary, former President of Jana Sangh and the leader of Antyodaya and Integral Humanism." "The dream of building a new, capable and strong India will come true by following the auspicious and welfare mantra of 'Integral Humanism' given by the revered Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Ji. I pay my respects at the feet of the leader who showed the path, the great builder of the nation.

CM PLANTED DEODAR SAPLING IN HARIDWAR

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a deodar sapling at Harihar Ashram in Kankhal Haridwar during his stay in Uttarakhand. Chief Minister Chouhan planted saplings along with Juna Peethadhishwar Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Awadheshanand Maharaj. It is noteworthy that Chief Minister Chouhan is planting saplings every day as per his resolve. Apart from staying in Bhopal, he does plantation every day during his stay in other areas also. Deodar is a tall, beautiful, evergreen tree growing in mountain areas. Its trunk is straight, erect and branches are spreading. Deodar is known for its medicinal properties.



'Must Teach A Lesson:' High Court Orders Enquiry Against Complainant For Allegedly Filing False Rape Case

The Madhya Pradesh High Court recently directed the SP, District Sehore to conduct a proper enquiry against a complainant, who allegedly filed a false rape case.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Stating that such actions are nothing but a misuse of the provisions in law and the Court must teach a lesson to the persons like the complainant, Justice Sanjay Dwivedi ordered, "the Superintendent of Police, Sehore, is directed to make a proper enquiry in the matter and if it is found that the complainant had made false allegation against the applicant, then offence be registered against her in accordance with law for making a false complaint or misusing the provisions of law."

It added that if any non-bailable offence is made out against the complainant for making a false complaint, then the police would be free to proceed further in accordance with law.

The Court was essentially dealing with an application of anticipatory bail moved by the Applicant, accused U/S 376, 365 and 323/34 IPC.

The case of the Applicant was that initially, a complaint was made by the Complainant against him, alleging that he forcefully committed rape upon her. The Complainant then reiterated her allegations made in the FIR in her statements recorded U/S 164 and 161 CRPC. Having said that, during the hearing of application for anticipatory bail moved by the Applicant before the lower court, the Complainant gave an affidavit, stating that if bail is granted to the Applicant, she would have no objection. She further admitted that Gagan Agrawal (the Applicant) had not committed rape upon her and that it was only at the instance of police that she made an allegation of rape against him.

Therefore, the Applicant submitted that in view of the aforesaid, it was clear that he was innocent and falsely implicated in the alleged crime and as such, he was entitled to get the protection of anticipatory bail.

The State concurred with the Applicant and submitted that that the case was nothing but a misuse of law by the Complainant. It was further submitted that although, in the FIR and in the statement recorded U/S 164 and 161 CRPC, she had categorically made the allegation against the Applicant of forcible rape, she later took a somersault stating before the trial court that a false complaint was made against the Applicant. Considering the submissions made by the parties and without commenting anything on the merits of the case, the Court allowed the application and granted anticipatory bail to the accused.

The Court, however, took strong exception to the behaviour of the Complainant and directed the SP, District Sehore to look into the matter.

It also directed the officer concerned to submit the enquiry report within 15 days from the date of order.

Bahadur Singh doubles income by reducing agricultural cost with government aid

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Bahadur Singh Lodhi, a resident of Tikriya Amkharla village of Damoh district, while thanking the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister says that today agriculture has become a profitable business due to their schemes. With organic farming, the cost of fertilizers, pesticides, etc. is almost zero and income has doubled.

Bahadur Singh says that ever since he started farming under the guidance of Agriculture Department and Krishi Vigyan Kendra, he has started realizing his dreams. With the profits gained from the garden, I have bought a scooter for myself, jewelry for my wife, LCD, as well as got my daughter married. I didn't have to take any loan from anyone. He urged the farmers to take advantage of government schemes and improve their standard of living. Bahadur Singh says four years ago he used to use 5 bags of DAP and 3 bags of urea. Along with the cost, it also had an adverse effect on the fertility of the land. In organic farming, I had left earthworms in the dung manure during the rainy days, which has now turned into the best manure. This zero-budget fertilizer is yielding excellent quality crop. The earthworm manure prepared in about 2 months result in production for 3 years. I have



There are 2 bullocks, 2 buffaloes and 2 cows in the field and at home, I am using the dung and urine obtained from them to make organic fertilizers and organic pesticides. Bahadur Singh told that under the employment guarantee scheme, he had planted a fruit orchard in the field in the year 2017. In a case of Rs two lakh, he got money for 3 years. In one acre orchard, he has grown about 100 lemons, 50 pomegranates, 25 mangoes, 5 apple plum trees, Allahabadi guava, chikoo, orange, mosambi etc. Bahadur Singh has sold pomegranate worth Rs 35 thousand and lemon worth Rs 40 thousand this year. He has sold lemon juice at the rate of Rs 125 and peel at the rate of Rs 20 per kg to Krishi Vigyan Kendra. Apart from this, he is also selling lemon pickle to the center at the rate of Rs.200/kg. He is generating extra income by planting ginger, turmeric, coriander etc. in the vacant space in his garden.



When Robert Pattinson pretended to be a drug dealer

London | Agencies

Actor Robert Pattinson was keen to impress the "cool kids" when he was at school so even though he had no idea what narcotics "looked like", he created his own powder doused in cleaning products, which he hid inside floppy discs and claimed he was importing illegally.

He said: "I haven't thought about this in years, but during secondary school, my first proper-ish kind of girlfriend was a few years above me, and I always wanted to hang out with the cool kids, who were in the oldest year."

"And some of us decided that I'd pretend that I was importing drugs. But I didn't even know what drugs looked like."

"So I had this idea I'd get floppy discs, open up the floppy disc, pour this kind of powder stuff inside, and then spray it with,

like, some kind of cleaning product so that it'd smell chemical-y, and seal all of it in." "I bought, like, 40 floppy discs, and then I'd show it to kids who were probably 15 or 16, and I'd be like, 'Yeah, I'm importing drugs in floppy discs.'"

"And everybody believed me. And I kind of got this reputation that, this kid is crazy. He's a drug dealer! Like, 'Want to try some? Some sawdust with Febreze on it?'"

Robert also used to pretend he was a great skateboarder when he was actually "terrified" of boarding because he didn't want to get injured, reports femalefirst.co.uk. The 35-year-old star admitted he has regularly fabricated stories over the years, such as his past claim he never washed his hair, and he even used to create a different persona for his auditions because he knew casting agents would be concerned if they knew he was English and trying out for an American role.



Gal Gadot impressed with 'Death on the Nile'

London | Agencies

Hollywood star Gal Gadot, whose murder mystery "Death on the Nile" released recently, had a great time working with the film's director Kenneth Branagh. Sharing her experience of working with the Oscar nominated director, Gal Gadot, who plays the lead role of Linnet Ridgeway Doyle, said: "Working with Ken was an amazing experience for me. I learned so much from his performance, as well as his direction."

Lauding the director for his clarity of thought, the actress said, "He's so prepared and organised and that leaves almost no

room for any mistakes but at the same time, he gives the actors a lot of freedom to try and do whatever they want to do. He has this ability to make everyone feel special, and his charisma and charm go a long way."

"Death on the Nile" is based on Agatha Christie's novel of the same name and is a follow-up to "Murder on the Orient Express". The film, produced by 20th Century Studios, features an ensemble cast which includes Kenneth Branagh, Tom Bateman, Gal Gadot, Ali Faizal and Emma Mackey. The movie is currently running in Indian theatres in English and Hindi.



Tom Hanks comedy 'A Man Called Otto' acquired by Sony Pictures

Los Angeles | Agencies

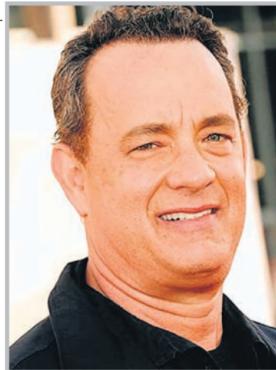
Tom Hanks-starrer 'A Man Called Otto' has been acquired by Sony Pictures for \$60 million.

The sale marks the largest deal to date at the virtual European Film Market, surpassing Netflix's \$55 million acquisition of 'The Pale Blue Eye' last year, reports variety.com.

Directed by Marc Forster, 'A Man Called Otto' sparked a fierce bidding war with Sony ultimately coming out on top with the film's worldwide rights.

It will be released in theaters. Based on Fredrik Backman's bestselling novel 'A Man Called Otto', the film tells the story of Otto (Hanks), a grumpy and strict widower who holds the rest of his neighbourhood to his staunch rules. But just as Otto is about to give up on his life, he sparks a new friendship with his neighbours, prompting him to undergo a transformation.

The cast includes Mariana Trevino, Rachel Keller and



Manuel Garcia-Rulfo, Oscar-nominated writer David Magee is adapting the screenplay and will serve as an executive producer.

SF Studios' Fredrik Wikström Nicastro is producing the film with Rita Wilson and Playtone partners Hanks and Gary Goetzman. Forster and Renée Wolfe will executive produce via their company 2DUX2. SF Studios is financing the film.

GATE BLANCHETT TO STAR IN AND PRODUCE 'THE NEW BOY'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Cate Blanchett's Dirty Films and Scarlett Pictures have teamed up to co-produce 'The New Boy', from award-winning Indigenous Australian filmmaker Warwick Thornton. Blanchett will star in the film, set in 1940s Australia, alongside Deborah Mailman and Wayne Blair. Written and directed by Thornton, 'The New Boy' depicts the story of a nine-year-old Aboriginal orphan boy who arrives in the dead of night at a remote monastery, run by a renegade nun (Blanchett), where his presence disturbs the delicately balanced world in this story of spiritual struggle and the cost of survival.

Blanchett, Andrew Upton and Georgie Pym will produce the project for Dirty Films alongside Scarlett Pictures principal Kath Shelper, reports variety.com.

"What a joy to finally be collaborating with Warwick - a filmmaker whose warmth, wit and humanity we have admired for so very long," Blanchett said on behalf of Dirty Films.

"We can't wait to be on the ground with him and the wonderful Kath Shelper to realize this startling story."

Added Thornton: "The idea for the story of this little boy has been flickering in my imagination for a long time. Kath and I are beyond excited to be working with Cate and the Dirty Films mob to put him up on the big screen where he belongs."



JUNG HAE-IN SLEPT FOR ONLY FOUR HOURS DURING FILMING OF 'SNOWDROP'

Seoul | Agencies

South Korean actor Jung Hae-in gave it all to the black comedy series 'Snowdrop'. The actor not just underwent rigorous physical training but also cut down on his sleeping hours.

Talking about the intensity of his role and the preparation it took, Jung Hae-in said, "I got a tan. I learned all different kinds of martial arts, and regional dialects. But most of all, I worked out a lot." Commenting on his sleep cycle during the course of filming, he said, "If I had four hours of sleep, I'd divide it in half so I'd sleep for two hours and hit the gym for the remaining two before I headed out to the set. I was very hard on myself."

'Snowdrop', which also stars

'Blackpink' band member Jisoo, Yoo In-na, Jang Seung-jo, Kim Hye-yoon and Jung Yoo-jin, takes the viewers on an emotional rollercoaster that is full of excitement, action, and romance.

The 16-episode series explores the forbidden love between a South Korean girl and a North Korean spy during the June 1987 Democracy Movement in South Korea.

The drama, written by Yoo Hyun-mi and directed by Jo Hyun-tak, 'Snowdrop' will soon be streaming on Disney+ Hotstar in Hindi as well.



LILY JAMES 'FELT PRESSURE TO DO JUSTICE' TO PAMELA ANDERSON

Los Angeles: Actress Lily James felt anxious about playing "Baywatch" star Pamela Anderson in the new drama series "Pam And Tommy", which focuses on her whirlwind romance with Tommy Lee and the release of their sex tape.

James told Rolling Stone: "I felt the pressure of trying to do justice to this woman. What happened to her was so unprecedented and so wrong."

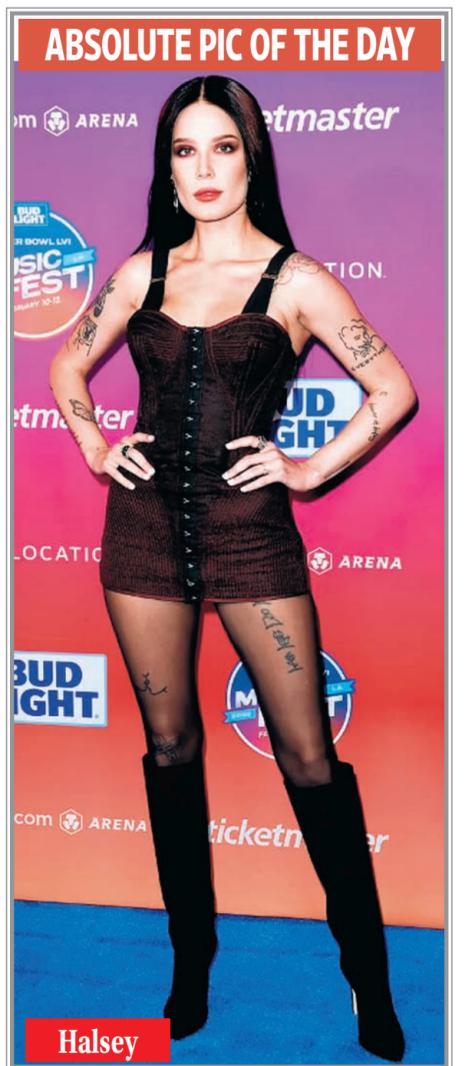
The actress recognises playing Pamela was a distinctly different challenge to most of her previous roles, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

The actress was determined to give it her best shot.

When asked about the challenge of playing the blonde beauty, Lily said: "You come to understand how people think of you. That's very useful, what that fantasy idea of you is a I was ready for a transformational role, something I didn't really think I could pull off."

She thinks the leak of Pamela and Tommy's sex tape "collided with the huge change in the world", as it happened during the early years of the internet.

In fact, the actress believes the sex tape and the controversy that it sparked has influenced the "kind of culture we have today."





KRISHNA, SIRAJ BOWL INDIA TO A 96-RUN WIN AND COMPLETE A 3-0 SWEEP

Ahmedabad | Agencies

led by three-wicket hauls from Prasad Krishna and Mohammed Siraj, India signed off from the ODI series with a 96-run win over West Indies in the third and final match at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Friday. Chasing 266, West Indies were never in the hunt and were bowled out for 169 in 37.1 overs.

Deepak Chahar tested the opening pair of Brandon King and Shai Hope with some movement available from the pitch. He was almost successful when King top-edged the third ball of the innings but it fell between mid-on and mid-off fielders. King survived a DRS call off Chahar and ended the third over with successive boundaries.

Mohammed Siraj was the first bowler to strike, trapping Shai Hope with a sharp nip-backer to hit him flush on the back pad. Hope didn't take the review as replays later showed the ball was missing the stumps.

In the next over, Chahar returned



to take out King and Shamarh Brooks in the space of four balls. While King nicked an outswinger to first slip, Brooks sliced the ball straight to point, departing without troubling the scorers.

Darren Bravo and Nicholas Pooran amassed some boundaries but Prasad Krishna broke the 43-run stand for the fourth wicket in the 14th over. Bravo played an

expansive drive away from the body and edged to second slip. The extra bounce in the pitch helped Krishna in taking out Jason Holder as the ball hit the shoulder of the bat while defending and edge flew to slip fielder.

Two balls later, Fabian Allen fell for a golden duck, enticed in driving forward by a returning Kuldeep Yadav. But the googly took the edge

behind to Rishabh Pant. Allen took the review but replays showed a spike on UltraEdge.

Odean Smith had luck on his side as Suryakumar Yadav dropped an absolute sitter at mid-off off Siraj the unlucky bowler. After hitting Yadav for another six over long-on, Smith had a streaky boundary off an outer edge off Siraj. Two balls later, Siraj ended Smith's short-lived blitzkrieg as the right-handed batter mistimed to cover. Alzarri Joseph and Hayden Walsh frustrated India with a 47-run stand for the ninth wicket. Siraj broke the stand with a short ball directed towards Walsh, and the left-handed batter gave a simple catch to leg gully. Krishna finished off the match as Joseph pulled and top-edge flew to deep mid-wicket.

Brief scores:

India 265 all out in 50 overs (Shreyas Iyer 80, Rishabh Pant 56; Jason Holder 4/34, Alzarri Joseph 2/54) beat West Indies (Odean Smith 36, Nicholas Pooran 34; Prasad Krishna 3/27, Mohammed Siraj 3/29) by 96 runs

KL Rahul and Axar Patel ruled out of T20I series against West Indies

Ahmedabad | Agencies

India's T20I vice-captain KL Rahul and left-arm spin all-rounder Axar Patel have been ruled out of the upcoming three-match T20I series against the West Indies, said the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Friday. It also announced opener Rituraj Gaikwad and all-rounder Deepak Hooda as replacements for Rahul and Patel respectively.

"Rahul sustained an upper left hamstring strain during fielding in the second ODI on February 9, 2022, while Axar has resumed the final stage of his rehabilitation after recently recovering from Covid-19. They will now head to the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru for further management of their injury," said a release from the BCCI.

In the second ODI against the West Indies on Wednesday, Rahul had made 49 off 48 balls while batting at number four. During the toss in the third ODI, captain



Rohit Sharma had cited a niggle as the reason for Rahul's absence from the match. Patel, meanwhile, hasn't been in action since the Test series against New Zealand and had missed the tour of South Africa due to an injury.

After the completion of the

third and final ODI at the Narendra Modi Stadium, India and West Indies will move to Kolkata for the T20I series to be played at the Eden Gardens from February 16. The second and third match of the T20I series will be played on February 18 and 20 respectively.

India's T20I squad:

Rohit Sharma (Captain), Ishan Kishan, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Surya Kumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (wicket-keeper), Venkatesh Iyer, Deepak Chahar, Shardul Thakur, Ravi Bishnoi, Yuzvendra Chahal, Washington Sundar, Mohammed Siraj, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Avesh Khan, Harshal Patel, Rituraj Gaikwad and Deepak Hooda.

Valencia take ugly draw in first leg of Cup semifinal in Bilbao



Bilbao | Agencies

Athletic Bilbao and Valencia drew the first leg of their Copa del Rey semifinal 1-1 in the San Mames Stadium after 90 minutes of bad-tempered football.

Valencia did their best to break up the home side's play and got their reward with a second-half goal from Hugo Duro, which gives them a slight advantage for the return leg in three weeks.

Duro took advantage of a loose ball after home keeper Julen Aguirrezabala had produced a

reflex save to deny Bryan Gil following a cross from Gonzalo Guedes. It was clear from the start that it wasn't going to be a flowing game of football, with Valencia pressing high up the pitch and looking to stop their rivals moving the ball comfortably. At the other end, Diakhaby produced a vital last-minute clearance when it looked as if Asier Villalibre was on the point of heading home a late winner.

In the first semifinal on February 9, Real Betis won 2-1 away to Rayo Vallecano to take a big step towards the final.

MANY TEAMS WOULD GO AFTER ISHAN KISHAN IN IPL AUCTION: HARBHAJAN SINGH

New Delhi: Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh lavished praise on wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan, saying many teams would go after him in the Indian Premier League (IPL) auction as the young cricketer can win the game with his impeccable batting. He added that Kishan's presence in the team provides an edge in the batting department as the 23-year-old has a strike rate of over 130 in T20.

"It will be tough because many teams will go after Ishan Kishan at the auction. Royal Challengers Bangalore would definitely target him," Harbhajan said in a video on his YouTube channel. "I am a fan of Kishan. On his own capability, on any given day, he can smash 70-80 runs off 30 balls and win the match for his team. He will become a very big player in the time to come. If a player like him goes to any team, he should be given the responsibility of leadership. The way he gets older, with responsibilities, he will become even bigger," he added.

Earlier, India cricketer Dinesh Karthik and the former leg spinner Pragyan Ojha too had lauded the batting ability of the young wicketkeeper, saying his ability to hit the ball puts him on the list of some rare players.



Argentina Open FOGNINI FINDS WINNING FORMULA IN BUENOS AIRES

Buenos Aires | Agencies

Fabio Fognini reached the quarter-finals of a tour-level event for the first time since April, defeating Spain's Pedro Martinez 6-4, 7-6(5) at the Argentina Open. The fourth seed Italian set the wheels in motion as he outmaneuvered Martinez with his heavy topspin groundstrokes to advance after two hours and five minutes.

In a hard-fought match played on Thursday night, Fognini rallied from a break down in the first set and recovered from a match point on Martinez's serve at 4-5, 30/40 in the second to eventually triumph in their first ATP meeting.

The last time Fognini reached the quarter-finals at a tour-level event was also on clay at the Monte Carlo Masters 10 months ago. The Italian is making his 13th appearance in Buenos Aires and will next face sixth-seeded Argentine Federico Delbonis, who was a 6-3, 6-3 winner over Spanish 36-year-old Pablo Andujar.

In Thursday's Buenos Aires nightcap, second seed Diego Schwartzman needed seven match points to close out a 7-



(6/2), 7-6(4) win over Spain's Jaume Munar. In a dramatic second set, Munar had one last surge left to close to 4-6, but a forehand return winner finished the match after two hours, 23 minutes.

The victory sets up a rematch of last year's all-Argentine Buenos Aires final against Francisco Cerundolo, who beat Miomir Kecmanovic, 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 earlier in the day.

his backhand, Schwartzman forced a tie-break and then built a 6-0 lead. Munar had one last surge left to close to 4-6, but a forehand return winner finished the match after two hours, 23 minutes.

The victory sets up a rematch of last year's all-Argentine Buenos Aires final against Francisco Cerundolo, who beat Miomir Kecmanovic, 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 earlier in the day.

We are confident of putting our best, says Mithali Raj ahead of New Zealand ODIs

Indian women's ODI cricket team skipper Mithali Raj has said that the team is confident of putting their best in the first game of the series against New Zealand. She added that the team is keen to start the ODI campaign with a win ahead of the ICC World

Queenstown (New Zealand) | Agencies

Cup, scheduled for next month.alking about the upcoming series, Mithali who now holds the second spot in IFC's ODI batting rankings said, "The team and I are confident of putting our best foot forward and delivering our best performance. The pressure, as always, is immense, but I am thrilled that viewers in India will be able to cheer for us when they watch us live."

"I am excited to lead the team as we face the White Ferns in New Zealand. While each series is equally important for us, we can feel a billion hopes riding on our shoulders with this tournament," she added.

Adding on, Sophie Devine, captain of the



New Zealand women's team said, "It is always exciting to play against India. They are a worthy opponent and boast some of the finest players in the world. We are looking forward to facing them in New Zealand and expect it to be an intense series between the two teams. I am also excited with the fact that cricket fans from India can watch all the action from New Zealand in real time."

The Indian women's cricket team will face New Zealand in a series comprising five ODIs at John Davies Oval Queenstown in New Zealand from Saturday. The high-octane cricket series between India and New Zealand will be streamed live and exclusive on Amazon Prime Video.

Despite big wins, we cannot take France, South Africa lightly: Manpreet Singh

Potchefstroom | Agencies

India hockey team captain Manpreet Singh said on Friday that despite his side defeating France and South Africa in the opening round matches of the FIH Pro League here, the boys cannot take the two teams lightly over the weekend matches as they are capable of springing surprises.

Having begun their Pro League 2021/2022 campaign with back-to-back victories, India will vie to end their South African campaign on a winning note when they take on France and South Africa over the weekend.

In the opening match, India beat France 5-0 with Harmanpreet Singh (21st min), Varun Kumar (24th), Shamsheer Singh (28th), Mandeep Singh (32nd) and Akashdeep Singh (41st) on target.

"It was good to start off the campaign with a win. Our first quarter was patchy but after the first quarter we played a rather composed game. We played to our structure and converted from the chances we created," stated Manpreet talking about their first match



against France, who are building their team towards the Paris Olympics in 2024.

Manpreet believes France are an unpredictable team and on a good day they can pull off a surprise. "It's important we don't take them lightly when we play against them on Saturday. We saw what France is capable of when they played against Netherlands. The match went into a shootout after 2-2 draw and eventually they lost in the shootout. Even when we played against them, they created good chances to score," said the skipper.

BENGALURU OPEN: MYNENI-RAMKUMAR REACH DOUBLES FINAL

Bengaluru: The third-seeded pair of Saketh Myneni and Ramkumar Ramanathan brought some cheers to the Indian camp as it reached the doubles final in the Bengaluru Open ATP Challenger Tournament at the KSLTA Courts here on Friday. The Indian duo defeated the Great Britain-Australia combine of Jay Clarke and Marc Polmans (AUS) 6-4, 6-4 to make it to the title round in the doubles event. They now meet the French pair of Hugo Grenier and Alexandre Muller, who stunned the second-seeded Austrian-Czech pair of Alexander Erler and Vit Koprivka with a 6-3, 6-4 win. Meanwhile, qualifier Borna Gojo from Croatia continued his dream run as he stormed into the semi-finals with a 7-5, 6-4 victory over a better-ranked Belgian Kimmer Coppejans.

STAGE SET FOR IPL MEGA AUCTION; SHREYAS, ISHAN, HARSHAL LIKELY TO SPARK BIDDING WARS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The excitement will be at its peak and hundreds of cricketers and countless fans from all over the world will be on the edge of their seats when the paddle will go up and hammer will change the fortunes of many players in the IPL 2022 mega auctions, set to be held this weekend in Bengaluru.

Over the years, IPL has been an enormous boon to cricketers as it has given them a huge platform to perform, earn money and fame. Apart from the financial gains, the real value to a cricketer has been the wealth of experience and cricket-related knowledge because of the diversity that IPL provides.

Also, success in the IPL could lead to a player achieving their dream of getting a call from their national teams. So every cricketer wishes to be a part of the league and auction is the first stage of realising their dreams.

On February 12 and 13, the 10 franchises will fight among themselves to fill the remaining slots. Each team can have a maximum number of 25 players and at least 18 in their squad. Amongst 590 players (370 Indian, 220 Overseas), who have registered for the auction, 228 are capped players, 355 are uncapped and seven belong to Associate Nations.



The highest reserve price is Rs 2 crore and as many as 48 players have chosen to place themselves in this bracket. There are 20 players on the auction list with a reserve price of Rs 1.5 crore while 34 players are on the list of cricketers with a reserve price of Rs one crore. A total of ten-star cricketers -- David Warner, R Ashwin, Trent Boult, Pat Cummins, and

Quinton de Kock, Shikhar Dhawan, Faf du Plessis, Shreyas Iyer, Kagiso Rabada, Mohammed Shami, will be the part of the marquee set that will ring in the mega auction.

The marquee set will be followed by a full round of capped players by specialties -- batsmen, all-rounders, wicketkeeper/batsmen, fast bowlers, and

spin bowlers and then move into a full specialism round of uncapped players.

Among the Indian players, the likes of Shreyas Iyer, Ishan Kishan, Deepak Chahar, Shardul Thakur and Yuzvendra Chahal are likely to spark a bidding war when the mega-auction commences on Saturday.

Three teams -- Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB), Punjab Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) -- need a captain and Shreyas Iyer, who is a potential candidate to lead a side, could go for megabucks. Young Ishan Kishan, a dashing wicket-keeper-batter, who is tailor-made for T20 cricket, is also a hot prospect to fetch big money. Pacer Harshal Patel, the highest wicket-taker of IPL 2021, has different variations, which are tough to pick and his miserly death over bowling is an invaluable asset, so he is set to fetch a big amount. Then there are Deepak Chahar and Yuzvendra Chahal, who have a terrific record in IPL for playing at CSK and RCB, also set to attract bidders with their skills. Also, not to forget, Shardul Thakur, who will fit the bill for a franchise looking for a seamer who can contribute with the bat as a finisher. Among the overseas players Quinton de Kock, Kagiso Rabada and Trent Boult, David Warner, Shreyas Iyer and Pat Cummins could go for big bucks.



Shruti likes to preserve her characters' traits

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shruti Haasan, who will be soon seen in the upcoming psychological thriller series 'Bestseller', likes to preserve some traits of her characters as a souvenir. The actress feels glad that she got to play a character which is as determined as her. Commenting on the same, Shruti, who plays Meetu Mathur, an aspiring writer in the series, said: "I always love to walk away with the mood or the fragrance or the memory of the character. And I think what I got in this series is to meet another character that is really determined. So, I love remembering those experiences (while shooting for 'Bestseller')." Drawing parallels between her real life persona and the character, she said: "I found it really interesting to play a part like Meetu because her arc is so interesting. The common thing if I had to say is that Meetu is a fan and a determined woman." Talking about the fun she had behind-the-scenes, Shruti said: "I had to do a scene where I would sit under a running shower, and we were shooting at the peak of winter season (in Rajasthan) and you know how cold it gets out there. The shot was ready and to my horror I realised that there was no hot water available. "So, there I was, sitting in the freezing cold shower, trying to get the emotions on my face right while I quite literally froze." She added: "We have a scene where Satyajet and I had to ride atop a truck and while we shot for it, there were gaps in shooting as the truck had to turn around on the highway and get back to the start location. Guess what we decided to do while that was happening? Satyajet and I kept dancing on top of the truck and it was so much fun."



Ashi Singh compares herself with Alia Bhat



Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Meet' actress Ashi Singh believes that her journey is very similar to popular Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt when it comes to picking a versatile and challenging role. Ashi mentions: "I believe I have always taken risks while choosing my characters since the start of my career and so I relate to Alia Bhatt a lot as she also has experimented with her choice of roles." "She has been a versatile actor throughout her journey in terms of choosing her characters in movies like 'Highway', 'Uda Punjab', 'Raazi', etc. I have always tried the same." Ashi is seen in the show as Meet Hooda, who is ready to break all the societal norms of gender roles related to work and other responsibilities. The actress says the most important thing for her while doing any role is to make it look realistic and impactful. She adds: "I have always been very excited to try different kinds of roles. There were times when I wasn't sure if it would work out or not, or how it would look onscreen but all I knew was I wanted to act and give my best performance in whatever I do. I believe it is very important for me to love the character, know what it requires, and be in that comfort zone of playing it onscreen." 'Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai' actress shared that she said, 'yes' for the show, 'Meet' because this character made her excited to bring it on-screen.

Small town stories need to break shackles of film formula: Rajkumar Rao

Team Absolute | Mumbai

It's been almost 12 years for Rajkumar Rao in the movies. With a filmography that boasts of brave choices, he has become one of the most prominent acting talents in the country. Throw any role at him and he will deliver a flawless performance every time. As his new release 'Badhaai Do' hits the screens on Friday, which is based on the concept of lavender marriage, Rajkumar spoke with reporter about how it's high time that stories from small towns travel an extra mile, his character and conversations with his director Harshvardhan Kulkarni (who is also a fellow

FTII alumnus of the actor).

Talking about the writing process of the film, he says, "The writing team has worked very hard on it, they have been working on the script for the last 2 years now. It had also gone through multiple drafts and a lot of people from the (LGBTQ) community were also involved in the script writing. So, it has been written in a very sensitive way even after keeping the entertainment part intact."

He calls it one of the best written material that he has ever come across. "One of the best scripts that I've ever read. The moment I read the script, I was laughing with it. I also saw the emotional and sensitive part of

it. Once I was done reading the script, I was thinking about these two characters and the drama they must have gone through." He adds, "And it happens a lot in the society as it is still a taboo as there are still certain sections of society which are not ready to accept that someone's sexual preferences can be different to yours."

He credits the medium of OTT for bringing in a broad range of stories to the forefront. "It (OTT) has been giving rise to a lot of diverse stories. I also believe that our country or the major population of our country lives in small towns, there are so many stories and characters from those places."

DIRECTOR RAVI TANDON, FATHER OF RAVEENA, PASSES AWAY

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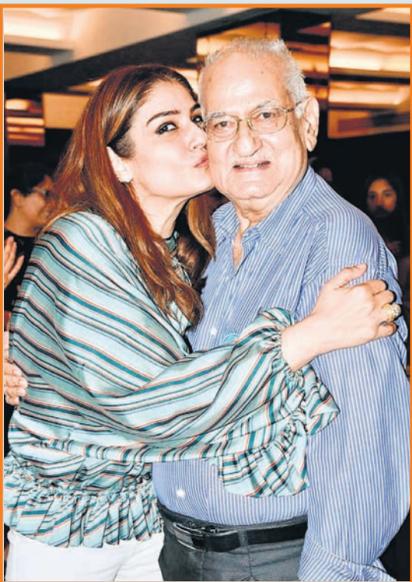
Noted Hindi film director and producer Ravi Tandon passed away reportedly due to respiratory failure at his residence here on Friday. He was 86 years old and is survived by his wife Veena.

During his career, which took off in 1963 with Sunil Dutt's production, 'Yeh Rastey Hain Pyar Ke', Tandon directed a number of hit films with some of the leading stars of the industry -- films such as 'Khel Khel Mein', 'Anhonee', 'Nazrana', 'Majboor', 'Khud-daar' and 'Zindagi'.

Tandon's daughter, well-known actress Raveena Tandon, took to her Instagram account to share the news. She posted a few throwback pictures with her late father and wrote in the caption: "You will always walk with me. I will always be you. I'm never letting go. Love you papa."

As soon as she shared the news, a number of celebrities, including Neelam Kothari and Juhi Chawla, posted condolence messages in the comments section.

Ravi Tandon was born in a Punjabi family in Agra. His son, Rajeev, helmed the popular Hindi television serial, 'Heena'. Raveena Tandon has been in the news recently because of her brilliant performance in the web series, 'Aranyak'.



'GEHRAIYAAN':

A SLOW-BURN CAPTIVATING NOIR DRAMA



BY TROY RIBEIRO

(Streaming on Amazon Prime)

Direction: Shakun Batra

Cast: Deepika Padukone, Siddhant Chaturvedi, Ananya Panday, Dhairya Karwa, Naseeruddin Shah and Rajat Kapoor.

Duration: 148 minutes.

Ratings: **** (four stars)

'Gehraiyaan' is a slow-burn, captivating, noir drama that draws you into its immersive narrative, which tells us, "Life is all about choices. ... Let's put all this behind us and move on." Shots of the deep sea and its rolling waves form a subtle leitmotif in the film that reminds you of life's mysteries, innumerable choices, and the momentum of moving on.

But are choices and moving on so simple? At least not for Alisha, a yoga instructor in Mumbai who is at the crossroads of her life. She has a strained relationship with her father, who lives in Nashik.

She is also haunted by memories of her mother's demise. Moreover, there are roadblocks in the way of her entrepreneurial endeavours, and the spark in her six-year-old relationship with Karan, an aspiring author, seems to have petered out.

But when she catches up with younger cousin Tia and her fiancé Zain, sparks fly between her and Zain. She



gets drawn to him. Then, burdened with the uncertainty of their relationship, she tries to stay away from Zain. But eventually, after Zain convinces her that the feeling is mutual, she inevitably gives in to the relationship.

So far, so good, but when the plot abruptly shifts gear from romance to noir, 'Gehraiyaan' becomes an altogether less predictable, more volatile story whose twists and turns revolve around the selfishness of human beings and the desperate lengths to which it can drive people.

Craftily, the plot is tense on the brink of a psychological drama with its painful uncertainties, extremes of emotions, and the onslaught of hormones. The struggle to strike a balance is innately dramatic.

Director Shakun Batra's cleverness lies in fashioning from these ingredients a relaxed but stylish thriller in which suspense is accompanied by a scuffle for survival instinct and, per-

haps toughest of all, hope.

Deepika and Siddhant, as Alisha and Zain, are sincere in their roles; attractive and responsive with an instinctive ability for calm expression and restrained emotions. They create a completely trustworthy pair of complementary forces.

Supporting them with equal fervour are Ananya Panday and Dhairya Karwa as Tia and Karan. They both are impressive and earnest.

Naseeruddin Shah as Alisha's laid-back dad, and Rajat Kapoor as Zain's cold and calculating colleague, are both stoically effective but perfunctorily limited by the script.

Mounted with ace production values, cinematographer Kaushal Shah's location shots, inland or over water, in Alibaug or in Mumbai, look grim and evocative, perfectly in line with the film's breathtaking rhythm.

Overall, 'Gehraiyaan' keeps you hooked till the end.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Urfi Javed