

absolute india

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GLOBAL WARMING SPEEDING UP WORLD'S WATER CYCLE: REPORT

AQUATIC CRISIS

▶ The team had instead analysed historical data from 1970 to 2014 to monitor the changing patterns of salt in the ocean, to estimate how much ocean freshwater had moved from the equator to the poles during that time.

▶ Their new findings showed that between two and four times more freshwater had moved than climate models had anticipated.

▶ The researchers believe the amount of freshwater that was transported from the equator to the poles during those years had exceeded predictions by up to 77,000 cubic km.



SYDNEY | Agencies

Rising temperatures are accelerating the world's water cycle and triggering natural disasters such as droughts and floods, according to a new report led by Australian researchers. The report, published in Nature journal, released to the public on Thursday, said that the hotter temperatures are speeding up the con-

stant cycle of freshwater between the clouds, the land and the ocean, leading to more extreme weather conditions with the world's wetter areas becoming even more soaked and the dry regions becoming even more parched. Taimoor Sohail, the lead author and a mathematician from the University of New South Wales (UNSW), said the findings "paint a picture of the larger changes happening in the global water cycle," Xinhua

news agency reported. Previously, changes to the cycle had been difficult to directly observe, as about 80 per cent of global rainfall and evaporation occurs over the ocean. "We already knew the global water cycle was intensifying," Sohail said. "We just didn't know by how much." Jan Zika, co-author of the report and associate professor of UNSW School of Mathematics and Statistics, said evaporation in warmer regions removed freshwater from the oceans making those bodies of water saltier. In contrast, Zika said the "water cycle takes that freshwater to colder regions where it falls as rain, diluting the ocean and making it less salty." "Changes to the water cycle can have a critical impact on infrastructure, agriculture, and biodiversity," Sohail said. "It's therefore important to understand the way climate change is impacting the water cycle now and into the future." "Establishing the change in warm-to-cold freshwater transport means we can move forward and continue to make these important projections about how climate change is likely to impact our global water cycle," Sohail said.

AFGHAN WOMAN BUILDS GIRLS' SCHOOL IN FAR-FLUNG DISTRICT

For Literacy

She has become the first woman who built a girls' school from her own wealth since the Taliban took over the power of Afghanistan in mid-August last year. Local officials said local female students, who used to attend classes under tents, now have finally found a place to study with rooftops.

SHIBERGHAN | Agencies

An Afghan woman has helped construct a school for girls in the country's northern Jawzjan province, which has been welcomed by Afghans as an initiative towards developing education in the country. In Aqcha, a far-flung district of the Jawzjan province, Hajji Bibi Nazira has built a 12-classroom school on 650 square meters of land at a cost of \$65,000, largely solving the school shortage for girls in the district, Xinhua news agency reported. Provincial director of Education Department Mohammad Tahir Jawad told Xinhua recently that getting education is vital for everyone as well as for the whole society. "The Islamic Emirate encourages education for girls and the new school has been built with the support of the government to promote education," Tahir Jawad said. Provincial education authorities have named the school Hajji Bibi Nazira Girl School, calling upon more capable Afghans to follow the suit. "Half of Afghanistan's population are women and girls are paving the ground for them to get education. It definitely would have a positive impact on our society," an elder of the area, Nematullah told Xinhua. Although there are no official statistics on the number of literate and illit-

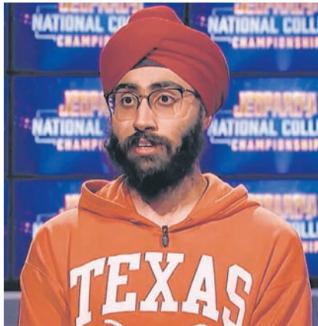


erate people among the war-torn country's some 35 million population, it is reported that the majority of Afghans, particularly the women, are illiterate. Local businessman Abdullah Safi, inspired by Nazira's benevolence, has donated 250,000 U.S. dollars for building another school in Aqcha to accommodate more students. "The children and pupils traveling tens of kilometers daily to attend classes and with building the new school, the problem in our area would be solved," Rohullah Habibzai, a close aide of Safi said. Ahead of the new educational year beginning in late March, Habibzai said investment and donations to support education would encourage more people to send their children to schools.

Indian-American student wins \$250K prize in college quiz contest

New York | Agencies

In a three-contest winning streak by Indian-American students, Jaskaran Singh has won the premiere quiz tournament for students, the National College Championship Jeopardy with a prize of \$250,000. The 22-year-old red-turbaned Sikh studying at the University of Texas at Austin on Tuesday beat out 35 other students selected from about the 26,000 who competed for a chance to be on the tournament held over two weeks. After winning the championship, Singh was modest about his success. "I just sort of just buzzed fast and know things, pretty much. I don't think there's much more," he told an interviewer from the show. The quarter million dollars win will pay for his college fees "and a lot more", he said. The college tournament is an offshoot of Jeopardy, the most popular daily quiz show, which uses the unusual format of the quizmaster or host stating an answer for which the contestant has to frame the right question. The puzzle given by the host, TV actor Mayim Bialik, in the final round of the contest was, "An 1873 book title gave us this phrase for the period in the late 1800s of growth & prosperity & also greed & corrup-



tion". Singh gave the correct solution in the form of a question: "What is the gilded age?" Nibir Sharma from the University of Minnesota won the 2019 tournament and was a semi-finalist in the Jeopardy Tournament of Champions going again the big winners in the main Jeopardy programme next year. Dhruv Gaur from Brown University bagged the championship in 2018 and there were no collegiate contests in the last two years because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Before them, Vinita Kailasath had won the championship in 2001.

Now, 300 persons allowed per slot at Mughal Gardens

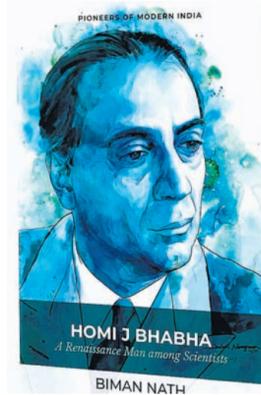
New Delhi: The Mughal Gardens at the Rashtrapati Bhavan can accommodate 300 persons per slot till the time it remains open for general public (except Mondays) till March 16. Earlier, each slot accommodated only 100 persons, but in view of the relaxation in Covid related restrictions, more people can be accommodated. Except Mondays and March 1 (a gazetted holiday), the Mughal Gardens will be open for public between 10 am and 5 pm, a communique from the Rashtrapati Bhavan said. Seven pre-booked hourly slots are available and the visitors would have to follow all the Covid protocols such as wearing of masks, maintaining social distance etc. They will have to undergo thermal screening at the entry point. No visitor will be allowed without mask, it said.



HOMI BHABHA'S VISIONARY FORESIGHT LAID FOUNDATION FOR INDIA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Setting the record straight in the midst of the controversy over the 'Rocket Boys' TV series that has been panned, as one critic put it, of being an "unfocused document of an intriguing period in Indian history" comes a monograph that brings to light the life and times of Homi Jahangir Bhabha, who laid the foundation for India's nuclear programme. "Bhabha has left a rich legacy in Indian science that enriches us even today. He recognised what India needed to gain a foothold in world science in its post-Independence era and had the determination to push through his ideas. The rare combination of calibre and confidence in Bhabha made him the icon that he was, and this is what makes us look back at his life and work even after half a century of his passing away," says author Biman Nath, an astrophysicist at the Raman Research Institute of 'Homi J Bhabha - A Renaissance Man among Scientists' (Niyogi Books). Bhabha's far sightedness and enterprise shaped the development of mod-



ern science in India. Understanding the need for achieving self-reliance, he laid the framework for nuclear research in India by founding The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) and the Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay (AEE), later renamed Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) in his honour. Bhabha

achieved international prominence for his trailblazing studies in the field of Atomic Energy, while his role of scientist-diplomat, handled with aplomb, gained worldwide recognition in the global arena. This compelling monograph outlines the story of his life, his early work on cosmic rays, which remained a lifelong obsession, his struggles to translate theories into experiments, and his achievements. A deeply evocative work, it portrays Bhabha's visionary foresight in anticipating the urgent need for high-quality facilities in India to pursue research on nuclear energy. It also speaks of his passionate interest in art and architecture, drawing and painting, and his love for classical music, which made him stand out as a renaissance man among scientists. Comprehensive and reflective, this monograph encapsulates Bhabha's vision for India and sheds light on his rich legacy. His legendary leadership in organising scientific research in India, his drive and passion continue to inspire generations of students in India.

KASHMIR'S ROMANCE WITH 4 LAKH MIGRATORY BIRDS

- Four lakh migratory birds from Central Asian Republics, Russia, Siberia, and Turkey escape the freezing temperatures of their homelands. Few species fly in from the Philippines, Eastern Europe, and Japan.
- Habitation spots include the lakes -- Dal, Mansbal, and Wular, and agricultural lands and orchards. These areas sustain a large population and variety of immigrants, and also give them a breeding ground for a few months.
- Presently, Dal Lake has over 1 lakh birds, Hokersar and Hygam reserve has 1 lakh birds each, Shalboog bird reserve has 50,000, Chatlam has 20,000, and Wular Lake has 30,000 birds.



Team Absolute | Srinagar

Kashmir's passionate affair with migratory birds is coming to an end as the winged marvels of nature are packing bags to return home after a season's stay in the Valley's hospitable climate. The Valley has attracted and mesmerized the whole world, and these European friends are no exception. This year, 20 new and rare species have joined the party, exciting scores of bird watchers in the Valley. Their arrival is marked with cackles

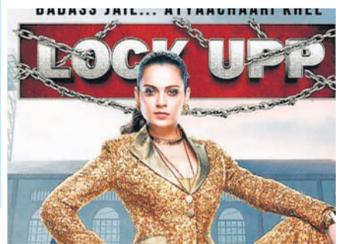
and coos and exotic colours in the sky. They fly in by mid-October and leave for their homes by March almost with arithmetical accuracy. Along with these migratory birds, 'birds of passage' also join this annual gathering in the Himalayas. Birds of passage like the Sandhill crane came to Kashmir from the Indian Plains before going back south in spring. These avian guests bring life to the lethargic winter days of Kashmir. The new guests this year are -- Sharpe Tailed Sandpiper, Glossy

Ibis, Dunlin, Red-Necked Phalarope, Yellow Hammer, Tundra Swan, Black-Tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank, Kentish Plover, Pacific Golden Plover, Terrek sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Jack Snipe, Pin Tailed Snipe, Little Stint, among others. Kashmir houses 24 wetlands. Shalboog, located in the Ganderbal district is the biggest wetland spread over 16 sq km while the most famous Hokersar wetland on the city outskirts is around 13.5 sq km. Hygam wetland

in North Kashmir is spread across 9 sq km. Another important wetland is Chatlam, located in South Kashmir's Pampore. Bird migration is nature's finest example of an inner compass that guides one through life. Each species independently comes together. The eldest pilot bird of the flock navigates her way through the sky and the rest follow. They create formations and highly disciplined patterns in the sky depending upon the direction of wind and climate of land, all through instinct.

Kangana's 'Lock Upp' is a stolen idea?

The reality show 'Lock Upp' hosted by Kangana Ranaut, which was set to be aired from Sunday, has been put on hold by the City Civil Court of Hyderabad.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The show will not air on any form of electronic or social media.

After taking note of a video clip of the trailer of the show, the court issued an ad-interim injunction on releasing the upcoming show, saying that it bears resemblance to petitioner Sanober Baig's story and the script of the concept 'The Jail'. The concept, which is owned by Pride Media through its proprietor Sanober Baig, was written by Shaantanu Ray and Sheershak Anand and is registered under the Copyright Act on March 7, 2018 and was also registered at the Film Writers Association. The petition explains how the concept was developed and also lists the details of the money invested by him at various stages of

concept development. Commenting on the situation, Sanober said, "When I saw the promo of the said show, I was in shock. I have been in touch with Abhishek Rege from Endemol Shine for a long time and had several meetings

about the subject in Hyderabad. He had promised that once the market gets better, we will get going." He further mentioned that the show is outrightly plagiarised, saying: "The show is not only similar to our concept, but it is an absolute copy of the same. I could not believe that somebody could plagiarise the concept to such an extent. We have prayed to the court for infringement of copyright and have got a stay order." If the legal representatives of the petitioner are successful in proving infringement, the defendant production house (Ekta Kapoor's AltBalaji) will be liable for consequences under Sections 51 and 52 of the Copyright Act. It's not that Sanober directly knocked the court's door. It was only after the production house refused to have a dialogue with him that Sanober reached out to the court.



CABINET APPROVES AYUSHMAN BHARAT DIGITAL MISSION ROLLOUT FOR 5 YRS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday approved the national rollout of Central Sector Scheme, Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) of health ministry with a budget of Rs 1,600 crore for five years. The National Health Authority (NHA) will be the implementing agency of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM). The digital health solutions across healthcare ecosystem have proven to be of immense benefit over the years, with CoWIN, Arogya Setu and eSanjeevani further demonstrating the role technology can play in enabling access to healthcare. Based on the foundations laid



प्रधानमंत्री
आयुष्मान भारत योजना



down in the form of Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile (JAM) trinity and other digital initiatives of the government, Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) is creating an online platform through the provision of a wide-range of data, information and infrastructure services, duly leverag-

ing open, interoperable, standards-based digital systems while ensuring the security, confidentiality and privacy of health-related personal information. Under the ABDM, citizens will be able to create their Ayushman Bharat Health Account numbers, to which their digital health records can

be linked. The mission is expected to improve equitable access to quality healthcare by encouraging use of technologies such as telemedicine and enabling national portability of health services. The pilot of ABDM was completed in the six Union Territories of Ladakh, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep with the technology platform developed by the NHA. During the pilot, digital sandbox was created in which more than 774 partner solutions are undergoing integration. A total of 17,33,69,087 Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts have been created and 10,114 doctors and 17,319 health facilities have been registered in ABDM as on February 24.

Visuals of Indian students in bunkers disturbing: Rahul

Team Absolute | New Delhi



Visuals of Indian students in bunkers are disturbing. Many are stuck in eastern Ukraine which is under heavy attack.

My thoughts are with their worried family members. Again, I appeal to GOI to execute urgent evacuation.



any of the border posts without prior coordination with Government of India officials at the border posts and the Emergency numbers of Embassy of India, Kiev."

The Ministry of External Affairs said on Friday that the first batch of evacuees from the war-hit nation has reached Romania via the Suceava border crossing.

INL LEADER 'TADA' RAHIM ARRESTED FOR DEROGATORY POST

Chennai: The cyber crime wing of the Tamil Nadu police arrested the Indian National League leader 'Tada' Rahim for derogatory posts on social media calling for protest of 'severing the sacred thread' in response to the Hijab row in Karnataka. In his post on Sunday, the INL leader warned the right-wing organisations that "if they continue to disrupt the peace among Muslims, his party would resort to severing sacred thread". He also posted on his social media page calling on people to participate in protests. Veer Vasanthakumar of Hindu Mahasabha Trust filed a complaint with the Cyber police which lodged case against Rahim under Sections 153 (provocation to riot), 505 (2) (conducting public mischief), 505 (1)(c) (causing communal disharmony) of the IPC. He was produced before the CCB court and remanded to judicial custody for 15 days.

NGT refuses to waive compensation for failing to set up TSDF

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has refused to entertain a plea by Goa Waste Management Corporation seeking waiver of environmental compensation for failure to set up a requisite treatment, storage, and disposal facility (TSDF) in the state citing Covid-19 pandemic. "We are unable to entertain this application. Once there is acknowledged violation in setting up of TSDF, as required under the Rules and orders of this Tribunal, there is no reason for the waiver of compensation," said the NGT bench headed by its chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel in an order passed on February 23. The said directions were reiterated in subsequent orders dated July 7, 2020, and January 29, 2021. Thus, setting up of TSDFs by all the states is mandatory and



environment and public health. This aspect does not brook any delay or laxity, as depicted from the present application, the order said. The bench also noted that none appeared for the applicant. The plea stated that the process for setting up TSDF started in 2006 for which EC was granted in 2008. Thereafter, the decision was taken that TSDF may be set up by individual companies. The area was allocated, a plan for construction was prepared, inventory of waste was also prepared, the operator was selected, drawing was approved. Waste was being disposed of through Maharashtra Enviro Power Ltd. or other entities. It further said Covid is another reason for not setting up TSDF. The state has pursued the matter. Consent to operate has been granted by the state PCB. Thus, according to the applicant, no compensation is liable to be paid, as sought to be done by the CPCB vide order dated February 26, 2021, and subsequent orders, in pursuance of the order of this tribunal dated August 26, 2019, the plea said.

TRAINEE PILOT KILLED AS TRAINER AIRCRAFT CRASHES IN TELANGANA

Hyderabad: A female trainee pilot has been confirmed dead in a trainer aircraft crash in Nalgonda district of Telangana. Police sources said that the aircraft belonging to a private aviation training company, had crashed into agricultural fields on Saturday morning. According to police sources, the victim hails from Tamil Nadu. She was training at a Hyderabad-based training institute which also operates from Nagarjuna Sagar. Telangana police rushed to the spot after being alerted by farmers working in the fields at Tungaturthi village of Peddavoora Mandal in Nalgonda district. Eyewitnesses said that the aircraft was flying from Nagarjuna Sagar, when it crashed to the ground and erupted in flames around 11.30 am. Further details are awaited.



India launches National Polio Immunization Drive to sustain polio-free status

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Saturday launched the National Polio Immunization Drive for 2022 by administering polio drops to children below five years of age at the health ministry. The immunisation drive will be organised across the country on Sunday. India conducts one nationwide NID and two Sub-National Immunization Day (SNIDs) for polio every year to maintain population immunity against wild poliovirus and to sustain its polio-free status. During the Polio NID, over 15 crore children will be covered across all 36 states and UTs in 735 districts. Addressing the occasion, Mandaviya said that the country's strategic fight against polio is a success story of India's public health policy against vaccine preventable diseases. "We need to continue to be vigilant and ensure that every child under five years of age must get polio drops". "Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, Universal Immunization Programme is focusing to protect



children from more diseases than ever before and has introduced several new vaccines like Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV), Rotavirus vaccine, and Measles-Rubella vaccine (MR) in the recent past. "Further, to provide additional protection to our children, the Centre has

also introduced the injectable Inactivated Polio Vaccine into its routine immunization programme. While we are making efforts to protect our children from more and more diseases, it is important that all vaccines under the programme reach every child of our country", said the

minister. Stressing on the importance of observing National Immunisation Day, he said that the aim of Swastha Bharath can only be achieved if the children are healthy. The objective of Mission Indradhanush or Polio Vaccination Drive is to protect them against such deadly diseases. "Since our neighbouring countries are still not polio free, we should remain vigilant and continue the vaccination programme. Over 15 crore children under 5 years of age will be vaccinated in the coming months. Door-to-door vaccination campaigns through robust micro-planning will be done to ensure that no one is left," he stated. During the drive, polio drops will be provided to children through 7 lakh booths across the country. Approximately 23.6 crore houses will be visited for polio drops. Meghalaya has already conducted the drive in the state on January 24, while Mizoram plans to conduct the same on March 1 due to local reasons. Election-bound states of Uttar Pradesh and Manipur also plan to organise the Polio NID on March 20 and 24, respectively.

2020 Delhi riots: Court fines six accused for false claim

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A court here, in a case related to 2020 Delhi riots, has imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 each on six accused persons for a false statement related to their acknowledgment of the supply of copies of pen drives along with the charge sheet. Hearing the case, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Arun Kumar Garg, observed, "Copy of acknowledgment regarding supply of a copy of CCTV footage along with a copy of charge sheet has been placed on record by the Investigating Officer (IO) qua all the accused. Besides, it is submitted by him that he had supplied the fresh pen drives to the accused on 17 February 2022 also against the proper acknowledgment also." However, noting the false statement of the accused, who had informed the court that the IO has not supplied them the copies, the judge asked the accused persons—Firoz Khan, Iqbal, Zakhir, Shakir, Sirajuddin, and Anas to deposit the fine by the next hearing. The IO was asked to furnish the acknowledgment of the supply of copies within two days, failing which, he shall deposit an adjournment cost of Rs. 10,000 in the court. As many as 1,356 persons accused in the infamous northeast Delhi riots are still in judi-



cial custody and the investigation is still underway in several cases, according to Delhi police. The police registered over 700 cases in the riots, of which around 62 cases, in which murders happened, are being investigated by the Crime Branch of the Delhi Police while one case of larger conspiracy is being investigated by the Special cell. "The rest of the cases are being probed by local police stations," according to Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana. The riots broke out in northeast Delhi in February 2020 after clashes between anti-CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) and pro-CAA protesters took a violent turn. The mayhem, which coincided with then US President Donald Trump's maiden trip to India, saw over 50 people lose their lives.

RAINS LIKELY IN SOUTHERN, INTERIOR DISTRICTS OF TN TILL MONDAY



Chennai: The Indian Meteorological Department has predicted rains in the southern and interior districts of Tamil Nadu in the next few days till Monday. The weatherman also expect a low-pressure area to form over the southeast Bay of Bengal on Monday. This low-pressure area, according to the meteorological department is unusual for this time of the year. The department said that Dindigul, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Cuddalore, Karaikkal, and Union Territory of Puducherry might receive isolated rains. This rainfall, according to the meteorological department is due to the easterly wind convergence. The IMD officials also said that cyclonic circulation was likely to form over the south Andaman sea and its neighbourhood around Sunday. This might influence the formation of a low-pressure area over the southeast Bay of Bengal and south Andaman sea on Monday. Chennai might experience partly cloudy skies and mist or haze during morning hours till Monday. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be 32 degrees Celsius and 22 degrees Celsius respectively.

Ponzi scheme: Guj woman held for duping around 700 for over Rs 4 cr

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Economic Offences Wing of Delhi Police has arrested a 48-year-old woman for misappropriating the funds of the people and cheating them to the tune of over Rs 4 crore, an official said on Saturday. The accused was identified as Sunita Saini, a resident of Surat, Gujarat. Furnishing details, Joint Commissioner of Police (Economic Offences Wing) Chhaya Sharma said the complainant had levelled allegations against one Vashundhara Group, allegedly a financial institution functioning in Azadpur, Delhi for misappropriating their funds on false representation of doubling invested money in 4 years. "The accused Sunita Saini is Director and share holder in the alleged company," the Jt CP said.



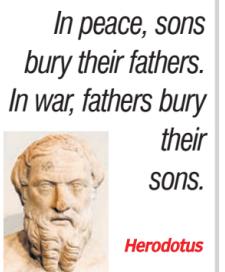
According to the senior official, the alleged group and its owner and directors Chandra Prakash Saini alias C.P. Saini, Sunita Saini & others, allured the general public to open daily saving account, fixed deposit account and other lucrative investment schemes and following the directions of the accused, the victims fell prey and opened the accounts (likewise banks). They were issued certificates, pass books, etc against investments and the deposits. "Around 700 victims have been cheated to the tune of more than Rs 4 crore as on date. The amount and victims are increasing on day basis. Thereafter, C.P. Saini and his wife Sunita Saini ran away with the invested funds of the victims," Sharma said. Accordingly, the police registered an FIR under sections 409, 420 and 120B of the Indian Penal Code and took up the investigation.

TN POLICE HUNT WOMAN WHO EXTRACTED MONEY FROM PEOPLE USING COBRA

Chennai: Tamil Nadu police have launched a hunt for a woman who scared the people with a cobra and extracted money from them. After a video of the woman with cobra went viral, the police registered a suo motu case against her. An officer with the Tambaram police station told reporter that the woman appeared to be a nomad and a snake charmer. She had told the residents that she belonged to Villupuram, he said. The police said that the woman would go from house to house at Meppadu in Tambaram asking for money and clothes. If refused, she took out a snake from a basket and scared the residents. Sukumaran Nair, a resident of Meppadu, told reporter: "One morning the woman came asking for money. At houses, when the people refused to give her money, she opened a basket and played an instrument at which a cobra slithered out. The horrified residents gave her money and clothes and sent her away. Someone filmed the incident which went viral and was noticed by police." He said that the woman told the people that her son lived in Tambaram and that she used to carry the cobra whenever she visited her son by train. Forest officials have also joined the police in the hunt for the woman.



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Escape from Ukraine: 219 Indians landed by AI flight in Mumbai

WELCOME BACK

Answering the prayers of hundreds of their anxious relatives, 219 Indians, mostly students and a majority of them girls, finally landed here by Air India's first evacuation flight from Bucharest, Romania, on Saturday evening.

Air India's flight from Bucharest, Romania which is bringing back stranded Indians will arrive back to New Delhi on Sunday morning. Accordingly, the flight from Bucharest took off with 250 Indian nationals. It is estimated to arrive at IGIA around 3 a.m., on Sunday morning. Besides, Hungary's Budapest to Delhi flight is expected to land at IGIA around 8.30 a.m.



UKRAINE SEEKS INDIA'S POLITICAL SUPPORT IN UN

New Delhi: Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday said that he has spoken to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi over Russia's aggression and sought "political support" at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). He revealed speaking to Modi soon after after Russia praised India's decision to abstain from a vote at the United Nations to condemn its invasion. He urged India to provide political support in the UNSC, saying: "Stop the aggressor together!" India had abstained from voting on the UNSC resolution that deplored in the strongest terms Russia's aggression against Ukraine, saying dialogue is the only answer to settling differences and disputes.



Volodymyr Zelensky, President, Ukraine

RUSSIA RESUMES MILITARY OPERATIONS AFTER UKRAINE REFUSES TO NEGOTIATE

New Delhi: Russia's military operation in Ukraine has resumed after the country's leadership declined to negotiate, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Saturday, RT reported. President Vladimir Putin previously ordered the Russian troops to halt their advance on Friday, awaiting a response from Kiev, Moscow said. It added that the offensive continued on Saturday, RT reported. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Friday that he was ready to sit down for talks with Russia in order to end hostilities between the countries. The same day, Peskov told reporters that Moscow was ready to hold talks in Minsk, Belarus. He later claimed that the Ukrainian side first offered to move the meeting to Warsaw, Poland, and then stopped responding.

help through social media, seeking return to their parents and motherland. This is the first batch of evacuees arriving from the war-hit Ukraine, and several more airlifting operations are expected in the next few days. An estimated 1,200 students from Maharashtra, besides some who had gone for business or tourism purposes, are stranded in Ukraine, as their concerned families await news from them.

The CSMA was fully geared to handle the evacuees reaching here by AI-1944 with a special corridor and all necessary facilities. As per Centre's guidelines, all the students shall undergo a mandatory temperature check and will be required to produce a Covid-19 vaccination certification or a negative RTPCR report on landing.

Expressions of joy, easing of intense stress, weary smiles or controlled tears of happiness were visible among the evacuees, some of whom managed to speak with their waiting kin outside on video-calls. At the CSMA, Union Minister Piyush Goyal, Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar and other officials received, welcomed and comforted the evacuees, as they trooped out of the arrival lounge. In the past few days, many of them had sent desperate SOS for

RUSSIA FACES HEAVY LOSSES: UKRAINE

Russia has lost 14 planes, 8 helicopters, 102 tanks, 536 BBM, 15 heavy machine guns, and 1 BUK missile since February 24, according to Ukrainians military. The Kremlin also lost over 3,500 soldiers, Ukraine's Armed Forces said on Saturday. Nearly 200 service members have been kept hostage, Kyiv Independent reported. Ukrainian military stopped Russia's offensive in Kharkiv Oblast where fighting is ongoing. Urban warfare is still being fought in Okhtyrka, Sumy Oblast. On the coast, Ukraine's Naval Forces mined accessible landing sites. A combined force is conducting a defensive operation and holding positions along the entire line of demarcation.

The AI-194 special service with the passengers -- largely Indian students studying in various universities in Ukraine -- landed at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMA) at around 8 pm, sending waves of relief among their near and dear ones

Mumbai, Ahmedabad witnessing 3rd successive dust storm in one month

Team Absolute | New Delhi

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

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



Mumbai for two days, but the relatively less AQI of Mumbai turned from satisfactory to poor since Friday. It is predicted that the same dust cloud will further intensify with the clouds of Afghanistan and the upper edge of the Thar region of Pakistan and will further deteriorate the AQI for places along the Mumbai - Ahmedabad belt," said Gufan Beig, founder director of SAFAR.

However, due to warmer local conditions, it is likely to subside by Monday, he said. SAFAR, the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research is part of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune under the Ministry of Earth Science. As per SAFAR data, on Saturday, Ahmedabad had PM10 concentration at 225 (moderate) while PM2.5 levels were at 120 (poor). For Mumbai, PM10 was 231 and PM2.5 was 125.

MILITANT OUTFIT BACKS BJP CANDIDATES IN MANIPUR POLLS



Team Absolute | Imphal

In an unprecedented development, militant outfit Kuki National Organisation (KNO), which is under Suspension of Operation (SoO), announced support to all the candidates of the ruling BJP in the Manipur Assembly elections.

The opposition Congress on Saturday strongly reacted to the development and urged the Election Commission to take appropriate actions against the KNO outfit. The President of KNO, P.S. Haokip, said in a statement on Friday night: "In line with the ongoing political dialogue between KNO and the government of India, the Centre and the ruling BJP leadership have promised swift settlement of Kuki political aspirations. Home Minister Amit Shah had announced the same in his public address on February 23 at the Churachandpur public Ground. "Therefore, the KNO has resolved to extend support to all BJP candidates for the Manipur Assembly elections." The KNO appealed to all its chiefs, civil society organisation leaders and voters to support BJP candidates in all KNO operational areas, and any person or organisation acting contrary to this appeal will be deemed acting against Kuki interest, the statement said.

Hoping for positive response from govt, CJ on lack of judicial infrastructure

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In the presence of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Chief Justice N.V. Ramana on Saturday said mere allocation of funds is not sufficient in improving the judicial infrastructure in the country. Justice Ramana said he is hoping for a positive response, as he has been pursuing the government for setting up statutory authorities, both at Centre and states. The Chief Justice was speaking at the national seminar on Adjudication of



Intellectual Property Rights Disputes organised by the Delhi High Court. The Chief Justice said: "Judicial infrastructure needs to be improved. Unfortunately, we are not even meeting the basic minimum standards in this area. It has been my endeavour since assuming

the office of Chief Justice of India, to put in place an institutional mechanism to co-ordinate and oversee the improvement of judicial infrastructure". The event was also attended by the Delhi High Court Chief Justice D.N. Patel. The Chief Justice added: "Mere allocation of funds is not enough. The challenge is to put the available resources to optimum use. I have been pursuing the government for setting up of statutory authorities, both at the centre and at the states. I hoping for a positive response soon".

Rs 1K cr worth of cash, liquor seized in poll-bound states

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Election Commission has said the enforcement agencies have seized cash, liquor and drugs worth over Rs 1,000 crore during the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa. Punjab tops the list with total seizures worth over Rs 510 crore, followed by Uttar Pradesh at Rs 307 crore. While Uttar Pradesh tops in liquor seizures of Rs 54 crore, Punjab tops in seizure of drugs of Rs 376 crore. A total Rs 12.73 crore worth of cash, liquor, drugs and other precious metals have been seized from Goa. Seizures worth Rs 3.64 crore were made in these states during the 2017 Assembly elections.

In Manipur, total Rs 163.87 crore worth of cash, liquor and others have been seized. In 2017 Assembly elections, only Rs 6.42 crore worth of seizures were made. In Punjab, a total of Rs 510.91 crore worth of cash, liquor, drugs and others have been seized. In 2017 Assembly elections, total seizure value was only Rs 89.64 crore. A total of Rs 18.81 crore worth of cash, liquor and drugs have been seized in Uttarakhand, while in 2017, it was Rs 6.85 crore. In Uttar Pradesh, total Rs 307.92 crore worth of cash, liquor, drugs and other items have been seized. It also includes Rs 91.30 crore cash. In 2017, it was Rs 193.29 crore worth of seizure in the state.

BULLIED OVER SEXUALITY, CLASS 10 STUDENT ENDS LIFE

Faridabad: A class 10 student of Delhi Public School, Greater Faridabad, committed suicide by jumping off his residential building, police said on Saturday. The deceased left behind a suicide note alleging mentally harassment by his classmates over his sexuality. "You're powerful (mother), don't care what people say about my sexuality, kindly handle relative, Grand father and niana. The school has killed me. Higher authority is also responsible," read the suicide note. Despite several complaints, no action was taken by the school administration, the family alleged. A senior police official said that the boy's mother also teaches in the school. "She gave us a complaint against the academic head of the school for harassing her son, a class X student. Based on her complaint, we have lodged an FIR under sections of abetment to suicide. A team has been formed and we are looking into the allegations," said the Faridabad police official. The post-mortem was conducted at a nearby government hospital and the autopsy report is awaited. Last year, two boys had commented on his sexuality. The boy then spoke to his mother who approached the principal. However, no action was taken.

BAJRANG DAL ACTIVIST MURDER CASE: K'TAKA DIST INCHING TOWARDS PEACE

Shivamogga: After witnessing large-scale violence following the murder of 28-year-old Bajrang Dal activist Harsha, the Shivamogga district is limping back to normalcy. All curfew curbs have been lifted. The district administration, however, will keep prohibitory orders in place till Sunday with all schools and colleges remaining closed till Monday. Meanwhile, the special teams formed to probe the case have made two more arrests taking the number of arrested persons to ten. The arrested have been identified as Abdul Roshan (24), a resident of Bhadravathi town and Jafar Sadiq (55) from Shivamogga city. Shops and commercial establishments in Shivamogga are allowed to operate between 6 a.m and 4 p.m on Saturday. However, heavy police presence will continue in the city to ensure absolute restoration of peace.

K-RAIL WILL TAKE 127 YEARS TO COMPLETE: ECONOMIST

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM | Agencies

Noted economist K.P. Kannan while taking part in a discussion on the controversial K-Rail - Silverline, has come out with mind boggling figures. He said "if there is going to be a time and cost overrun" and "if the time taken to build Kochi Metro is an indicator, it will take a staggering 127 years to finish K-Rail project". However, if the time taken to build Delhi Metro is taken as indicator, then it would take 37 years to finish the project, Kannan asserted. If completed, the pet project of Vijayan will see a 529.45 km corridor connecting Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod and a high speed train will run this distance in around four hours and it will cost Rs 63,940 crore. NITI Aayog says it might cost Rs 1.24 lakh crore and is expected to be completed in 2025, according to the detailed



survey procedures have begun only. Kannan, a former professor at the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), and presently a Honorary Fellow said this while taking part in a discussion on K-

Rail asked his former student at CDS, a two-time former state Finance Minister, Thomas Isaac, who was battling for the K-Rail project, that if there is "any" documented reference where it has been said that the speed of transport is a "critical barrier" for economic development. "China saw the maximum growth during the period 1978-2007 and it was after that they went in for high speed rail (HSR) and today 40 per cent of high speed rail is in China. Studies in China, Spain and Japan which account for 75 per cent of the HSR in the world have shown that the end results was disappointing," said Kannan. Kannan pointed out that the time overrun of projects which is natural, also is a dampener. "If we look into the time taken by (Metroman) E. Sreedharan for Kochi Metro and if that's going to be applied standards, it took him (DMRC) 6 years to build 25 km and on an average every year

4.17 km was built and if that's the average efficiency then for the K-Rail it will take 127 years. If we take Delhi Metro for the time taken as the standard, then K-Rail will take 37 years," said Kannan. With regard to the cost overrun in projects across the various sectors in Kerala, the power projects have the least and if that's taken as the benchmark, if the Kerala government's total project cost of K-Rail which is Rs 63,940 crore is taken, when completed it will cost Rs 2.47 lakh crore and if the Niti Aayog figure of Rs 1.24 lakh crore is taken, it will cost Rs 4.79 lakh crore. The Congress led Opposition has planned a massive protest against Vijayan's pet project and it will begin from March 10 to April 4, while Vijayan is also getting ready to reach out to the people with booklets highlighting his point of view on why K-Rail is needed for Kerala's development.



PM MODI HAD STARTED NATION-WIDE CROP INSURANCE SCHEME FROM MP

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar launched the nation-wide campaign of "Meri Policy-Mere Hath" campaign under the ambitious Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna of the Central Government today in Barlai, Indore. Fasal Bima Yojna policies were distributed to the farmers. This campaign is a unique initiative, in which hard copies of crop insurance policy will be distributed to the farmers enrolled in Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana through special camps at the Gram Panchayat/Village level. The objective of the campaign is to reach out to all the loanee and non-loanee farmers enrolled in the scheme and also to make them aware about crop insurance.

GOOD FORTUNE OF MP THAT PM STARTED PMFBY FROM MADHYA PRADESH: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that it is the good fortune of Madhya Pradesh that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had started the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana in the interest of farmers from Madhya Pradesh itself. Now the nationwide launch of "Meri Policy-Mere Haath" scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana is also being started from Madhya Pradesh. Chouhan said that village to village camps will be organised in this campaign in the state and farmers will be delivered insurance policies at their homes in their hands.

Chouhan said that effective implementation of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana is being ensured in Madhya Pradesh. In RBC 6(4) also, compensation for crop loss is being given to the farmers. Necessary amendments have also been made in the rules of RBC in the interest of farmers. The rules have been simplified. Recently, compensation of Rs 7,618 crore has been deposited in the accounts of farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. An amount of Rs 380 crore 54 lakh has been paid in Indore district alone. At the time of disaster, compensation of 10 and a half thousand crores has been given in RBC 6(4).

Chouhan said that the State Government has deposited a total amount of Rs 17 lakh 2 thousand 894 crore in the accounts of farmers in the last 20 months. This was the first time that such a big amount has been deposited in the accounts of farmers in the state. He said that PM Modi is constantly worrying about the farmers. Many schemes have been started by innovation for the welfare of farmers. The Chief Minister said that the area under irrigation is



being increased continuously in Madhya Pradesh. At present 43 lakh hectare area is being irrigated, this area will be increased upto 65 lakh hectare.

Chouhan said that the farmers have produced record agricultural production in the state by working tirelessly. As a result of this, Madhya Pradesh is number one in the country in the field of agriculture. The Chief Minister said that an Apparel Readymade Garment Park would be set up at Barlai in Indore. About one thousand crore rupees will be invested in this park. This will provide direct and indirect employment to about 12 thousand people. He administered the pledge to the farmers present to maintain cleanliness in their respective villages, celebrate Gaurav Diwas (pride day) and plant trees. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that in case of any natural calamity in the state, farmers would be given full compensation for the loss. He will get compensation even if the sowing is affected. Intensive surveys will be conducted at the field level to get the information about actual damage.

PM Fasal Bima Yojana is being Implemented Seriously and Sensitive in MP: Tomar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said that it is a matter of pride that the "Meri Policy-Mere Haath" campaign is being launched under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana from Indore in Madhya Pradesh. He said that PM Modi had launched Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana from Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh itself. Tomar said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Chouhan, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana is being implemented seriously and sensitively in state. All farmers are talking about the benefits of the scheme. Farmers have been helped a lot in times of crisis. Bringing positive change in the quality of life of farmers is the thinking and resolve of PM Modi. All efforts have been made to make this thinking and resolution come true.

Tomar said that the export of organic agricultural produce is

increasing continuously. Farmers are also getting good prices for organic produce. The area under organic farming is increasing in Madhya Pradesh. Along with this, effective efforts are being made to encourage organic farming. As a result, Madhya Pradesh ranks first in the country in the field of organic farming. He said that to make agriculture a profitable business, it is necessary that the cost of farming should be reduced. Farmers should get a fair price for their production and modern equipment and technology should be used for farming. In this direction, work is being done in Madhya Pradesh with determination. Tomar said that in Madhya Pradesh, the payment of schemes is being made transparently in the accounts of farmers. The money of other schemes including support price, compensation amount for crop damage is being deposited directly into the account of farmers. He said that the farmer is the soul of the country. If the farmers become financially prosperous then the village and the country will develop. To make the country self-reliant, the welfare of the village and the farmer is our priority.

OUR MAIN GOAL IS TO MAKE AGRICULTURE A PROFITABLE BUSINESS: THAKUR

Bhopal: Tourism and Culture Minister Usha Thakur said that our main goal is to make agriculture a profitable business. The progress and development of farmers is our priority. Effective efforts are being made in this direction to keep the farmers happy. The farmer is the Annadata. Farmers are the nurturers of humanity. He urged that natural and organic farming should be done to protect the health of human life. Save lives from the ill effects of chemical farming. Take firm steps in building a healthy India. Make your significant contribution towards self-reliant India by adopting cleanliness and organic farming.



CROP INSURANCE SCHEME IS SHIELD FOR LIFE AND CROP OF THE FARMERS: PATEL

Bhopal: State Agriculture Minister Kamal Patel said that the crop insurance scheme is a shield for the life and crop of the farmers. In case of a crisis, compensation for crop damage will be given. If the policy is with them then they will not have to run here and there. Such a scheme has been implemented for the first time in the country. Madhya Pradesh is the first state in the country to give loans without interest. The state government is with the farmers in every sorrow and pain. Every effort is being made to relieve their pain. Farmers have been given support in the time of crisis, full help will be given in future also.



DEVELOPMENT OF FARMERS IS DEVELOPMENT OF NATION: SILAWAT

Bhopal: State Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silawat said that the development of farmers is the development of the nation. The development and progress of farmers is our resolve. He said that a scheme has been brought to supply Narmada water to 180 villages in Sanwer area at a cost of three thousand crore rupees. With the Jal Jeevan Mission, a scheme to supply water from tap to every household has been started. Irrigation facility has been expanded. A network of roads is being laid in the villages. The "Meri Policy - Mere Haath" campaign started today is a boon for the farmers.



Will improve statistical system and use it in public interest: CM

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Formation of survey cadre and creation of professional statistical service.
- Re-formation of state level statistical and subordinate service, modernization of data management system, creation of state-of-the-art and professional statistical service.
- Calculation of GSDP and income, estimation of prices and expenditure, estimation of DSDP and prices, measures and suggestions to upgrade the existing approach adopted for expenditure-side estimation.
- Suggestion of GDP calculation at district level.
- After the above reforms, the availability of reliable statistical data will be ensured in the state, on the basis of which the state will be able to make scientific and accurate policies and take efficient decisions to get the definite outcome of the plans.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that necessary decisions will be taken after seriously considering the recommendations of the task force constituted for proper evaluation of the working of statistical system in the state and for improving the quality of data and system in policy making. By improving the statistical system, its



use in public interest will be ensured.

Chouhan on Saturday dedicated the report submitted by the Kundu Task Force (Committee) constituted under the chairmanship of famous economist Prof. Amitabh Kundu by the Madhya Pradesh government at CM residence office. The report given by the task force also includes a recommendation for the formation of a State Statistical Commission. The commission will provide technical guidance in this area. Chouhan said that authentic data is essential for the formulation of schemes and allocation of funds from the central government. These figures are also useful for GDP evaluation and implementation of projects. Kundu Task Force was formed and arrangements were made for its necessary study and research. It will also make it easier to suggest new and innovative measures to improve the existing administrative set-up at the state and district levels, to make publications comprehensive, accessible and legible for citizens and experts. Chouhan said that 10 lakh people of the state have been successfully provided jobs in the last two months. Women self-help groups are also doing good work. The report of Kundu Committee also mentions about this growth in the state. Apart from this, emphasis has been laid on training employees of the Statistics Department in the use of modern

techniques in surveying, income estimation, statistics and information technology among other recommendations. The plan to design and conduct sample surveys to improve the capacity and quality of sample surveys in the state, the need for creating a sample survey wing at the state level is also mentioned. Modernization of data management systems is one of the objectives of the task force. Chouhan said that accurate data would help in size and evaluation of GDP of the state as well as empowering the entire system. Chief Minister thanked the task force for preparing and submitting the report within a period of just 5 months. Prof. Amitabh Kundu said that the report has been prepared by the task force after visiting the districts and various meetings. This report will be helpful in policy making. Kundu said that there is good progress in the MSME sector in Madhya Pradesh. Micro, small and medium enterprises are becoming a support for the needy in Madhya Pradesh. In order to improve the collection and management of statistics in the state, setting up of a State Statistical Commission has been recommended. Along with this, setting up of a state level data reservoir is also in the offing, so that the work of data collection of all departments can be done in the Planning, Economic and Statistics Headquarters.

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स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय
भारत सरकार

दो बूँद हर बार

पोलियो पर जीत रहे बरकरार

श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी
प्रधानमंत्री

श्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान
मुख्यमंत्री, मध्यप्रदेश

भारत पोलियो मुक्त है। लेकिन पोलियो कुछ देशों में अभी भी है और फिर लौट सकता है। अपने बच्चे की सुरक्षा में कोई चूक न होने दें। पोलियो की सुराक हर बार दिलाएं। पोलियो पर देश की जीत बनाए रखने में योगदान दें।

अधिक जानकारी के लिए आशा/ए.एन.एम./आंगनवाड़ी कार्यकर्ता से मिलें

#Unite2FightCorona

Covid-19 से संबंधित प्रोटोकॉल का पालन करें

अपना मास्क पहनना या नहोने, अपनी साक और नुहा को अच्छे तरह करें

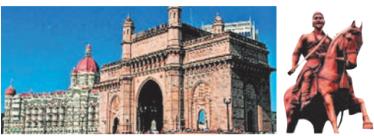
2 गज की दूरी बना कर रखें

अपने हाथ साफ रखें

लोक स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग, मध्यप्रदेश शासन द्वारा जनहित में जारी

आकल्पन : म.प्र. माध्यम/2022

मध्यप्रदेश जनसम्पर्क द्वारा जारी



Maha phone-tapping scam: FIR against IPS officer Rashmi Shukla

The Pune Police on Saturday lodged an FIR against IPS officer and a former Pune Police Commissioner Rashmi Shukla in connection with the phone-tapping scandal that erupted last year, officials said here.

Pune | Agencies

The Pune Police on Saturday lodged an FIR against IPS officer and a former Pune Police Commissioner Rashmi Shukla in connection with the phone-tapping scandal that erupted last year, officials said here.

Following the report of a 3-member committee, the state government ordered the Bund Garden Police Station to file the FIR against Shukla, a 1988 IPS officer, who is currently the Additional DGP, CRPF.

At the relevant time of the phone-tapping episode in 2020, she was serving as the Additional DGP of Maharashtra State Intelligence Department and later shunted as Chief of Civil Defence on September 3, 2020. In March 2021, the Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis had shared phone call records and other evidence of officers allegedly attempting to influence former home minister Anil Deshmukh for transfers or plum postings. The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government ordered a probe into the 'illegal' phone tapping carried out by Shukla to unearth the alleged police transfers-postings scam and leaking of call data. The probe report by the then Chief Secretary

Sitaram J. Kunte submitted to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, pointed an accusing finger at Shukla for overstepping her brief. When confronted, Shukla not only admitted her mistake but apologised for her actions, citing personal and family issues like her husband's death due to cancer and children's education, etc.

"She (Shukla) had met the CM, Home Minister (Anil Deshmukh) and myself and expressed regrets for the matter. She also sought permission to withdraw her report. Since she was a woman officer who had undergone traumatic personal problems and had admitted to her fault, a sympathetic view was taken and the matter was not pursued further," Kunte's report to Thackeray said. Shukla's 'Top Secret' report of August 25, 2020, had damned several prominent personalities including Deshmukh in the alleged corruption in the police promotions-transfer racket, but it was leaked into the public domain. Following Kunte's report, based on a complaint by the state CID, the Mumbai Cyber Police Station lodged a FIR on March 26, 2021 against 'unknown' persons invoking various sections under the Official Secrets Act, Indian Telegraph Act and Information Technology Act.

Maharashtra finances not robust, but salvageable with 'discipline'

As the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government readies for its third annual Budget (2022-2023) in early March, the focus is again on the state of the state's finances.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The state has been grappling - ranking among the worst-hit - with the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and the series of lockdowns that have played havoc with the economy, revenues and expenditure, and diversion of most resources to the health sector for the masses reeling under the impact of Covid-19. Till the previous fiscal (2020-2021), the state had notched up a whopping debt of Rs 520,717 crore, mostly comprising unpaid loans and other liabilities. However, the fiscal deficit percentage vis-a-vis GSDP is 2.1 per cent and the debt stock to GSDP is 19.6 per cent - well within the prescribed limits of 25 per cent, as per the Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement of last year, according to the official data. "Though appearing huge, the debt figures are an accumulation of the past several years owing to various factors. The average annual addition



is in the range of Rs 65,000 cr.," said Dr Ratnakar Mahajan, well-known economic expert and former Executive Chairman, Maharashtra State Planning Board. Unlike many other states, there are no money-guzzling 'populist schemes' operating in Maharashtra - barring one important welfare measure started in Jan/2020 - the affordable meal of 'Shiv Bhojan Thali' - which was extended and heavily subsidised after the pandemic lockdowns were imposed in March 2020. A pet venture of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, the 'Shiv Bhojan Thali' - on which the state government spent less than Rs 500 crore in the past 24 months - proved to be a life-saver for the urban-rural poor and the lakhs of migrants on the move in the early days of the lockdown series. However, officials say the debt as to be serviced without fail

every year - which is the expenditure part of the annual budget - but there is scope for being prudent, said an official of the state Finance Ministry, headed by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar. The official - requesting anonymity - explained how the two years of the severe pandemic has hit all sectors of the economy, compounded by the economic slowdown, job losses which are now gradually being rolled back, the farm loans waivers, handling a series of natural calamities, shortfall in all types of tax revenues and also the massive amount of GST dues pending from the Centre. Dr Mahajan said one of the factors responsible for growing fiscal burden in the past was, finances were raised at higher interest rates for shorter periods, like availing loans at 11 per cent for 3 years. Some governments managed

to overcome this by restructuring the old loans at lower rates of interest for longer periods - say, at 8 or 9 per cent for 5 years - which lessened the burden and spread it over the years less painfully. Besides, whenever any government takes up new or mega-projects, it becomes the responsibility of the next regime to take it forward with adequate budgetary provisions.

Officials said some like the Metrorail may be top priority to reduce traffic congestion but others like the Bullet Train could wait for a while to prevent diverting scarce resources from other critical sectors, especially during the pandemic period. Nevertheless, Dr Mahajan feels that with 'safer and cautious decisions' it is very much possible to bring the state's finances "well on the track" in just two years. "This was done in the past during the tenure of the former Chief Minister Sushilkumar Shinde... with certain decisions that helped revive the financial situation and also reduced the state's debt burden significantly," he said. As for the next year's State Budget (2022-2023), all eyes are on (DCM & FM) Ajit Pawar to see how he juggles with the stretched finances and scarce resources to keep the state aloft amid optimistic signs that it is veering out of the scalding Covid-19 cauldron.

IndiaPost felicitates BBPS Diwali Dhamaka achievers

The Department of Posts (DoP) and India Post Payments Bank (IPPB), Maharashtra circle, felicitated the top five Grameen Dak Sevaks (GDS) of the 'BBPS Diwali Dhamaka Campaign', officials said here on Friday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Department of Posts (DoP) and India Post Payments Bank (IPPB), Maharashtra circle, felicitated the top five Grameen Dak Sevaks (GDS) of the 'BBPS Diwali Dhamaka Campaign', officials said here on Friday.

The Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) was launched by the Reserve Bank of India for easing payment of bills across the country and boosting the digital payment drive.

IPPB had launched the BBPS 'Cash-to-Bill' feature in September 2021, and started a campaign for three months till January-end. The BBPS offers myriad utilities bill collection categories, insurance premium, mutual funds, schools or institution fees, credit cards payments, FastTag recharges, local or housing society taxes, etc. at a single window, proving a boon for the users.

The Maharashtra circle alone contributed over 57,000 bill payment transactions, or nearly 60 per cent of the all-India figures, said Chief Postmaster General, Maharashtra circle, Veena

Srinivas, in the presence of G.R. Bansal, IPPB's Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, New Delhi. "Any person can make bill payments through cash without having an IPPB account at any post office through any postal personnel across India. In Maharashtra and Goa, the facility is available at 12,000 post offices and at the doorsteps through more than 16,000 postmen/postwives and the GDS," said Srinivas.

The top five Grameen Dak Sevaks felicitated were Vishwanath Lingayat of Ratnagiri (4,127 transactions), Shivaji Kumbhar of Kolhapur (3,834), Rajesh Utekar of Ratnagiri (3,666), who were awarded scooters, while the next two performers, Jaydeo Adhav of Amravati (3,064) and Yasin Pinjari of Kolhapur (2,169) won smartphones.

Why isn't Nawab Malik asked to resign despite arrest: Maharashtra BJP

Malik, state Minority Affairs Minister and also chief spokesperson of the ruling Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday in a money laundering probe linked to the activities of fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim and his aides.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra BJP on Saturday continued to target the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state over the arrest of its minister Nawab Malik, and sought to know why Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray was not asking him to step down. Talking to reporters in Pune, Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrakant Patil said that in the past, some other ministers in the MVA government had resigned after facing allegations, so Malik should follow suit.

"Malik has been booked under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and has been



arrested. If a government employee faces criminal charges and is arrested, then that person is not only suspended, but also loses job. So why doesn't the same rule apply to Malik and why his boss is not seeking his resignation?" he asked.

By not taking his resignation, the government is protecting an accused and the BJP will never tolerate it, he said.

Malik, state Minority Affairs Minister and also chief spokesperson of the ruling Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), was arrested by the

Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday in a money laundering probe linked to the activities of fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim and his aides. He was remanded in the ED custody till March 3. On Friday, he was admitted to a state-run hospital in Mumbai after he complained of stomach pain.

Following his arrest, MVA leaders have ruled out the possibility of Malik's resignation.

Patil said, "Our one-day agitation (to seek Malik's resignation) was a warning to the state government. But going by its stand on the issue, it seems we will have to continue our protest over the demand."

Why are there different set of rules for ministers of NCP and Shiv Sena when they faced serious allegations, he asked.

"Earlier, Sanjay Rathod and Anil Deshmukh were asked to step down as ministers after they faced different allegations. But why Malik's resignation is not being sought despite his arrest?" he asked.

In February last year, Rathod had resigned after his name was linked to a woman's death, while Deshmukh had quit in April following allegations of corruption levelled by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh. Deshmukh was later arrested by the ED.

All COVID-19 restrictions to be lifted soon: Aaditya Thackeray

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As COVID-19 cases in the state are declining, Maharashtra Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray, on Friday said that all restrictions in the state will be lifted soon, reports from ABP Majha stated.

He also said that schools of all boards and mediums in Mumbai from pre-primary to 12th standard will function offline from March 2 onwards.

According to the guidelines issued by the BMC, the schools will have to check the temperature of students at the time of entry, 100% attendance and vaccination of teaching and non-teaching staff is mandatory. Besides, the schools will conduct curricular & extra-curricular activities including sports, physical training.

It will be mandatory to wear masks in classes, school buses and school vans while it has been exempted during sports and physical training. There will be recess as per pre-Covid timetable and students will be allowed to eat food.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra on Friday reported 973 new coronavirus cases including 62 Omicron infections, and 12 pandemic-related deaths, the state health department said.

The state's coronavirus caseload rose to



78,63,623, and death toll reached 1,43,687.

On Thursday, the state had recorded 1,182 new cases and 19 deaths. Of 62 new Omicron infections, 60 were from Pune city and two from the Pune rural area.

So far, 4,629 Omicron infections have been reported in the state, of which 4,456 patients have recovered.

Until now 9,382 samples have been sent for genome sequencing. Results 8,333 patients were received and 1,049 results were awaited.

There are now 8,668 active COVID-19 cases in

the states, lowest since December 25, 2021, when the active case tally stood at 9,102.

Mumbai on Friday recorded 128 new cases, while Pune reported 206 infections. Both the cities did not report any fatality.

Of the eight administrative circles (each circle comprising several districts), the Pune circle recorded 372 new cases, followed by Mumbai (243), Nashik (117), Nagpur (78), Akola (64), Aurangabad (44), Latur (28) and Kolhapur (27).

Of 12 fatalities, Pune and Mumbai circles recorded three fatalities each, Akola two, and Nashik, Kolhapur, Aurangabad and Latur circles one fatality each.

Nagpur region did not record any fatality. As many as 84,203 coronavirus tests were conducted since previous evening, taking the number of samples tested so far to 7,76,58,977.

At least 2,521 patients were discharged from hospitals or recovered from infection at home in the last 24 hours, taking the number of recovered patients to 77,07,254. The recovery rate in the state is 98.01 per cent. Currently 1,47,800 people are in home quarantine and 746 people are in institutional quarantine. Maharashtra's coronavirus figures: Total cases 78,63,623, New cases 973, New fatalities 12, Death toll 1,43,687, Total recoveries 77,07,254, Active cases 8,668, New tests: 84,203.

Women's groups, LGBTQ activists express concern on being clubbed together

"Including gay, bisexuals and trans men in the draft state policy and action plan for gender equality and women's empowerment 2022 sends out a signal that the government does not regard us as men," LGBTQIA activists have said.

Pune | Agencies

BOTH WOMEN'S groups and people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA) community have raised serious objections in the manner in which they have been clubbed together in the draft Maharashtra policy and action plan for gender equality and women's empowerment 2022. "Including gay, bisexuals and trans men in

the draft state policy and action plan for gender equality and women's empowerment 2022 sends out a signal that the government does not regard us as men," LGBTQIA activists have said.

Several women's activists have also objected to certain provisions of the draft policy which have not taken into consideration the issues that communities with diverse identities face. "This clubbing of groups without any consultation just indicates the lack of seriousness on the part of the government," said women's activists. The draft policy was released on February 4 and another translated version in Marathi was issued on February 7.

While feedback on the draft policy was called for within three days, activists are also upset at the "shoddy" manner in which the draft policy was translated from English to Marathi. Preeti Karmarkar, managing trustee, Nari Samata Manch and Medha Kale, trustee of Tathapi Trust, said that they will be sending

objections and suggestions on the draft policy to the government. The Manch and Trust are part of 'Stree Mukti Andolan Sampark Samiti', a 40-year-old network of secular and progressive organisations. "We strongly feel that issues and concerns of communities with diverse identities are different and deserve an independent policy instead of being clubbed together under women's empowerment," they said. The organisations have also asked for more time to review the policy. Kiran Moghe, state vice-president of Janwadi Mahila Sanghatana, said inclusion of LGBTQIA in the draft policy was like an "add on". "No serious thought (has been given) to their issues and rights and diverse nature of their selves and identities," said Moghe.

The Stree Sampark Mahila Samiti has, meanwhile, submitted a memorandum of demands to state WCD minister Yashomati Thakur, urging her to make necessary changes in the draft hire said.

MAHARASHTRA TO SET UP INDEPENDENT PANEL TO STUDY 'BACKWARDNESS OF MARATHA COMMUNITY'

The decision was taken at a meeting of the cabinet sub-committee of the Maratha Reservation held by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Almost nine months after the Supreme Court scrapped the Maratha quota, the Maharashtra government on Friday has taken the decision to set up an independent and dedicated backward class commission to study the backwardness of the Maratha community. The decision was taken at a meeting of the cabinet sub-committee of the Maratha Reservation held by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.



The Apex court had quashed Maratha quota in jobs and education in May last year stating that

the state did not have the powers to provide such reservation and that the provision crossed the 50

per cent reservation limit. Following the state government's demands, the Centre has made the amendments in the law and given powers to the state to provide reservation to the backward classes in the states, said an official.

However, the government has decided that the Maharashtra State Backward Classes Commission, set up under the chairmanship of retired Judge Anand Nirduge, would handle only the OBC reservation and related matters as per the SC order. The official further said that the government had made repeated requests to the Centre to take measures to relax the 50 per cent reservation limit but there has been no response by the latter so far. "So, the government has now decided to set up the backward class commission dedicated only for the Maratha community. It

will study the lacunas of the previous studies carried out to provide Maratha reservation and will also consider the judgements of the Apex court," said an official adding that the top court did not accept the previous report of a backward class commission headed by justice (retired) MG Gaikwad. Sources said that various decisions were taken after discussing the existing status of the decisions taken regarding the Maratha community and considering the demands of the community. Some of these decisions include appointing a joint secretary-level officer for coordination and implementation of the decisions, filling up posts in government organisations related to the Maratha community and increasing the number of hostels for children belonging to the community.



KENDALL JENNER KEEPS A DIARY TO HELP HER MENTAL HEALTH

Los Angeles | Agencies

Supermodel Kendall Jenner keeps an "old-fashioned diary" which she keeps locked to put all her thoughts in as it helps to ease her anxiety and panic attacks.

Kendall says having a safe space for her thoughts and fears and somewhere to "let out your happiness" is important for her mental health, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

In an interview with the new issue of i-D Magazine, she said: "It's important to have a space that's just for you where you can let out your happiness, your anger, frustrations, and stress, the things that are freaking you out, the things that are making you happy and even just ideas."

"It's like an old-fashioned diary."

"It has a lock on it and I hide it, I lock it away: mine is so, so secretive. I'm like, 'No one can ever get this.'"

Revealing that she believes in manifesting things into being and writing them into existence, the Estee Lauder brand ambassador, whose mother is Kris Jenner, added: "Our minds are extremely powerful."

Kendall is also a keen reader and she finds that losing herself in a good book helps stop her panic attacks and keep her calm.

The supermodel, who is currently reading the romance novel 'It Ends with Us' by Colleen Hoover, said: "I was having a panic attack two nights ago, and I was just like, 'Oh, but you know what? I'm just going to pick up this book and try to forget.'"

"It's a great form of therapy and form of distraction. I just love having things that are for me and no one else, you know? I feel like reading is one of those things."



HISTORICAL DRAMA 'OUTLANDER' KICKS OFF ITS PREQUEL

Los Angeles | Agencies

With Season 6 of 'Outlander' scheduled to release on March 6 and the seventh season already getting a nod for production, a prequel to the historical drama series is currently in works at a leading television network with Matthew B. Roberts set to write and executive produce the prequel, reports 'Variety'.

'Outlander' is based on the ongoing novel series of the same name by Diana Gabaldon, who recently teased in a Facebook post about working on a prequel novel about Ellen MacKenzie and Brian Fraser, the parents of Jamie Fraser - the main character from 'Outlander'. Currently, a writers' room is being assembled for the project which is set to begin work in the coming weeks.

According to 'Variety', the exact plot details with regards to the prequel and its focal point haven't been revealed yet. Ronald D. Moore, who developed 'Outlander' for television, will also executive produce along with Maril Davis under their Tall Ship Productions banner.

The series remains one of the premium cable's most popular shows. As with 'Outlander', Sony Pictures Television will be the studio.



UKRAINE - RUSSIA WAR

PRIYANKA CHOPRA URGES PEOPLE TO HELP

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who was appointed the UN Goodwill Ambassador in 2016, has strongly reacted to the crisis which is currently unfolding in Ukraine following the military attack launched by Russia. Terming the situation as "terrifying", she has urged people on behalf of Unicef to provide aid to Ukraine. The actress shared a video of a news coverage on the situation in Ukraine, which is getting battered with Russian bombing on their military bases.

The bombing has created widespread panic among the Ukrainians, who have turned subway stations into underground bunkers to stay safe during the ongoing skirmish.

Priyanka wrote in the caption, "The situation unfolding in Ukraine is terrifying. Innocent people living in fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones, while trying to navigate the uncertainty of the immediate future."

She further wrote, "It's difficult to comprehend how in the modern world this could escalate to such a catastrophic point, but this is a consequential moment that will reverberate around the world."

Urging people to lend a helping hand, she wrote, "There are innocent lives living in this war zone. They are just like you and me. Here is more info at the link in my bio about how to assist the people of Ukraine."

NAACP IMAGE AWARDS

DANIEL KALUUYA, REGINA KING, MARY BLIGE AMONG WINNERS

Los Angeles | Agencies

As the final night of the NAACP Image Awards unfolded, Daniel Kaluuya, Regina King and Mary J. Blige and more clinched acting awards. While Kaluuya's work as Fred Hampton in 'Judas and the Black Messiah' won him the outstanding supporting actor in a motion picture, King took home the actress award in the same category for playing Trudy Smith in 'The Harder They Fall', reports 'Variety'. Blige, who delivered an exceptional halftime show performance at the Super Bowl on February 13, bagged the supporting actress in a drama series for her performance in 'Power Book II: Ghost'. According to 'Variety', the drama series 'Colin in Black & White', which presents a dramatized version of teenage years of athlete Colin Kaepernick's life, was presented with outstanding television movie, limited series or dramatic special, another series 'Queen Sugar' won the honour for drama series. For the films, 'CODA' was awarded for independent motion picture, best documentary went to 'Barbara Lee: Speaking Truth to Power'. 'Encanto' claimed the honor for animated motion picture. Other winners on Friday night included Kevin Hart, Taraji P. Henson, Courtney B. Vance, Regina Hall, Miles Brown, Deon Cole, Natasha Rothwell, Cliff 'Method Man' Smith and Angel Kristi Williams. The NAACP Image Awards comprised five virtual ceremonies starting February 21 leading up to the live telecast.



Steven Spielberg developing original Frank 'Bullitt' movie

Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker Steven Spielberg

is developing an original feature film based on the character of Frank Bullitt, the San Francisco cop first played by Steve McQueen in the 1968 thriller 'Bullitt'. Josh Singer is set to write the screenplay, with regular Spielberg collaborator Kristie Macosko Krieger on board to produce with the director, reports variety.com.

McQueen's son Chad McQueen and granddaughter Molly McQueen are executive producing after a lengthy negotia-

tion process with the McQueen estate to secure the rights to the character.

Warner Bros., which released the 1968 'Bullitt', will be the studio for Spielberg's new film, which is not a remake, but an original story about the character, arguably McQueen's most iconic role. The 1968 'Bullitt', based on the 1963 novel 'Mute Witness', follows Bullitt's investigation into the death of a mob informant that he was tasked with protecting.

Directed by Peter Yates, 'Bullitt' features one of the most memorable car chases in movie history with McQueen famously doing all of his own driving in a modified Ford Mustang.

The film won the Oscar for editing and was also nominated for sound.

Andy Serkis: 'Alfred was inspired by my father'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Andy Serkis says that his portrayal of Alfred Pennyworth in 'The Batman' was influenced by his relationship with his father.

Serkis told The i newspaper: "Our relationship tends to revolve around personal matters, a lot of conversations about fatherhood. That is very much a part of what we were exploring with our version of Alfred. It was a truth that we both kind of understand."

"My relationship with my father was strange because he was away for such a long time."

The 'Lord of the Rings' actor also explained that his version of Alfred - a former special forces soldier - is based on "a number of different people who had worked as close protection officers for the Royal Family".

Serkis said: "He's a man with logic, rules and stature at the core of his personality - and he's living with (a young Batman) who is the antithesis of that, and having to deal with this angst-ridden, emo energy." Serkis is renowned for his work in the field of performance capture and he is adamant that the CGI technique is no different to regular acting, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

He said: "I've never drawn any distinction between the process of acting and the truth of acting, whether it's using performance capture or being on screen in my own skin. For me they're identical. I think most people get that now."

Serkis has also directed projects such as 'Venom: Let There Be Carnage' but says he will always find time to perform in front of the camera.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Emma Hernan



2ND
T20I

India beat Sri Lanka by 7 wickets, take unassailable 2-0 series lead

Dharamsala | Agencies

Riding on explosive knocks from Shreyas Iyer (74 not out off 44), Ravindra Jadeja (45 not out off 18) and Sanju Samson (39 off 25), India thrashed Sri Lanka by seven wickets in the second T20I, to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series, at the picturesque HPCA Stadium, here on Saturday.

With this win, India also extended their winning run in T20I cricket to 11 matches, a streak that began at last year's T20 World Cup.

Put in to bat first, a fighting knock from Pathum Nissanka (75 off 53) and an attacking cameo by Dasun Shanaka (47 not out off 19) propelled Sri Lanka to 183-5 in 20 overs. Apart from Nissanka and Shanaka, Danushka Gunathilaka also played a vital knock (38 off 29) for the visitors.

Chasing a challenging total, India were off to a poor start as Dushmantha Chameera dismissed Rohit Sharma in the very first over of the innings. Shreyas Iyer then



joined the previous game's half-century Ishan Kishan at the crease.

Sri Lanka rattled India with pace in the powerplay as Chameera and Lahiru Kumara were consistently hitting speeds of 140-plus. The duo targeted Ishan with short balls and the wicket-keeper batter struggled during his short innings before getting out for 16 from 15 balls, leaving India struggling at 44/2.

After losing both openers inside

the powerplay, India were in a spot of bother but Shreyas Iyer played a counter-attacking knock. The stylish batter broke through India's dry spell after Ishan's wicket with a couple of straight sixes against the left-arm spin of Praveen Jayawickrama and looked like he was batting on a totally different pitch than what Sanju Samson seemed to be on.

Samson (39 off 26), who was playing his first international game in seven months, was struggling for

timing. After taking his sweet time to settle down, Samson changed the momentum of the chase with a 23-run over against Lahiru Kumara, with a boundary and three sixes before being caught one-handed at slip by Fernando in the same over (13th). Thereafter, Ravindra Jadeja came to bat and he didn't waste a delivery at the crease literally, getting off the mark with a boundary of his first ball. He then tore into Chameera in the 16th over, hitting a maximum and three boundaries to really hasten India towards victory.

In the end, India made short work of a target of 184 as Shreyas Iyer sparked with an innings of 74 not out off 44 balls while Ravindra Jadeja played an attacking cameo (45 not out off 18), taking the hosts home with 2.5 overs to spare.

Brief scores

Sri Lanka 183-5 in 20 overs (Pathum Nissanka 75, Dasun Shanaka 47 not out; Jasprit Bumrah 1/24) lost to India (Shreyas Iyer 74 not out, Ravindra Jadeja 45 not out; Lahiru Kumara 2/31) by 7 wickets

HOCKEY PRO LEAGUE

India women fight back to beat Spain 2-1

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Forward Jyoti and substitute Neha scored a goal apiece as the Indian women's team came back from a goal deficit to beat Spain 2-1 in the FIH Hockey Pro League here on Saturday.

The Indian women, who had started their Pro League campaign with 7-1 and 2-1 wins against China, went behind against the higher-ranked Spain in the 18th minute when Marta Segu scored in the 18th minute.

India had done better than Spain in the Tokyo Olympics as they reached the semi-finals and eventually finished fourth. Spain lost to eventual bronze medallist Great Britain in a shoot-out in the quarter-finals.



Spain, who are ranked sixth, three spots ahead of India in the FIH Rankings, had lost to World and Olympic Champions the Netherlands 1-0 in the first match and held them 2-2

before losing 3-2 in a shoot-out in the second, started well but the hosts soon fought back into the match. Jyoti made it 1-1 for the hosts within two minutes as the Indians got into the rhythm. The teams were locked 1-1 at half-time.

The two teams made some good efforts in the third quar-

ter but could not find a goal. The Indians finally sealed victory in the 52nd minute to seal full points against Spain.

This was India's third successive victory in Hockey Pro League and the hosts will be hoping to maintain the momentum in their second encounter with Spain on Sunday.

POLAND REFUSES TO PLAY FIFA WORLD CUP QUALIFIER AGAINST RUSSIA

Warsaw: Zesary Kulesza, the President of the Polish Football Association, announced on Saturday that the Poland side will not play their FIFA World Cup qualifier match against Russia, scheduled for March 24, due to its invasion of Ukraine.



Kulesza, through the announcement on Twitter, also indicated that Poland is in talks with Sweden and the Czech Republic to present a unified position to FIFA. On Thursday, Russia invaded Ukraine after president Vladimir Putin announced a 'special military operation' in the country, resulting in widespread condemnation of his actions by prominent leaders in the world. The invasion has resulted in many people leaving cities, including capital Kyiv and major sporting events to be held in or against Russia getting cancelled.

"No more words, time to act! Due to the escalation of the aggression of the Russian Federation towards Ukraine the Polish national team does not intend to play the play-off match against Russia. We are in talks with Sweden (flag) and Czech Republic (flag) federations to bring forward a joint statement to FIFA," wrote Kulesza.

Rally of Coimbatore: Kadur takes overall lead; Gill retires with electrical issues

Coimbatore | Agencies

Gaurav Gill, the seven-time national champion, was forced to pull out due to an electrical issue with his car when he was ahead by 49 seconds in the Rally of Coimbatore, the first round of the FMSCI Indian National Rally Championship 2021, here on Saturday.

With Gill out of the way, Bengaluru's Karma Kadur and co-driver Nikhil Pai (Arka Motorsports) took the overall lead on a day of shock exits. Driving a Volkswagen Polo, Kadur enjoyed a lead of over one minute in the Overall standings after four loops of the extremely dusty Special Stages ahead of Himachal Pradesh's Aditya Thakur (Virender Kashyap) and Mangaluru's Dean



Mascarenhas (Gagan Karumbaiah) who, however, is placed first in INRC-2 category. Thakur leads the INRC-3 class at the end of Leg-1.

The Rally, organised by Coimbatore Auto Sports Club, will conclude on Sunday when the two physical Special Stages will be run

twice in the reverse order. The scheduled start is at 8:48 am. This morning, 7-times National champion Gaurav Gill (co-driver Musa Sherif) packed up after SS-2 due to an electrical issue with their Mahindra XUV 300 and when he was ahead by 49 seconds. Also to retire was 2019 champion Chetan Shivram (Dilip Sharan) from Bengaluru with a broken drive-shaft in SS-1. Both Gill and Shivram, however, will rejoin the rally on Sunday in a bid to secure Leg points.

Kadur, despite nil seat time, showed tremendous pace. "I made some mistakes with the set-up for the first loop, but otherwise, enjoyed a good run despite not having any seat time in the car ahead of the rally," Kadur was quoted as saying by the organisers.

YOU WILL SEE THE BEST OF ELLYSE PERRY AT WORLD CUP: BEN SAWYER

Christchurch: Australia bowling coach Ben Sawyer believes that the world will get to see the best of all-rounder Ellyse Perry with the ball in the upcoming ICC Women's Cricket World Cup. Ellyse, one of the most prominent women cricketers in the world, took nearly two years to get back to her best self after a surgery on her injured hamstring ruled her out of the triumphant women's T20 World Cup campaign in 2020 at home. Glimpses of her coming back to her best abilities came during the second ODI of women's Ashes, where Ellyse took 3/12 in seven overs to bowl out England for 129 and then made 40 with the bat to help Australia clinch the series. Ahead of Australia's warm-up match against the West Indies at Lincoln, Sawyer can feel strongly about Ellyse's good showing with the ball in the tournament. "One hundred per cent, you watch her, she's one of the most competitive players I've seen. She practices really hard, you'll see the best of her. She'll build up again. Having a number of games at the World Cup I think you'll see the best of her," Sawyer was quoted as saying by The Sydney Morning Herald. Sawyer also felt that Ellyse's show with the ball has improved since the pink-ball Test against India at Gold Coast last year. "After the Indian Test match we played she bowled a lot better. With the Ashes and the big spell in the Test match there once she gets into bowling and gets lots of balls under her belt I think she's fantastic."



New Zealand in trouble vs SA despite de Grandhomme's unbeaten half-ton

Christchurch | Agencies

Fighting unbeaten half-century from Colin de Grandhomme in the final session on Day 2 helped New Zealand recover from the early blows to post 157/5, but they were still 207 runs behind South Africa's first-innings total of 364 on Saturday in the second Test at the Hagley Oval here.

Earlier, the Blackcaps' bowlers started the day on the front foot, exerting pressure and picking up four South African wickets in the opening session. Matt Henry continued his fine form from the first Test as the hosts picked up two crucial wickets early in the morning, dismissing Temba Bavuma (29) and Kyle Verreynne (4). Neil Wagner added three wickets to his tally after picking up wickets of Rassie van der Dussen



(35), Wiaan Mulder (14) and Kagiso Rabada (6), finishing his spell with a four-wicket haul. Keshav Maharaj and Marco Jansen built a strong 64-run partnership for the ninth wicket, before Kyle Jamieson finally got the breakthrough and wrapped up the South African innings at 364. The

New Zealand innings got off to the worst possible start as they lost captain Tom Latham (0) in the first over to Kasigo Rabada. The speedster struck once again as he clean bowled the other opener, Will Young (3). Devon Conway (16) was the next to depart to Marco Jansen, edging one to the wicketkeeper down the leg side. The tall seamer continued his good spell by picking up the crucial wicket of Henry Nicholls (39) who looked in good touch until he decided to cut one over gully but ended up finding the man halfway from the boundary at backward point. Rabada came back into the spell with the hosts reeling and ensured he put the icing on the cake with a brilliant fast bowling display which earned him his third wicket of the innings in the form of Tom Blundell (6). Coming in at 91/5, de Grandhomme picked up

the pieces and launched a counter-attack against the South African bowlers hitting seven boundaries and two sixes to bring up a 36-ball fifty. He slowed down a bit with the introduction of spin but finished the day with a healthy strike-rate of 88.52.

The visitors lead by 207 runs with Daryl Mitchell (29 not out) and de Grandhomme (54 not out) at the crease. New Zealand had won the opening Test at the same venue by an innings and 276 runs.

Brief scores

South Africa 364 in 133 overs (Dean Elgar 41, Sarel Erwee 108, Aiden Markram 42, Marco Jansen 37 not out, Keshav Maharaj 36; Matt Henry 3/90, Neil Wagner 4/102) vs New Zealand 157/5 in 45 overs (Colin de Grandhomme 54 not out; Kagiso Rabada 3/37, Marco Jansen 2/48).

Important to give everybody a go during practice games: Mithali Raj

Christchurch | Agencies

Confident India skipper Mithali Raj on Saturday stated the importance of giving all members in the squad game time during the warm-up matches of the Women's Cricket World Cup starting from Sunday. Ahead of their opening match in the World Cup against Pakistan on March 6, India will play two warm-up matches against South Africa and West Indies on Sunday and Tuesday respectively.

"I definitely know the combinations that I would field in the first couple of games at least. But I look forward to giving all the co-players game time and the opportunity of a practice game also to those players who I think will probably get an opportunity at some point during the World Cup. So, it's important to give everybody a go during the practice games," said Mithali during the captains' virtual media conference. Mithali, set to



make her sixth World Cup appearance, clarified that batter Harmanpreet Kaur will be the vice-captain in the tournament despite all-rounder Deepti Sharma doing those duties in the last two ODIs against New Zealand.

Norrie halts Tsitsipas' charge in Acapulco to enter final

Acapulco (Mexico) | Agencies

Great Britain's Cameron Norrie reached back-to-back ATP Tour finals, defeating Greece's world No. 4 Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-4 in a battle of in-form players at the Mexican Open here on Saturday (IST).

Braving the humid Acapulco weather, the 26-year-old British No. 1 won the semifinal contest in one hour, 18 minutes.

The world No. 12 Norrie, champion a week ago in Delray Beach, thus extended his win streak to eight straight matches. Tsitsipas, who was a finalist in Rotterdam earlier this month, had not dropped a set at the Mexican Open until his clash against Norrie. In each of the



two sets on Saturday, Norrie scored a break in the ninth game and then easily served it out.

The world No. 12 faced just one break point in the match, in the sixth game of the second set, but a Tsitsipas error ended the threat. Norrie made 92 per cent of his first serves in the opening set to keep the pressure off, but relied more on his baseline game behind a 57 per cent first-serve rate in the second set. Norrie now awaits the winner of the clash between soon-to-be world No. 1 Daniil Medvedev of Russia and 21-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal of Spain.

Norrie will be playing for his fourth ATP Tour title on Sunday (IST).

Fierce contest on cards as ATK Mohun Bagan, Bengaluru fight for semis spot

Fatorda (Goa) | Agencies

With the semi-final race reaching its final phase, a fierce contest will be on cards when arch-rivals ATK Mohun Bagan and Bengaluru FC face each other in a rescheduled 2021-22 Indian Super League (ISL) match at the PJN Stadium, here on Sunday.

ATKMB were halted in their tracks with two successive draws at a time when they were fighting for the League Shield, which now seems a distant dream. The Mariners have 31 points from 17 matches, four less than league leaders Hyderabad who have secured a semifinal spot, and three adrift of second-placed Jamshedpur FC who also have one foot in the knockout stages.



The green and maroons dropped points against Kerala Blasters and Odisha FC, losing their grip over the League Shield race but are very much



in the fray for a semi spot with three games in hand. For Bengaluru, the odds are heavily stacked against them. The Blues are placed sixth in

the table with 26 points from 18 matches. They not only have to win their last two fixtures in the league stage but also hope other results go in their favour to keep their slim semi hopes alive. "ATKMB are one of the best teams in the League. They have high-quality players, but we need to focus on ourselves. It's an important game, these 90 minutes. We beat Odisha, and Odisha drew with them so that shows how strong we are," said Bengaluru head coach Marco Pezzaioli. On player availability, he said: "Jayesh and Rohit are back in training and we also have Iman, Damait, along with some other offensive players who can play in the number 10 position. The players who step into Danish's position can do a good job and I am sure of it."



Huma Qureshi floored by love of Ajith fans

Team Absolute | Chennai

Actress Huma Qureshi, who plays the female lead in the just released Ajith-starrer 'Valimai', is overwhelmed by the love shown to her by Ajith's fans. The actress, who plays a cop in director H Vinoth's Valimai, has been garnering praises for her performance in the action entertainer. In particular, her action blocks have come in for praise. Pleased with the response to her performance, Huma Qureshi says: "I am literally amazed by the love and affection of enthusiastic Ajith fans. I want to extend my thanksgiving to Ajith Kumar fans".

"Working with Ajith sir has been a long-run dream that has come true now. I thank Ajith sir, producer Boney Kapoor, and director H Vinoth for gifting me this role, which had so much importance. It was an amazing experience overall, and shooting for this movie has endowed me with an everlasting positive vibe."

The actress, who made her debut in Tamil with the Rajinikanth-starrer 'Kaala', is currently working in various regional languages, including the movie 'Double XL' with Tamil actor Mahat Raghavendra.



HRITHIK GIVES SHOUTOUT TO RUMOURED GIRLFRIEND SABA AZAD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Hrithik Roshan recently took to his Instagram and gave a shoutout to his rumored girlfriend, Saba Azad. The shoutout came ahead of Saba's gig and it marks Hrithik's first post for her. The 'War' actor shared a picture of Saba Azad along with Nasseruddin Shah's son Imaad Shah. The two have an electro-funk band called Madboy/Mink. Hrithik wrote on the picture, "Kill it you guys".

The rumours of the two dating each other have been grabbing headlines of late. Earlier, Saba was also seen at a Hrithik's family lunch in a picture shared by Hrithik's uncle Rajesh Roshan. Captioning the picture, Rajesh Roshan had written, "Happiness is always around... Especially on a Sunday, specifically at lunchtime."

Hrithik was earlier married to Sussanne Khan, they're parents to



two sons, Hrehaan and Hridhaan. Sussanne had also attended Saba's gig sometime back. She posted Saba Azad's photo from the music event and wrote, "What an amazing evening. You are super cool and supremely talented."

Saba Azad expressed her gratitude towards Sussanne through

Instagram stories, where she wrote, "Thanks, my Suzie. So happy you were there last night."

Meanwhile, after a hiatus of two years, Hrithik will be next seen in the Hindi remake of the 2017 runaway Tamil success, 'Vikram Vedha' essaying the role of Vikram along with Saif Ali Khan, Radhika Apte and Rohit Saraf.

RAASHII KHANNA: WAS NERVOUS AT FIRST TO WORK WITH AJAY DEVGN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Rashii Khanna, who is all set to make her digital debut with 'Rudra - The Edge of Darkness', has talked about working with Bollywood star Ajay Devgn in the stories.

Raashii said: "To be honest, I was nervous at first to work with him. But when I met him, I realised how down to earth he is. It's very easy to have a conversation with him. And whatever little that I have pulled off playing this character is all thanks to him and my director. Ajay sir was very supportive and made me feel very comfortable."

"I wouldn't have been able to pull off certain scenes if it wasn't for his support, especially my introduction. He obviously is very experienced and I learnt a lot from him in terms of camera angles, playing out certain emotions, playing it natural and the list is very long!"

A remake of the successful British series Luther, 'Rudra - The Edge of Darkness' is an engaging and dark take on a cop's journey of uncovering truths and bringing victims justice.

It will see Ajay Devgn's titular character of an intuitive and instinctive police officer fighting for the truth in darkness as he wades through a grim and complex web of crimes and criminals and corruption with a wrathful, steely grit.

'Rudra - The Edge of Darkness' will be available exclusively on Disney+ Hotstar from March 4, 2022 in Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Bengali.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Taapsee Pannu talks about reuniting with filmmaker Anubhav Sinha for one of the short films which is part of his anthology movie.

Anubhav Sinha has brought together filmmakers Sudhir Mishra and Hansal Mehta for an anthology film with the pandemic as a backdrop. The film will be produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series and Sinha's production house Benaras Mediaworks. Taapsee shares her experience of working with Anubhav Sinha again after 'Thappaad' and 'Mulk' and also unveils the concept of the short film directed by Sudhir Mishra with pandemic as a backdrop.

Taapsee says: "The story is unique and never done before, it's a socio political drama that spans across two generations with the pandemic as the backdrop. I couldn't be more thrilled to be working with a brilliant filmmaker like Sudhir Sir who is so solid with his craft."

"And mostly it feels like homecoming working again with Anubhav Sir and Bhushan Sir. Anubhav Sir knows how to channel the best in me. Being surrounded by masterful filmmakers like these is a blessed experience," she adds.

Anubhav Sinha shares about the narrative of the film which is layered and focuses on human relationships. He is happy to work with Taapsee again and have all the words of appreciation for her.

"The narrative is a layered one talking about human relationships against the pandemic serving as a backdrop. I am so glad to be reuniting with Taapsee for this one! She is perceptive and brings her own to every character she plays. She is the kind of actor who infuses her roles with a lived-in experience, making the story even more relatable."

Director Sudhir Mishra throws light on his short film and reveals: "This is a film about the idea of being young, about how one generation passes the baton to the next. Personally, this is one of those stories for me which leaves an indelible mark on you and I couldn't have asked for a better team to bring it to life with."



Taapsee Pannu on working with Anubhav Sinha, Sudhir Mishra for upcoming anthology film

Samantha describes her fans as most loyal people in world

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu expressed her happiness over the completion of 12 years in the movie industry. As she thanked her fans, she calls them 'the most loyal fans in the world'. In a heartfelt note, the 'Shakuntalam' actress wrote on her social media profiles, "Today marks my 12th year in the Film Industry." "It's been 12 years of memories that revolve around Lights, Camera, action and incomparable moments. I am filled with gratitude for having had this blessed journey and the best, most loyal fans in the world", Samantha's note reads. Samantha Ruth Prabhu made her acting debut in 2010 with Gautham Vasudev Menon's Telugu film 'Ye Maaya Chesave', in which

she starred opposite Naga Chaitanya Akkineni.

Samantha's filmography includes super hit movies from Telugu and Tamil languages. 'Atharintiki Daaredi', 'Seethamma Vakiltu Sirimalle Chettu', 'Manam', 'Aa aa', 'Eega', 'Oh Baby', 'Majili' and others are among Samantha's super hit movies in Telugu.

Her appearance in 'Theri', 'Mersal', and other Tamil movies brought much craze for her in Tamil as well.

Samantha's OTT debut with Manoj Bajpayee in 'The Family Man' series, brought huge critical acclaim.

Her last appearance in Allu Arjun's blockbuster pan-India movie 'Pushpa', in a special song 'Oo Antava' made her one of the most happening actresses in India.



DHARMENDRA: 'LATA JI WAS ALWAYS A PHONE CALL AWAY FOR ME'

Mumbai: Bollywood's 'He-Man' Dharmendra reveals about his emotional connection with legendary singer, the late Lata Mangeshkar, on singing reality show 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa'.

He is appearing as a celebrity guest on the show. The soulful rendition of 'Agar Mujhse Mohabbat Hai' and 'Chalo Sajna, Jahan Tak Ghata Chale' left Dharmendra mesmerised and made him reminisce about late Lata Mangeshkar's singing. He talked about how he and Lata Di have always shared an emotional connection and she was always a phone call away from him. He further recalled that the late singer would always make it a point to send him gifts. She shared motivating messages with him and always asked him to "remain strong." Once Dharmendra had written a rather gloomy post on Twitter. Soon Lata Mangeshkar called him up and spoke to him for 30 minutes only to cheer him up. Reminiscing about the late Lata Di, Dharmendra mentioned: "I am fortunate enough that legendary singer like Lata ji was always a phone call away from me and whenever she found my tweet or Instagram posts sad, she used to call me up and sing for me to lighten up my mood. But it breaks my heart today that she is unfortunately not between us anymore."



Vedhika