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NEARLY 5,000 CASES PENDING AGAINST MPS, MLAS, UP TOPS LIST WITH 1,339, SC TOLD

TAINTED RULERS

According to the report, which provided state-wise data on cases, Uttar Pradesh topped the list with 1,339 cases pending for final disposal as on December 1, 2021, whereas in December 2018, 992 cases were pending, and in October 2020, 1,374 cases were pending. Therefore, data reveals that only few cases were disposed of between October 2020 and December 1, 2021. As on December 4, 2018, UP disposed of 435 cases -- 364 by sessions court and 71 by magistrates.

IN 2018, THE APEX COURT ISSUED THE DIRECTIVE TO SET UP SPECIAL COURTS TO EXPEDITE TRIALS OF CASES AGAINST MPS AND MLAS AND SINCE THEN, IT HAS ISSUED MANY DIRECTIONS, INCLUDING ASKING THE CENTRE TO SET UP A MONITORING COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE REASONS FOR DELAY OF INVESTIGATION IN CASES.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court has been informed that cases pending against sitting and former MP/MLAs increased from 4,110 in December 2018 to 4,984 in December 2021.

A report submitted by amicus curiae, senior advocate Vijay Hansaria said: "Some of these cases were pending for more than three decades. 2,324 cases were against sitting legislators, and 1,675 cases were against former legislators. In 1,991 cases, even charges were not framed. 264 cases were pending due to stay granted by the High Courts."

The amicus filed the report in a case connected with the expeditious trial of MPs and MLAs.

In Bihar, in December 2018, there were 304 cases pending, which rose to 557 in October 2020, and then 571 in December 2021. Out of 571 cases, 341 cases are pending before magistrate courts and 68 cases before sessions judges. The report, which was submitted in the top court on Thursday, added: "It is submitted that despite a series of directions by this Hon'ble Court and continuous monitoring, as many as 4,984 cases are pending out of which 1,899 cases are more than 5 years old. It may be noted that the total number of cases pending as on December 2018 were 4,110, and as on October 2020 were 4,859. Even after disposal of 2,775

YOGI HAS NO CRIMINAL CASE, ASSETS ROSE BY RS 59L IN FOUR YEARS

Gorakhpur: There are no criminal cases against Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. In his affidavit filed with his nomination for the Gorakhpur Assembly seat on Friday, the chief minister has said that there is not a single criminal case against him. It is noteworthy that the opposition has been repeatedly accusing the chief minister of having criminal antecedents. Meanwhile, the assets of Yogi Adityanath, have increased by about Rs 59 lakh in the last four years. At the time of being elected as MLC in 2017, his assets were Rs 95.98 lakh, which have now increased to Rs 1,54,94,000. He has Rs one lakh cash in hand.

cases after December 4, 2018, the cases against MPs/MLAs have increased from 4,122 to 4,984."

Citing the volume of cases against the lawmakers, the report said: "This shows that more and more persons with criminal antecedents are occupying the seats in the Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies. It is of utmost necessity that urgent and stringent steps are taken for expeditious disposal of pending criminal cases."

The report added that the Centre hasn't provided any suggestions after the court's order in August last year regarding the setting up of a monitoring committee to evaluate the reasons for delay in investigation.

AKHILESH, JAYANT CHAUDHARY BOOKED FOR VIOLATING COVID NORMS DURING CAMPAIGNING

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh police has filed an FIR against Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav, Rashtriya Lok Dal president Jayant Chaudhary, and about 400 others for allegedly violating COVID-19 norms during an election campaigning in Dadri on Thursday ahead of Assembly polls. The case has also been filed against SP's Dadri candidate Rajkumar Bhati, SP's Gautam Buddha Nagar chief Indra Pradhan among others. "A case filed against SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary, SP's Dadri candidate Rajkumar Bhati, SP's Gautam Buddha Nagar chief Indra Pradhan, and 300-400 others, for violating COVID-19 and Election Commission of India's (ECI) guidelines during a campaign in Dadri on February 3," Gautam Buddha Nagar Police said.

Army to deploy K-9 howitzers in central, eastern sectors of LAC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Having successfully deployed and tested the K-9 Vajra

Howitzers in the Ladakh sector, the Indian Army is now planning to deploy K-9 Vajra howitzers in the high altitude mountains in the central and eastern sector of the line of actual control with China.

The Indian Army had deployed the made in India guns in Ladakh in the March-April timeframe last year along with the Eastern Ladakh sector and have been found to be very effective in those areas where they can move at high speeds and reach the frontline areas quickly. "The trials of the guns

have been very successful and now the plan is to order 200 more of these howitzers and deploy them in the high altitude mountainous region in the central sector including Uttarakhand and eastern sector including Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh in areas where armoured vehicles can be moved swiftly," government sources said.

The performance of the howitzer has been very good and fulfils the requirements of the Indian Army in high altitude areas, they said. Recently, Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane had told media that the guns acquired for deployment in deserts and plains were put in the modifications with some

modifications in view of the Conflict with China.

The regiments in Ladakh have built special tents and facilities to operate the howitzers in extreme winters conditions.

General Naravane has been monitoring the induction and operations of the howitzers produced in the Larsen and Toubro facility in Hazira near Surat in Gujarat. The self-propelled guns have a range of 38 kilometres but they have been successfully hitting targets at 50 kilometres in the mountains up to 16,000 feet altitude in Eastern Ladakh.



COMMITTEE ON MSP AFTER ASSEMBLY POLLS: GOVERNMENT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Kailash Choudhary on Friday said that the Government is committed to setting up a committee to examine and provide legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) once the Assembly elections in five states are over.

Responding to a question by Samajwadi Party Member Sukhram Yadav in the Rajya Sabha, the Minister said that the details of the proposed committee will be divulged once the government gets the Election Commission's approval. "As the Model Code of Conduct is in place in many states across



the country ahead of the 2022 Assembly elections, the government has not announced the details of the committee," Choudhary said.

Later, Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar further said: "As the Prime Minister had announced we are committed to the issue of MSP. We were to form a Committee for fixing the MSP, but schedules for Assembly elections were announced." He also informed the House that the Agriculture Ministry had written to the Election Commission seeking its permission. Responding to the request, the EC said that the Ministry should wait for the elections before setting up the Committee.

GOVT LIMITS EDIBLE OIL STOCKS TO COOL PRICE RISE

FOR EDIBLE OILSEEDS, THE STOCK LIMIT WOULD BE 100 QUINTALS FOR RETAILERS, 2,000 QUINTALS FOR WHOLESALERS.

PROCESSORS OF EDIBLE OILSEEDS WOULD BE ABLE TO STOCK 90 DAYS OF PRODUCTION OF EDIBLE OILS AS PER DAILY INPUT PRODUCTION CAPACITY.

EXPORTERS AND IMPORTERS HAVE BEEN KEPT OUTSIDE THE PURVIEW OF THIS ORDER WITH SOME CAVEATS, THE MINISTRY SAID.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution said on Friday it has imposed a stock limit on edible oils and oilseeds upto June 30, 2022, with an objective to 'cool down' the prices of edible oil in the country. "In an effort to further cool down the prices of edible oils, the government has taken various steps, latest being an order notified by the government on 3rd February 2022 specifying the stock limit quantities on edible oils and oilseeds upto 30th June, 2022,"



the ministry said in a statement. For edible oils, the stock limit would be 30 quintals for retailers, 500 quintals for wholesalers, 30 quintals for retail outlets of bulk consumers ie, big chain retailers and shops and 1,000 quintals for its depots. Processors of edible oils would be able to stock 90 days of their storage capacities.

I don't want Z category security cover: Owaisi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Hyderabad MP and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Friday rejected the Z category security provided to him earlier in the day, a day after shots were fired at his car when he was returning to the national capital after campaigning for the UP Assembly polls in Meerut.

According to the police, two youth have been arrested for their involvement in the firing incident that took place in Kithoudh area in Meerut on Thursday. Earlier during the Question Hour, Owaisi first thanked Speaker Om

"I don't want Z category security, as I don't want to lead a life in suffocation as I always want to be with the poor and deprived people of this country and my constituency. I urge the government to work for deradicalising such youth who opened fire on my vehicle on Thursday,"



Birla for showing concern over Friday's firing incident and for directing the concerned officials to ensure the safety of a sitting member of the Parliament.

However, Owaisi then declined to accept the Z category security cover ordered by the government for his personal security.

JIO PLATFORMS INVESTS \$15 MN IN AI, VR STARTUP TWO PLATFORMS

New Delhi: Jio Platforms announced on Friday that it has invested \$15 million in Two Platforms (TWO) for a 25 per cent equity stake. The startup -- Two Platforms -- is an Artificial Reality company focusing on building interactive and immersive AI experiences. Notably, TWO's Artificial Reality platform enables real-time AI voice and video calls, digital humans, immersive spaces and lifelike gaming. The startup brings interactive AI technologies first to consumer applications followed by entertainment and gaming, as well as enterprise solutions, including retail, services, education, health and wellness. In a statement, Jio said that Two Platforms will work collaboratively with Jio to fast-track the adoption of new technologies and build disruptive technologies such as AI, metaverse, and mixed realities.

'Will replicate Chhattisgarh's Nyay financial dole scheme in Goa'

Team Absolute | Panaji

The Congress will introduce the populist 'Nyay' scheme implemented by the party's Chhattisgarh government in Goa if the party comes to power, which will provide a dole of Rs 6,000 for every economically backward family in the coastal state, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Friday.

Addressing a party rally, Rahul Gandhi also said that the party would not allow Goa to become a hub for coal transportation if the Congress comes to power following the February 14 assembly polls.

"We are taking a historic decision in Goa. Some days



back, I was in Chhattisgarh, we have started it there and we will also start a new scheme for the poor in Goa. It is the Nyay scheme. Every month, Rs 6,000 (Rs 72,000 annually) will be given to the poorest people in Goa right into their bank accounts. The money will be deposited every month irrespective of storm, wind, corona, anything calamity," Rahul Gandhi said.

INDIAN SCIENTISTS DEVELOP SELF-DISINFECTING, ANTI-VIRAL FACE MASK

This face mask was developed by scientists at the International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI), an autonomous R&D Centre of Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, in collaboration with the Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology (CSIR-CCMB) and Resil Chemicals, a Bengaluru based company.

THE BIODEGRADABLE, HIGHLY BREATHABLE AND WASHABLE MASK EXHIBITS HIGH PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE COVID-19 VIRUS AS WELL AS SEVERAL OTHER VIRAL AND BACTERIAL INFECTIONS.

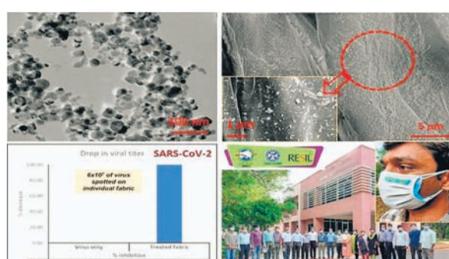
PUBLIC MASK WEARING IS MOST EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS COVID-19 CAUSED BY SARS-COV-2, AN ENVELOPED POSITIVE SENSE SINGLE-STRANDED RNA VIRUS, WHERE THE MODE OF TRANSMISSION IS VIA RESPIRATORY PARTICLES THAT ARE MAINLY AIRBORNE.

A uniform layer of this nano-coating on the cotton fabric with good adhesion was achieved using a suitable binder. The coated fabric exhibited an efficacy of more than 99.9 per cent against bacteria. CSIR-CCMB tested the efficacy of this fabric against SARS-CoV-2 for their disinfection properties and reported 99.9 per cent disinfection, as evident from the standard results.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A team of Indian scientists in collaboration with an industry partner has developed a self-disinfecting 'Copper-based Nanoparticle-coated Antiviral Face Mask' to fight against the Covid-19 pan-

dem. However, the Indian market is selling expensive masks that neither exhibit antiviral nor antibacterial properties, especially when people wear those and move about at densely populated places like hospitals, airports, stations, shopping malls and so on where the virus load is



very high. "In the present scenario, where mutations in coronavirus causing the COVID-19 pandemic are fast emerging, it is an urgent necessity to develop a low-cost antiviral mask. To this end, scientists have developed

the self-disinfecting 'Copper-based Nanoparticle-coated Antiviral Face Masks' under the Department of Science & Technology (DST) sponsored Nano-Mission project," a release from the Ministry of Science & Technology said on

Friday. ARCI developed copper-based nanoparticles of around 20 nanometres by a Flame Spray Pyrolysis (FSP) processing facility. FSP process involves conversion of solution precursors into nanopowders by high temperature pyrolytic decomposition. Stable nanoparticle suspension was obtained by optimizing the solid loading and pH. Prototype masks having different designs such as single layer and triple layers with nanoparticle coated fabric as outer layer have been demonstrated. A single layer mask is especially useful as a protective antiviral outer mask over a regular mask, the release said.



'I LOVE HIJAB' MOVEMENT IN K'TAKA; BJP SAYS IT WON'T ALLOW TALIBANISATION

BENGALURU | Agencies

The hijab row in Karnataka is spreading fast to other districts of the state. Muslim students in Mysuru district started a "I love hijab" movement on Friday. The ruling BJP has declared that it won't let Talibanisation happen and told these students that if they want to attend classes they will have to shun the hijab.

Muslim students have started a 'I love hijab' movement in Mysuru city extending their support to the protest of students in Udupi district to wear a hijab and attend classes. The group of students gathered near the historical Bannimantap and staged a protest urging the government to allow students with hijab. The protestors held placards saying 'I love hijab' and later attended classes wearing a hijab.

The police intervened when Hindu students came to classes wearing saffron shawls in Ramdurg College of Belagavi in north Karnataka.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai held a meeting on the evolving situation in the state over the hijab row. Education Minister B.C. Nagesh and top officers of the education department attended the meeting and briefed Bommai on the issue.

Minister for Power, Kannada and Culture V. Sunil Kumar stated that he won't allow Talibanisation of Udupi district from where the hijab row started. "How can students from poor



backgrounds move the High Court? Who is behind them?" he questioned. Education Minister Nagesh after attending the

meeting with CM Bommai stated that if Muslim students want to study they have to come in uniform. He attacked Leader of Opposition Siddaramaiah for targeting the BJP over the hijab row that rules on uniform were framed in 2018 when he was the CM. "Do not destroy the education field in the state. The state would come out with a policy once the High Court decides the matter," he said. Home Minister Araga Jnanendra has stated that the government can't make rules as per the wishes of the Congress party. The concept of uniform has come from the time of the British. The Congress has divided the nation on the basis of religion for vote bank politics, he said.

Former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa stated that the ruling BJP is observing the developments and a suitable decision will be taken at a suitable time on the hijab row.

Former Minister from the Congress U.T. Khader warned the ruling BJP that if the students come out in the open, the government can't withstand it. Former Minister and senior Congress leader Satish Jarakiholi stated that there is a possibility of the hijab row escalating and spreading and the government must stop it. Another senior Congress leader B.Z. Zameer Ahmad Khan stated that he was pained to see the students denied entry into college and standing on the road in Kundapur for wearing a hijab. "It was wrong. The ruling BJP is behind this," he charged.

Punjab CM's nephew sent to ED custody till Feb 8

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Chandigarh

A court in Punjab's Jalandhar city on Friday sent Bhopinder Singh Honey, Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi's nephew, to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody till February 8 in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering case pertaining to illegal mining in Punjab.

The ED on late Thursday arrested him after over eight hours of questioning. He was summoned for the second time.

Honey was earlier summoned by the ED to join the investigation on January 23, but he skipped the first summon on health issues and did not join the investigation.

He informed the ED officials that he was Covid-19 positive and was unable to join the probe. On January 18, the ED had conducted raids at 10 locations, including Homeland Heights which is the residence of Honey.

The ED continued raiding at different places for two days and recovered incriminating documents. Honey was asked to appear before the ED's zonal office in Jalandhar. He had to record his statement in connection with the ongoing probe.

The ED officials had recorded the statement of Kudrat Deep Singh, the business partner of Honey. The ED official had said



that they seized incriminating documents pertaining to illegal sand mining, property transactions, cell phones, gold worth above Rs 21 lakh and a watch worth Rs 12 lakh and cash Rs 10 crore during the raid.

A source said that the documents recovered by them have confirmed that Kudrat Deep Singh was running two firms and Bhopinder Singh Honey was a joint director in them. As per sources, the firms are basically shell companies, but ED has found a lot of money transactions. One of the firms is Provider Overseas Consultancy Limited, which was incorporated in 2018 with 33.33 per cent equal shares.

ED attaches Rs 66 Cr assets in MLM scam

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets of Rs 66.30 crore under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) of Indusviva Health Sciences Private Limited, its chairman C.A. Anzar and others in a Rs 1,500 crore multi-level marketing (MLM) scam.

The accused Anzar and Abhilash Thomas were arrested by the ED on December 15 last year and are presently in judicial custody.

The financial fraud probe agency had initiated a money-laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by Gachibowli police station in Hyderabad.

It said that the accused company was into a multi-level marketing scam having illegal pyramid type structure and was working under the guise of Direct Selling Business.

"The accused company engaged a large number of distributors and did rigorous marketing about the commission schemes of the company stating that there is a great opportunity for quick and easy money by becoming a member and then in turn making further enrollments under one's downline on the right side and left side in a binary manner," said the ED.

In order to project their fraud pyramid scheme as a legitimate business, the accused introduced some

products which were by their own admission valued at only 20 per cent of the sale revenue and in reality were completely worthless. The membership fee paid by new clients used to pay commission to old clients. According to the ED, by giving false promises and inducements, the company enrolled around 10 lakh members and collected around Rs 1,500 crore since its inception.

During the investigation under PMLA, the ED noticed that C.A. Anzar, Chairman of Indusviva and Abhilash Thomas, CEO of Indusviva, diverted funds to the subsidiary company and their other related companies and to their personal accounts.

NO FLIGHTS AFTER 5 PM FROM SRINAGAR AIRPORT ON FRIDAYS, WEEKENDS



Srinagar: All flight operations to and from the Srinagar International Airport shall remain suspended after 5 p.m. on Friday, Saturday and Sunday during the months of February and March 2022. "We will be doing the polymer modified emulsion work on the entire runway during the months of February and March.

"This work is planned on all Fri, Sat, Sun from 5 pm to 6 pm. "We are ensuring that work is done only in night time so that there is minimum disruption of flights." No flights to operate at Srinagar airport after 5 pm on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays during the months of February and March to facilitate runway repair", officials said on Srinagar airport's Twitter handle.

K'taka couple seeks partners on social media, husband held

BENGALURU | Agencies

The Karnataka Police on Friday arrested a man on charges of going public with his wife on social media, seeking partners in Bengaluru.

The arrested person has been identified as Vinay Kumar, a salesman in an electric shop.

According to police, the accused Vinay Kumar had married his colleague after falling in love with her and the couple shared similar weird fantasies.

They also made money out of their obscene experiments and had opened accounts in all major social media handles, including Twitter and Facebook, the police said.

Srinath Mahadev Joshi, South East DCP, said that the couple used to put up messages on Twitter. When they were contacted, they would give an ID on



Telegram App for further communication. They would exchange messages with each other and come to an agreement. If they agreed, the accused would invite them home. The couple used to watch fan-

tasy videos and posted obscene photographs on Twitter handles.

"We have told the public on many occasions and public meetings not to put up nude photos and videos on social media handles. The action has been initiated in this connection," he said.

The couple has been booked under the IT Act.

After getting calls from the public over the lewd messages, the Cyber, Economics and Narcotics (CEN) police of South East Division had lodged a suo moto complaint against the couple and started investigating the matter.

The people had also tagged their posts to the Bengaluru Commissioner of Police and sought action. After finding the Twitter handle active near Singasandra, the police arrested the accused.

WOMAN LAWYER ACCUSES RJD LEADER, IAS OFFICER OF GANG-RAPING HER

PATNA | Agencies

A woman lawyer of Allahabad High Court, on Friday, threatened to immolate herself with her three-year-old son outside the Supreme Court if action is not taken against the two men, who allegedly gang-raped her for years.

The victim, Gayatri Singh claimed that she was sexually assaulted by RJD MLA Gulab Singh and senior IAS officer Sanjiv Hans, secretary in the energy department of Bihar government.

While interacting with mediapersons in Patna, the victim said that she came in contact with Gulab Singh, then sitting MLA of Jhanyhpur in February 2016, in a chamber of a senior lawyer of Patna High Court.

"Gulab Yadav called me to submit a job application in his official residence for a membership post in the state women commission in February 2016. When I went there, he took me inside the Bangalwad and raped me on gun point. When I retaliated and threatened to go to the police, he asked his aide Lalit to get vermilion and put it on my head and said that you are my wife," the victim said.

"After that incident, Gulab Yadav con-



vinced me that he would take divorce his first wife and marry me. He had also taken 7 to 8 months for divorce proceedings. I fell for his false promise," the victim said.

"In July 2016, Gulab Singh asked me to reach Westin hotel in Pune. When I went

there, Sanjiv Hans was already there. They offered soft drinks which I consumed and fell unconscious. When I gathered consciousness next morning, they showed me a video clip of them gang-raping me. They threatened to upload this video on social

networking platforms if I approached the police. On the basis of the video clip, they blackmailed me and gang-raped several times in the hotels of Delhi, Patna and other places," the victim said.

"Due to sexual assault, I conceived in 2017. They forced me to abort the child. I did the same in a nursing home in Allahabad. Even after the abortion, the exploitation continued. I became pregnant again in 2018. The duo again pressured me to abort the child which I refused. I realised that they were using me for sexual gratification," she said.

Gulab Singh threatened her with dire consequences saying that they both were powerful enough to influence police administration and judiciary if she went against them. They would prevent her from registering FIR or any other legal proceeding, she said.

"I gave birth to a baby boy in 2018. Now, I need his birth certificate for admission in school," she said.

When the lawyer contacted Gulab Singh, he said that he had already undergone vasectomy a few years ago. Hence, he would not have fathered the child. When she called Sanjiv Hans, he refused to take her calls, she said.

Akhilesh, Jayant and Priyanka greet each other during campaign



Team Absolute | New Delhi

A trail underway ahead of the high voltage Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav, RLD President Jayant Chaudhary and Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi came in front of each other in Bulandshahr. The three leaders showed friendly gesture and greeted each other with folded hands.

The event took place on Thursday, when the Priyanka Gandhi's convoy came in front of the 'Vijay Rath' cam-

paign bus of Akhilesh Yadav-Jayant Chaudhary'.

Akhilesh and Jayant were on the top of their 'Vijay Rath', while Priyanka was in an open van during road show at Nehru Chowk in Jahangirabad, Bulandshahr. The Congress leader waved hand and in response, the SP and the RLD leaders greeted her with folded hands and with smile on their faces. Elections in Uttar Pradesh will be held in seven phases between February 10 and March 7. The results will be out on March 10.

Lalu rules out stepping down as RJD President in Tejashwi's favour

RJD President Lalu Prasad Yadav on Friday sought to quash speculation that he would step down from the post and son Tejashwi Yadav could be the next party chief.

PATNA / New Delhi

Interacting with media persons in New Delhi, he said that those who are saying it, are absolutely fools and spreading lies in the media.

"There is no truth in it. We are not planning anything like this. It is a complete rumour spread in the media," Lalu Prasad said.

There were rumours within the party that Lalu Prasad may step down during the national Executive Committee meeting scheduled on February 10 and hand over the responsibility to Tejashwi Yadav as he is ill and reportedly unable to actively participate in the party's activities.

Tejashwi Yadav is Leader of opposition in Bihar Vidhan Sabha. Prasad's wife and former Chief Minister Rabri Devi is also against the move of him giving the top party post.

"There is no basis in giving the national President post of the party to Tejashwi Yadav so far. The party has not decided this," she said in Patna.



Sources have said that Tejashwi Yadav's elder sister Misa Bharti and elder brother Tej Pratap Yadav are also against any such move.

I FAVOURED MAHUA MOITRA, NEVER DISCOURAGED HER: RAMA DEVI

New Delhi: Lok Sabha MP Rama Devi, who drew the ire of Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra for "not letting her speak", said on Friday she never discouraged the Bengal parliamentarian, and had "just requested her to tone down".

MP Rama Devi, who presided over the Lok Sabha proceedings on Thursday in regular Speaker Om Birla's absence, was accused by Moitra of not letting her conclude her speech.

Moitra's fiery speech had been the talk of the day on Thursday.

Responding to the Bengal MP, Rama Devi said: "I just told her to speak in a soft tone, not to be so angry or aggressive while speaking in the Parliament. That is the established tradition of the House, and we all have been obeying it since decades, without raising any questions.

India rejects Tesla's call for tax benefits

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian government has turned down a demand of tech billionaire Elon Musk's electric vehicle (EV) company Tesla for tax breaks to import electric cars, saying rules already allow bringing in partially-built vehicles and assembling them locally at a lower levy, Bloomberg reported on Friday.

"We looked at whether the duties need to be re-jigged, but some domestic production is happening and some investments have come in with the current tariff structure," Vivek Johri, Chairman of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), was quoted as saying in an interview with Bloomberg.

"So, it is clear that this is not a hindrance," Johri added.

Government of India has encouraged Tesla to produce locally, while Musk wants India to lower taxes -- as high as 100 per cent on imported EVs -- to enable the company to first sell vehicles built elsewhere at competitive prices.

However, it levies import duties of



between 15 and 30 per cent on parts shipped for assembly in the nation.



WORK TO CHANGE THE FACE OF THE VILLAGE HAS TO BE DONE: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the Central and State Governments are working to change the face of the village. For easy availability of drinking water in the village, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given the gift of Jal Jeevan Mission, which is proving to be a boon especially for rural women. Work is being done on a war-footing by making single and group drinking water schemes in all rural areas of the state through the mission. Chief Minister Chouhan said that till now 100 percent houses of more than 4 thousand villages have been provided with tap water facility from the mission. Including these, till now more than 46 lakh families of the state have got tap water from the mission. Also, special attention has been paid to the purity of water.



Village Water and Sanitation Committee and rural women benefitted from the mission virtually participated in the program.

Chouhan was doing virtual dialogue with the residents of the villages benefitted from the Jal Jeevan Mission on Friday. Minister of State for Public Health Engineering Brijendra Singh Yadav, Additional Chief Secretary Public Health Engineering Malay Srivastava were present in this dialogue held at Kushabhau Thackeray Hall, Bhopal. MPs, MLAs, public representatives, members of

ment of drinking water from village to village, door to door is being done through Jal Jeevan Mission. He said that along with electricity, water, education, ration, treatment, self-employment, cleanliness is also our priority in the village. We are running these facilities provided by the government with public participation. Chouhan also appealed to the vil-

agers to stop wastage of water and electricity. Chouhan said that today in his interaction with the women of different rural areas, he was very happy to know that they know very well the importance of water coming from the tap in the house. No one can understand the importance of water more than her, because before the mission she used to walk more than 2 kms to fetch water. Now his problem has been solved. Seeing water coming from the tap in your house gives you a feeling of pleasant joy. Chouhan said that by the year 2024, water would be supplied through tap in all the villages of the state. With the availability of pure drinking water, people will get freedom from many diseases. Chouhan said that a provision of 45 thousand crores has been kept for ensuring easy availability of drinking water in every village through Jal Jeevan Mission. In this, 50 percent central share and 50 percent amount is being spent by the state government. So far, the work of operation and maintenance of more than 4 thousand villages in which the project has been implemented is being done by the Village Level Water and Sanitation Committee. During the interaction, Chouhan thanked all the committee members and appreciated the work being done by them.

Madhya Pradesh gov't plans to introduce 'happiness' subject in school syllabus

► IN 2016, MADHYA PRADESH BECAME THE FIRST STATE IN THE COUNTRY TO SET UP HAPPINESS DEPARTMENT.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government is considering to introduce 'happiness' as a subject in the syllabus of its high school and higher secondary school classes from the next academic session, an official said on Friday. A draft of the books on the subject for Classes 9 to 12 is almost ready, CEO of the Rajya Anand Sansthan (state happiness department), Akhilesh Argal, told PTI. In 2016, Madhya Pradesh became the first state in the country to set up happiness department.

"In November (last year), we gave a presentation on the subject to 80-odd teachers or trainers here. The following month, we interacted with 80 students from Classes 9 to 12 for five days

and discussed the happiness book draft. Their response to the subject was very encouraging," he said.

Argal said that the MP School Education Department, All India Council of Technical Education and others organisations are helping them on the project.

"After giving final touches to the books, they will be sent to the State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) for clearance," he said.

The subject will be mandatory for the students of all streams from Classes 9 to 12, he said, adding that MP would be possibly the first state in the country where this subject will be introduced in schools.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interaction with chief ministers from BJP-ruled states at Varanasi in December last year, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had given a presentation on the works initiated by the Rajya Anand Sansthan and the state's plan to introduce happiness as subject in school syllabus, Argal said.

Trees give the feeling of Family Members and Children: CM

■ Chouhan Planted Saptaparni and Karanj Saplings
■ Representatives of News Nation TV Channel and Saharsh Welfare Society accompanied during plantation

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan along with Harish Sharma, Mohammad Faizan and Vimlesh Sharma of Saharsh Culture and Welfare Society planted Saptaparni and Karanj saplings in Smart Garden on Friday. Nitendra

Sharma and Deepti Chaurasia of News Nation TV channel also participated in the plantation. Chouhan, in a discussion with the representatives of News Nation, said that while planting saplings for one year continuously, such a feeling has been created in the mind and heart that trees give the feeling of one's sons and family members. Seeing the trees and plants the same feeling of love, affection and fondness awakens as seeing the girls of Ladli Laxmi Yojana moving ahead in life.

Saharsh Culture and Welfare Society is working for theatre and social development. The organisation is equally active in the children's as well as the youth theatre and presents

an inquiring perspective on social burning issues through dance, music and plays. Through theatre, it makes continuous efforts for the education, art of the slum children and the development of human feelings to become an ideal citizen. The aim of the organisation is also that by saving the vanishing culture and art of the country, the promotion of folk, theatrical and classical art should be done at the village and tehsil level.

The Saptaparni sapling planted today is an ever-green medicinal tree, which has great importance in Ayurveda. Karanj plant is considered important in Ayurvedic medicine. Karanj plant is also used in religious works.

END THE BACKLOG OF EXAMINATIONS: GOVERNOR

Works of Medical Science University Jabalpur reviewed at Raj Bhavan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that the backlog of university examinations should be cleared soon. He said that the delay in the conduct of examinations and examination results affects the entire family including the student. Timely conduct of examinations is very important in the interest of the students. Patel was reviewing the works of Madhya Pradesh Medical Science University, Jabalpur.

Patel said that the conduct of examinations and timely declaration of results by the university determines the image of the university in the society. A positive atmosphere is created for the university. He said that along with the completion of the examination backlog, the upcoming examinations and their results should be announced on time. Proper preparations for this should be done from now on.

Additional Chief Secretary Health and Medical Education, Mohammad Suleman informed that effective efforts have been made to make the university management better. Out of 23 pending examinations, the results of 16 examinations have



been released by the university through centralized offline evaluation. Presently 14 examinations are under process. Their evaluation will be done manually and the result will be declared. He assured that the university arrangements are being made smooth by speedily ending the examination backlog.

Vice Chancellor B Chandrashekhar informed that all the pending mark sheets will be released by

the university in the month of February. By discontinuing the system of applying for degree certificates, arrangements have been made to give permanent degree certificates directly by the university. In the last 5 months, 10 thousand 896 provisional and permanent degree certificates have been issued. The work of affiliation of government colleges has been completed. Inspection work is being done for the affiliation of private colleges for the academic year 2020-21. All affiliation applications received for this period will be resolved by the end of the month. A new system of giving roll number and enrolment number to the students has been implemented. The University enrolment number will be available at the time of taking admission in the college. The roll number will be part of the enrolment number. To make university management end-to-end, arrangements are being made to conduct the work through single integrated software.

Principal Secretary to Governor DP Ahuja, Commissioner Medical Education Nishant Warudha, Registrar of the University Prabhat Budholia and Controller of Examinations Vrinda Saxena were present.

Cricket Association for the Blind MP Expresses Gratitude to CM

► IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THE INDIA-BANGLADESH INTERNATIONAL BLIND CRICKET MATCH WAS ORGANISED BY THE ASSOCIATION IN BHOPAL LAST MONTH.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The representatives of Cricket Association for the Blind MP presented a cricket bat to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at his residence office today as a mark of respect and gratitude. It is noteworthy that the India-Bangladesh International Blind Cricket Match was organised by the Association in



Bhopal last month. The association expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Chouhan for the cooperation and support extended by the state government in organising the international match.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that the efforts of the Association are like making the impossible possible. He said that blind cricket is played with a ball that produces sound. It is a pleasant surprise to see blind players bowling, fielding and batting on a sounding ball.

The President of the Association Raghavendra Sharma and international blind cricketer Sonu Golkar informed Chief Minister about the World Cup to be held in the country in November and the blind women's cricket being started by the organisation.

Vikram University Ujjain released the notice of PhD Entrance Examination-2022, exam will be held on 6th March

■ The subjects of engineering have also been included in the PhD entrance examination conducted by the university. It includes the subjects electronics engineering, electronics and communication, civil engineering, computer science, chemical and environmental engineering and electrical engineering.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The information of PhD Entrance Exam-2022 has been released by Vikram University Ujjain. There are 422 vacant seats in the entrance exam to be held on 6th March 2022. The exam will be held from 10 AM to 12:00 PM.

Eligible applicants for PhD entrance exam can apply by paying the fee by 22 February 2022 at the kiosk of MP Online. Applications will be accepted till February 28 with late fee. The application fee is Rs 2,000 and the late fee is Rs 500. Application form is available on MP Online website

www.mponlinevikram.gov.in.

The subjects of engineering have also been included in the PhD entrance examination conducted by the university. It includes the subjects electronics engineering, electronics and communication, civil engineering, computer science, chemical and environmental engineering and electrical engineering.

It is noteworthy that by signing an MoU between Vikram University's School of Engineering and Technology Institute and Government Engineering College, PhD in engineering was started in the university.

Efforts to Boost Harmony among All Sections Should Be Strengthened: Governor

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that to control crimes against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, harmony among all sections should be strengthened further. He said that Samsrta camps (harmony camps) should be organised on a large scale. Maintain lively dialogue with the citizens of the identified areas. Improvement in criminal thinking is essential for effective crime control efforts. Patel said this to the officials during the review of the Scheduled Castes, Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act.

Patel said that in order to strengthen the control system for offences under the Act, it is necessary that the guilty should be punished severely. Innocent should not be troubled. He said that there are strong traditions of harmony in the society. There is a need to further strengthen and propagate those good traditions. There are many such wards and villages where not a single crime is registered. Information regarding such villages should be given in Samsrta camp.

Governor said that for effective action under the Act, it is necessary to have compassion and sympathy for the victim in heart and mind. Works done with sensitivity always yield good results. He directed for continuous monitoring of the investigation works and review by doing intensive tours. He said that from the origin of the crime to the level of the court, the arrangements should be continu-



ously reviewed at all levels. If any deficiency or problem is found at any stage, it should be resolved immediately. Additional Chief Secretary Home Rajesh Rajora assured the Governor that effective action would be ensured as per his intention. Additional Director General of Police AJAK Rajesh Gupta informed about the innovations. He told that out of total 1,953 cases selected in the witness protection assistance programme, in 66 percent guilt has been proved. Financial assistance of Rs 100 crore 44 lakh has been given in 7,413 cases registered for scheduled castes and Rs 28 crore 80 lakh in 2,667 cases of scheduled tribes. Keeping in view the new amendments made in the Act, one video camera has been given to each Ajak police station. 700 police officers have been given training in 14 training camps at Ajak range level and 3,500 police officers in 60 training camps at district level in relation to sensitization, research and relief work etc.

CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan invites PM Modi for bhoomi-pujan of Ken-Betwa Link Project

► PM INVITED FOR DEDICATION OF MAHAKAL TEMPLE COMPLEX EXPANSION, INDORE'S WASTE TO WEALTH PROJECT, DEDICATION OF NUTRITIONAL FOOD PLANTS RUN BY WOMEN SELF-HELP GROUPS

► CM CHOUHAN APPRISES PM MODI ABOUT THE INNOVATIVE IDEA OF CELEBRATING BIRTHDAY OF VILLAGES

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi today and expressed his heartfelt thanks on behalf of the people of Madhya Pradesh for sanctioning funds for Ken-Betwa link project. He requested



Modi to attend the bhoomi-pujan of Ken-Betwa river project. After his meeting with the Prime Minister Modi, Chief Minister Chouhan told the media that he has invited Modi for the expansion of Mahakal temple complex in Ujjain and dedication of CNG making plant from wet waste under 'Waste to Wealth' and 7 nutritional food plants operated by women self-help groups in Indore. Chouhan said that an amount of

more than Rs 44 thousand crore has been approved for the interlinking of Ken and Betwa rivers in the budget this year. The dams that will be built by connecting these two rivers will irrigate about 10 lakh hectares of land and 50 lakh people will get drinking water. This will benefit the Bundelkhand region falling in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The people of Bundelkhand are happy with this decision of Modi.

Chouhan informed that the work of expansion of Shri Mahakal temple complex in Ujjain is nearing completion. The work will be completed by the end of April. Following the inspiration and mantra of Modi, a plant to make CNG from wet waste has been built in Indore under 'Waste to Wealth'. By this, CNG will be produced and 550 metric tonnes of waste will be disposed of.

Chouhan informed that earlier in the state, contractors used to do the work of preparing nutritious food. Now this work is being done by women self-help groups. For this, 7 nutrition food plants of Self Help Groups are being constructed. Prime Minister has been requested for the inauguration. Chouhan told the Prime Minister that villagers are being motivated to celebrate the birthday of the villages in rural areas of the state. The idea is that all the people of the village will gather together and celebrate the birthday of the village. All the people together will decide the action plan for the development of the village and make a strategy for its implementation.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Farmer are against BJP

The various farm unions, owing allegiance to the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) have issued an appeal to voters in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand to punish the BJP in the upcoming Assembly elections for "betraying" farmers. In the appeal, the SKM leaders said, "Mission UP would be carried out against the BJP, not in favour of any other party. Bhartiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait said that this anti-farmer BJP government needs to be punished in the elections, listing the Centre's failure to pay minimum support prices (MSP) to all farmers or set up a promised MSP committee, the lack of farmer-centric policies in the Union Budget, delayed payments to UP's sugarcane farmers, and the problem of stray cattle as among the issues at stake. When they come seeking your vote, ask them why they have betrayed farmers on these issues." The SKM is distributing a pamphlet across western Uttar Pradesh which is the SKM's main campaign tool. "The BJP government does not understand the language of truth and lies, or know the difference between constitutional and unconstitutional. This party understands only one language - vote, seat, power," says the pamphlet which also raised the issues of assaults against protesting farmers, and the failure to punish union minister Ajay Misra Teri for his alleged role in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence. The UP state chapters of SKM's constituent organisations also raised the issue of money power being used to intimidate voters. According to All India Kisan Sabha, "The 57 UP organisations have decided to set up a guard in villages to prevent anyone from distributing money before the elections, and hand over any perpetrators to the police." The SKM plans to hold press conferences in nine major cities in Uttar Pradesh before the elections.

IN KASHMIR, ONCE BEAUTIFUL AND LIFE-SUSTAINING 'KULS' ARE NOW TURNING INTO DUMPING GROUNDS

Mukhtar Dar

Up until a few decades ago, the small canal (locally known as 'Gaam-i-kul') passing through Budgam district's Lasipora village was not just another feature in Kashmir's exhilarating landscape. It was also a life-sustaining resource for the villagers. Residents, especially women, would often be sighted on its banks drawing the crystal clear waters carried down from the Karshan stream. However, this beautiful Gaam-i-Kul (Gaam means 'village' and Kul translates to 'water canal') has lost its charm over the years due to human activity.

"Single-use plastic bags, polystyrenes, and other non-biodegradable material have found their way into the stream. Besides that, untreated solid and liquid waste is directly being discharged into this canal," Rifat Qadri, a 25-year-old student from the village told 101Reporters.

In Kashmir, there are 2,827 canals most of which are suffering a similar fate. "There is at least one Gaam-i-Kul in every village in Kashmir, serving as an irrigation canal and as a source of water for its residents for centuries," said Ghulam Rasool Sheikh, a school teacher from Budgam's Chakpora village. "With the advent of modern living, households are now dumping into the kuls their solid and untreated liquid waste without any hesitation, and there is a criminal silence in the civil society and government about this brazen violation of moral and legal laws. We have polluted them so much that they are no longer even fit for agriculture," Sheikh told 101Reporters. He believes that Gaam-i-Kuls, once a source of livelihood, have now deteriorated to the point that they are affecting the village's sanitation.

Once a source of life, now a breeding ground of illness

Sheikh's claims are proven right in every village we visited to report this story. For instance, in Ramhuma village in the same district, the people who reside near the stream dump their waste on the banks every day. Mohammad Yousuf, a local, told 101Reporters, "We don't have a waste processing site. It is the responsibility of authorities to identify a proper site so people can dispose of the waste properly." Failing this, the canal has become a place where all kinds of communicable diseases originate, he said.

Similarly, the Gaam-i-Kul at the heart of the Chewdara village in Budgam, originating from the famed Sukhnag stream, has turned into a



garbage dumping yard. Sarpanch Hilal Mir said that while he has planned to dredge it under MGNREGA it will not be a long-term solution as long as people continue to discharge waste into it. It needs community and administration intervention to safeguard it from further pollution. He added that the government, in collaboration with the panchayat body, should prepare a sustainable long-term plan for waste management for rural residents including providing alternatives for and incentives against dumping into the water bodies. Around two kilometres away in Ohangam village, a resident, Muntazir Dar, told 101Reporters that their canal "has now become a breeding ground for illnesses. The foul smell emanating from it indicates how serious a health hazard it is to nearby villagers. Labartal kul of Sholipora village, that draws its water from Ahij stream, harbours all the plastic waste generated from the village market. The everyday waste that accumulates in its banks gradually flows into it," Khurshid Ahmad, another resident, told 101Reporters.

Awaiting implementation
Under the Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin (SBM-G), rolled out by the ruling government in 2014, each state must identify suitable technologies or methods to manage the liquid and solid waste generated from villages. For this purpose, Rs 7,00,000 are allocated for Gram Panchayats having 150 households and Rs 20,00,000 for Panchayats having more than 200 households.

The majority of the population in Jammu and Kashmir lives in rural areas. Yet, only Rs 4 crores have been allocated by the administration towards waste management in rural

areas as compared to Rs 464 crores for 91 urban local bodies in the 2019-20 budget.

The fund allocated for solid and liquid waste management through SBM-G remains unspent, according to an official who wanted to remain anonymous. As per SBM-G guidelines, every state should have at least one Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) consultant at the state level and one consultant for the District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM) to guide preparation for SLWM projects. However, the Department of Rural Development, which controls the Mission Directorate of SBM-G, failed to appoint consultants at the district and state levels, according to an official in the Rural Sanitation Department.

Is hope around the corner for Gaam-i-Kuls?

Advocating for a cleaner Kashmir, notable Srinagar-based RTI activist and columnist Raja Muzaffar Bhat has been keenly following SBM-G policy implementation in the union territory. He said, "The rural areas of Kashmir are facing severe problems of waste management. The unscientific waste disposal in rural areas of Kashmir is more cause of concern compared to our urban areas. People are not sensitised about the proper disposal of waste, and they are discharging their liquid waste to nearby water bodies without any legal or moral impediments. This has become normal practice in every nook and corner of the valley."

In January 2021, Bhat also filed an RTI enquiring about the implementation of rural waste management projects under SBM-G in Budgam district. The response

to the application revealed that not a single project had been implemented in the 296 panchayats of Budgam. "The departments lack technical know-how, and there is also unease within the administration, post the abrogation of Article 370," Bhat told 101Reporters.

Now a year later, the Rural Sanitation Department has finally begun to implement SLWM programs in Panchayats, according to an official in the Rural Sanitation Department. Speaking to 101Reporters, he said that the SLWM program in rural areas was in the initial stages and they plan to cover 1,000 locations. He further added, "We didn't have an expert who could guide us in implementing the plan due to which we were facing problems, but recently the department has hired an expert to carry out the waste management plans successfully in rural areas."

Another official in the Rural and Panchayat Raj Department of Budgam said that the SLWM program had not yet been implemented in any panchayat of Budgam district. "We are going to implement 31 projects for which dumping sites have been identified, and the department has sent a Detailed Project Report (DPR). As soon as the funds are granted, projects will be implemented. Five sites have also been identified where plastic will be dumped and treated scientifically," he added.

(The author is a Kashmir-based freelance journalist and a member of 101Reporters, a pan-India network of grassroots reporters)

international

IMF chief calls for policy agility, global cooperation

Washington | Agencies

Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has called for more policy agility and global cooperation to navigate an economic "obstacle course" as the world enters the third year of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The (global) recovery continues, but it has lost some momentum," Georgieva said at a virtual media roundtable with reporters. "We are particularly concerned about the higher uncertainty in front of us."

Georgieva noted that there are "three main obstacles" on the path to the global recovery, namely the pandemic, rising inflation and high levels of debt, reports Xinhua news agency.

"We need to be like a tiger in this year to deal with the complex challenges ahead, and top of mind is indeed policy agility," he said, referring to the Chinese New Year of the Tiger, which started on



Tuesday.

Given different levels of inflation and debt as well as different policy space in different countries, "policy actions should be calibrated to country's specific circumstances", the IMF chief said.

Georgieva's remarks came after the IMF last week projected the global economy to grow by 4.4 per cent in 2022, down 0.5 percentage point from the forecast in October 2021, as economies grapple with supply disruptions, higher inflation, record debt and persistent uncertainty. She urged central bank offi-

cial to strike a delicate balance between addressing inflation and protecting the economic recovery, as some central banks have taken steps to provide clear forward guidance regarding the withdrawal of monetary policy support.

The IMF chief also stressed the importance of global cooperation as the world economy recovers from the pandemic, saying "we have to do more to work together".

"In my view, the biggest lesson from the pandemic is we are interdependent. We need our scientists to serve the whole world. We need our supply chains to not be interrupted so they can deliver more for the benefit of the global economy." While the global economy contracted by 3.1 per cent in 2020, it was far less severe than a 10 per cent contraction the IMF initially predicted, thanks to an incredible global coordination of fiscal and monetary policy actions, especially in the first months of the pandemic, Georgieva noted.

SUDANESE LEADER PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS

Khartoum: Chairman of Sudan's transitional Sovereign Council Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan has reaffirmed the government's commitment to facilitate the work of humanitarian organisations and provide safety for their personnel, particularly in the poverty-stricken Darfur region.

Al-Burhan made the pledge in a meeting with Eddie Rowe, representative of the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the council said in a statement.

"The government is committed to facilitating the work of the humanitarian organisations operating in the country, removing the difficulties facing them, and providing safety and security for their workers, especially in the Darfur region," Al-Burhan said.

'50/50' chance UK Prime Minister will be forced out

Team Absolute | New Delhi

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been rocked by another Downing Street resignation after a fifth aide quit as Cabinet Ministers said they believe there is a "50/50" chance that Johnson will be forced out of office, the Daily Mail reported.

Elena Narozanski, a member of the Number 10 Policy Unit, resigned on Friday, according to the Conservative Home website.

Some senior ministers believe "it feels like the end" after Thursday's exodus amid mounting fears in Downing Street that more staff and even ministers could resign.

But the Prime Minister's allies have insisted the shake-up is actually evidence of Johnson "taking charge".

Senior Conservative MPs on Friday issued a fresh warning to Johnson that he must "shape up or ship out", the Daily Mail report said.

Number 10 was in meltdown as the Prime Minister ordered a brutal clearout in a desperate attempt to shore up his troubled premiership as Rishi Sunak primed himself for a leadership bid.

Downing Street announced that the Prime Minister's chief of staff Dan Rosenfield and private secretary Martin Reynolds will be



leaving. That announcement came after it emerged the PM's communications chief, Jack Doyle, was also departing. Johnson had already been hit by the shock resignation of one of his closest allies, policy chief Munira Mirza, on Thursday, the report said. It then emerged on Friday morning that Narozanski, a former Team England boxer and former adviser to Michael Gove, had reportedly followed Mirza in quitting the policy unit. Johnson was also publicly criticised on Thursday by the Chancellor who questioned the Prime Minister's conduct over his explosive claim that Labour Party leader Keir Starmer had failed to prosecute Jimmy Savile.

Erdogan says Israeli President to visit Turkey in March

Ankara | Agencies

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that his Israeli counterpart Isaac Herzog will visit Ankara in mid-March as the two countries seek to restore bilateral ties.

"With this visit, we will endeavour to put our bilateral relations on a very different ground for the future, in a positive direction," Erdogan told reporters.

On the fact that Israel had sent its special representatives to Turkey, Erdogan said Turkish special envoys would also travel to Israel before Herzog's visit. Turkey's relations with Israel have deteriorated since 2010, when a Turkish-led flotilla trying to break Israel's blockade on the Gaza Strip clashed with Israeli forces, killing 10 Turks onboard. Before 2010, Turkey and Israel had long been in close relations, including military and intelligence cooperation.

Reconciliation attempts did not yield full recovery of ties between the two countries because Erdogan is a vocal supporter of the Palestinian cause. In a more recent spat in 2018 when the US moved its embassy to Jerusalem, Turkey expelled the Israeli Ambassador from Ankara. The two countries have been working on a rapprochement in recent months, with Erdogan holding phone



talks with Herzog.

On January 16, the Turkish President said Ankara was interested in resuming talks with Israel over transporting Israeli natural gas to Europe through Turkey.

His remarks came after the US dropped support for the EastMed pipeline, a rival project involving Israel, Cyprus and Turkey's neighbour and rival Greece.

In 2016, Turkey and Israel held a series of talks for the transport of Israeli gas through Turkey as part of reconciliation efforts, but the discussions were fruitless.

African bloc to send stabilisation force to Guinea-Bissau after failed coup

Accra | Agencies

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has decided to send a stabilisation force to help normalise the security situation in Guinea-Bissau after the failed coup earlier this week.

ECOWAS Commission President Jean-Claude Kassi Brou said at a press briefing after an extraordinary summit of the authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government that the regional bloc has decided to offer military support to Guinea-Bissau to secure its democracy and sustain peace and security in the country, reports Xinhua news agency.

"This is something that we will do very rapidly to ensure that this type of attempt of take-over power by force does not take place," said Kassi Brou.

He said it took such a force from ECOWAS in the past to stabilise democracy in a country that experienced two military coups, a civil war, and a presidential assassination by the military since 1994. The government of Guinea-Bissau



on Wednesday confirmed 11 people died during a failed coup attempt that took place in the country on Tuesday.

Late Tuesday, President Umaro Sissoco Embalo announced that the coup had been thwarted and several

civilians and soldiers had been arrested. Embalo said the attackers tried to kill him and his entire cabinet at the government palace.

Guinea-Bissau, with a population of just under two million people, has

seen nine coups or attempted coups since 1980. Over the past two years there have been military takeovers in Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso and Guinea, as well as further east in Sudan.



'CAN'T REJECT OFFLINE COVID COMPENSATION APPLICATION', SC RAPS MAHA GOVT

▶ THE SUPREME COURT FRIDAY MADE IT CLEAR THAT NO STATE GOVERNMENT CAN REJECT OFFLINE APPLICATION FOR EX-GRATIA COMPENSATION TO FAMILY MEMBERS OF COVID-19 VICTIMS, AS IT RAPPED THE MAHARASHTRA GOVERNMENT FOR REJECTING OFFLINE APPLICATIONS.

Team Absolute | New Delhi The Supreme Court Friday made it clear that no state government can reject offline application for ex-gratia compensation to family members of Covid-19 victims, as it rapped the Maharashtra government for rejecting offline applications.

Covid compensation." No offline application can be rejected "some applications were rejected on the ground that they were filed offline. Such a rejection is deprecated and it is in teeth of the order passed by the court", said the bench. The bench queried the Maharashtra government counsel, how can a poor person file an online application? It further told the counsel, "You are not doing charity. As a welfare state it is their duty. Why are you sending people from pillar to post..."

ments to give full particulars like name, address and death certificate to the concerned SLSA. It further added that they should also provide complete information on orphans, within one week and directed states to appoint a dedicated officer, not below the rank of deputy secretary in Chief Minister Secretariat, who will be in constant touch with the member secretary of the state legal service authority. The top court emphasized that no compensation application can be rejected on technical grounds and if any technical glitch is found, the state government should give an opportunity to cure defects.

COURT SENDS NITESH RANE TO 14-DAY JUDICIAL CUSTODY



Sindhudurg: A court in Sindhudurg on Friday sent BJP MLA Nitesh Rane to 14-day judicial custody in connection with his alleged involvement in an attempt to murder case. A court in Sindhudurg on Friday sent BJP MLA Nitesh Rane to 14-day judicial custody in connection with his alleged involvement in an attempt to murder case.

Porn video case: SC grants protection from arrest to actress Sherlyn Chopra

The Supreme Court on Friday granted protection from arrest to Bollywood actress and model Sherlyn Chopra in the porn racket case.



Team Absolute | New Delhi action shall be taken against the petitioner," said the top court in its order. In November last year, the Bombay High Court declined to grant relief to Pandey. She moved the Supreme Court challenging the high court order. Pandey has been made an accused in the FIR along with actor Sherlyn Chopra.

Five Bihar workers crushed as Pune mall slab crashes

Maharashtra govt announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar declared an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh to the kin of all the deceased workers, and Rs 50,000 for the injured.

Team Absolute | Pune At least five migrant labourers, all from Bihar, were crushed to death and five others injured when the slab of

mall-cum-commercial building crashed in Pune's Shastrinagar area late on Thursday night, officials said on Friday. The Pune police have filed cases against the builders of the Blue Grass Business Park, the site supervisor, labour contractors and others in connection with the incident, following a complaint by co-worker, Mohammed Nahid Master.

SEX RACKET BUSTED; TWO WOMEN ARRESTED

Thane: An official of the anti-human trafficking cell said that the two women were allegedly acting as agents and forcing other women into flesh trade. A sex racket was busted in the Wagle Estate locality of Maharashtra's Thane city and two women were arrested, police said on Friday.

Thane couple nabbed for GST evasion of Rs 12cr

▶ THE CGST THANE ANTI-EVASION WING (MUMBAI ZONE) HAS ARRESTED A COUPLE FROM A THANE FIRM FOR EVADING GOODS & SERVICES TAX TO THE TUNE OF RS 12.23 CRORE, AN OFFICIAL SAID HERE ON FRIDAY.

Team Absolute | Thane The CGST Thane Anti-Evasion Wing (Mumbai Zone) has arrested a couple from a Thane firm for

evading Goods & Services Tax to the tune of Rs 12.23 crore, an official said here on Friday. According to CGST Commissioner Rajan Chaudhary, based on detailed data-mining and data-analysis, a probe was initiated against a suspicious firm, Datalink Consultancy.

remanded them to judicial custody for 14 days. Chaudhary said that if found guilty, they could face a jail term of up to five years and a penalty. The case was part of a major anti-evasion drive launched by CGST Mumbai Zone against such evaders and scamsters.

Man Uses Wife's Aadhaar Card to Check Into Hotel With Girlfriend, Booked

The complainant had installed a GPS device in her husband's car and found out that he was cheating on her and lodged a complaint.

Team Absolute | Pune In a strange case of cheating, a 41-year-old man and his girlfriend were booked after the former allegedly used his wife's Aadhaar card for identification to check into a hotel in Maharashtra's Pune, police said on Friday.

woman had fitted a GPS tracker in her husband's SUV. In November last year, when he told her about his business trip to Bengaluru, she checked his location and found that the car was in Pune," the official said. When the complainant contacted the hotel, the staff informed her that the man had checked in with his wife, she said.

MAHARASHTRA COMMISSION WILL NOW PAY SURPRISE VISITS IN OFFICES TO CHECK SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN

Mumbai: Companies to be fined Rs 50K if found they don't have ICC to probe sexual harassment complaints. The Women's Commission of Maharashtra will take stringent steps against offices if they are found violating the guidelines laid down for the prevention of sexual harassment at work places.

Lab technician takes 'vaginal swab' on pretext of COVID test, gets 10 years in jail

The convict identified as Alpesh Deshmukh took the vaginal swab of the woman telling her it was required to detect COVID-19. The incident took place in Amravati district of Maharashtra in 2020.

Team Absolute | Mumbai Sessions court in Amravati district of Maharashtra has sentenced a man to 10 years imprisonment for taking swab samples from private parts of women on the pretext of conducting a coronavirus test.

the trauma care centre laboratory of the government hospital at Badnera on July 20, 2020. The COVID-19 laboratory technician identified as Alpesh Deshmukh had taken the swab sample of a 23-year-old woman, who worked at a mall in Amravati. The victim decided to take the COVID test as she was one of the contacts of a mall employee who was found positive. Later, the mall operator asked all staff and their contacts to get a COVID test done.

for further tests. Deshmukh told the victim that he had to take her vaginal swab. Alpesh reportedly obtained the vaginal swab and later informed her that she had tested negative. Later, the woman informed her brother about the incident. When the victim's brother contacted the hospital, she was told that no such test was required for COVID detection.

Objectionable remarks: Maharashtra women's commission urges action against Karadkar

▶ SEVERAL POLITICIANS AND WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS HAVE PROTESTED AGAINST THE WARKARI LEADER'S STATEMENT ON LIQUOR CONSUMPTION AMONG WOMEN LEADERS AND CHILDREN OF POLITICAL LEADERS.

Team Absolute | Mumbai Chairperson of the Maharashtra State Commission for Women Rupali Chakankar has urged the state government to take action and submit a report on the allegedly objectionable remarks against politicians, including women, made by Vyasan Mukti Yuva Sangh

president Bandataty Karadkar. While leading a protest against the state government's decision to allow the sale of wine in supermarkets and step-in shops, the Warkari leader had told media persons, "All politicians' children consume liquor," and added, "Panjaka Munde and Supriya Sule also consume liquor." Karadkar challenged Sule to deny his statement and claimed to have proof to substantiate his statements.

Karadkar. It should submit its report to the Women's Commission." State Housing Minister and NCP leader Jitendra Awadh too slammed Karadkar's remarks. "The tone and tenor of Karadkar exposes his culture. Is this the way one talks? It needs to be investigated if Karadkar is a true Warkari," he said.

BJP leaders meet gov over issues related to development works

The BJP, in its memorandum, alleged that though the previous government had sanctioned Rs 1,680 crore for a water pipeline scheme in the city, the present MVA government had not released any funds for the work

Team Absolute | Aurangabad A delegation of BJP workers from Aurangabad met Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari to present a memorandum claiming that the state government had not been implementing development works in the city.

chairman Haribhau Bagde and some local leaders met Koshiyari in Aurangabad on Thursday. The BJP, in its memorandum, alleged that though the previous government had sanctioned Rs 1,680 crore for a water pipeline scheme in the city, the present MVA government had not released any funds for the work.

Central government were also not being implemented in a proper manner in the region, it claimed. The party further alleged that a plot of land allotted in Mitimita for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana had also been given to the safari park project and no alternate plot had been provided.

ensure that these development schemes were implemented effectively. Meanwhile, a delegation from Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Maharashtra University also met the governor to inform him that the state government had been making changes in the State University Act and there was political interference in the education system.



'I lost myself': Lily James

Los Angeles | Agencies

Lily James admitted she 'lost herself' in her transformation into Pamela Anderson for new Hulu and Disney+ series Pam & Tommy. During an appearance on CBS' The Late Late Show with James Corden on Thursday, the actress, 32, who appeared alongside her Cinderella director Kenneth Branagh, spoke about how she felt when slipping into the iconic Baywatch swimsuit, reports dailymail.co.uk. She detailed: 'It was wild. I was very nervous about that day because it just feels so iconic. It was weird. I sort of lost myself. I couldn't see myself any more. Then I would get on the suit and be in my trailer doing press-ups getting the blood flowing.'

James asked Lily what it was like to put on, 'that iconic red swimsuit,' which Lily confirmed was a 'four-hour transformation' each day. Lily admitted she struggled to see herself when making the critically-acclaimed changes, which included wigs and a prosthetic breast plate. After a clip was shown on the chat show Kenneth marveled at how 'unrecognizable' Lily is as Pamela - after which she revealed one of her favorite 'triggers' for getting into character as the Baywatch superstar. When asked by James what her specific phrase was to get into character, the actress said she had a few, but one was her favorite.



Fantasia Taylor, Danielle Brooks locked for 'The Color Purple'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Fantasia Taylor and Danielle Brooks will reprise their roles as Celie and Sofia in the musical 'The Color Purple'. Taylor made her foray in Broadway as Celie in 2007 after her 'American Idol' win, Brooks was nominated for the Tony Awards for her portrayal of Sofia in the 2015 revival of the Broadway musical, reports 'Variety'.

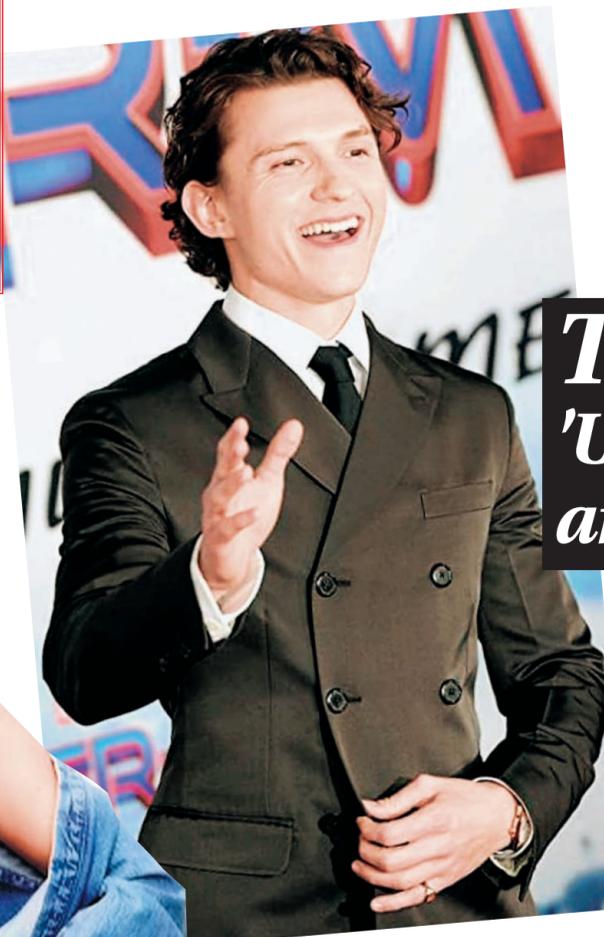
The casting announcement, according to 'Variety', was a part of 'Soul of a Nation Presents: Screen Queens Rising', which is an ABC News special.

Brooks had an emotional moment when Oprah Winfrey revealed that Brooks was chosen for the role during a Zoom call. Oprah is producing 'The Color Purple' under her Harpo Films banner.

The upcoming Warner Bros. movie is an adaptation of the Tony-winning Broadway musical, which was based on Alice Walker's 1982 epistolary novel of the same name. The novel had won for its author a Pulitzer Prize. The production will be directed by Bazawule and Marcus Gardley has written the screenplay, based on Walker's novel, the 1985 film and the stage musical.

In addition, Steven Spielberg will co-produce the film for his Amblin Entertainment. Scott Sanders and Quincy Jones, both of whom produced the Broadway musical, are also producers.

Alice Walker, Rebecca Walker, Mara Jacobs, Carla Gardini, Kristie Macosko Krieger and Adam Fell will serve as executive producers on the project.



Tom Holland on 'Uncharted', the game, and filming on real sets

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Tom Holland, best known for his title role in the 'Spider-Man' trilogy, will soon be seen in the upcoming action-adventure film 'Uncharted'. Holland recently spoke about the experience of shooting for the film on real sets, thereby limiting the reliance on the chroma set-up. The decision to work extensively on real sets was taken by the film's director Ruben Fleischer.

"When you make these big, big action movies, you're just acting on a blue screen," Holland said. "For this movie, Ruben was adamant that it needed a tangible feeling that we were in real places, so he pushed for real sets."

"The crypt and church were both built. The boats are real -- we had interior, exterior, and an outside exterior on a gimbal to simulate that the boats were flying. We pushed the boundaries of what we could do with practical sets."

'Uncharted' is based on a game series of the same name. Talking about laying his hands on the game series, Holland said: "I was shooting 'Spider-Man: Homecoming', and one of the benefits of working with Sony is that they outfitted all of our trailers with the newest PlayStation. And one of the games they gave us was 'Uncharted 4'."



'ABSOLUTELY NOT TRUE'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Khloe Kardashian shuts down rumor she is seeing Too Hot To Handle star Harry Jowsey after Tristan split

Khloe Kardashian set the record straight on a new rumor that she is seeing actor Harry Jowsey, reports dailymail.co.uk. A recent Instagram post by a Kardashian fan page alluded to the romance, sharing that Khloe and the Too Hot To Handle star have been talking. The co-founder of Good American vehemently denied the rumors regarding her love life, writing 'absolutely not true' in the comments. Instagram account @commentsthekarjenners shared the post which originally appeared on the @theekarjenners fan page.

It contained what appeared to be an email, with details of the supposed romance. 'One of my closest friends works at a very well known PR agency in LA & it's confirmed that Khloe Kardashian and Harry Jowsey are talking,' the email read.

M. Night Shyamalan chuffed about being Berlinale jury president

Los Angeles | Agencies

Indian American filmmaker M. Night Shyamalan, who'll be heading the competition jury of the Berlin Film Festival, says he is excited at the prospect of being enriched by new perspectives in the course of the prestigious event.

The Berlin International Film Festival usually called Berlinale is being held from February 10 to February 20. Commenting on the

honour, the maker of such cult hits as 'Sixth Sense' and 'Unbreakable' told 'Variety': "Part of going to film festivals and seeing these movies is I'm with the very best storytellers that are telling the most different and original stories in their own way. I'm sure 18 times I'm going to be re-inspired about being OK with what's weird and different about myself."

Shyamalan has visited Germany several times while promoting his films, has been in love with the

country's cinema, art and culture, "I spent so much time there, I found the respect for art very, very high. I feel very engaged in the conversations there about art and cinema."

He added: "There is a deep respect there for those that push the boundaries in the medium so I feel very at-home there. So when they so graciously asked me, I was exuberant. It's a place that I look forward to going to and feel replenished when I go there."



Addison Rae



FROM BATTLING COVID-19 TO REACHING FINAL: INDIA'S JOURNEY AT 2022 U-19 WORLD CUP

Saturday's clash will be India's fourth consecutive ICC U-19 World Cup final, where they will play for a chance to win the title for the fifth time in the country's history.

Avinash Kr Atish | New Delhi

Carrying the legacy of their domination at the Under-19 World Cups, India have once again booked their berth in the finale of the marquee tournament in junior cricket, despite the COVID-19 setback.

The Yash Dhull-led side registered a comprehensive 96-run win against Australia in the semifinal on Wednesday at the Coolidge Cricket Ground to set up a date with England in the World Cup final on Saturday.

However, the journey hasn't been easy for the Indian team in this edition as they were infected by the coronavirus and at one point even struggled to pick a fit eleven. Despite missing their key players for a couple of matches, the Indian team has come back fitter and stronger than before. India showed how much depth they had as the players on the



bench delivered impactful performances and the team is unbeaten till now in the tournament. Opener Angkrish Raghuvansi is the highest run-scorer for India in this tournament with 278 runs to his name at an excellent average of 55.60, including a best of 144 that came against Uganda in the group stage. On the other hand, left-arm orthodox spinner Vicky Ostwal is the highest wicket-taker for the team with 12 wickets to his name at an average of 10.75.

Ostwal registered his best figures of 5/28 against South Africa in their very first match of this competition.

Meanwhile, all-rounder Raj Agad Bawa has been the standout player for India in this tournament. He has amassed 217 runs in this competition, which includes a record-breaking knock of 162 not out against Uganda, and has also picked up four wickets at an average of 29.75.

Athletic Club Bilbao knock Real Madrid out of Copa del Rey

Bilbao | Agencies

Alex Berenguer's 89th-minute winner put Athletic Club Bilbao into the semifinals of the Copa del Rey for the fourth consecutive season with a 1-0 win at home to Real Madrid to add to their 3-2 win over Barcelona in the previous round. It was what Athletic deserved after dominating the league leaders, who had beaten them three times previously this season, Xinhua reports. The first half saw Athletic look to keep the pressure on Real Madrid high up the field and they created several chances with Dani Garcia seeing one shot saved by Thibaut Courtois and another deflected out for one of several corners.

Nico Williams was causing problems down the Real Madrid left flank and he saw a shot blocked, before Iker Muniain fired into the side netting, before Rodrygo hit Real Madrid's only shot of



the half straight at Athletic keeper Julen Aguirrezabala.

Eder Militao then produced a great block when Nico looked as if he was in on goal before Athletic suffered a setback on the stroke of halftime when the younger of the Williams brothers was forced off with a hamstring injury.

Berenguer replaced Williams for a tense second half with few chances as both sides defended magnificently, but the substitute would be decisive to make it fourth-time lucky for the Basques, who lost the last two cup

finals.

In Thursday's second semifinal Betis enjoyed a crushing 4-0 win away to Real Sociedad with two goals from former Real Sociedad striker, Juanmi after 12 and 57 minutes, before a penalty from William Jose, another former player for the home side, and an 87th-minute goal from Aitor Ruibal wrapped up a win that was much easier than expected.

Valencia and Rayo Vallecano booked their semi-final spots after beating Mallorca and Cadiz on Wednesday night.

Tata Open Maharashtra Majchrzak shocks second-seed Musetti; Ruusuvuori, Sousa enter semis

Pune | Agencies

Poland's Kamil Majchrzak, Emil Ruusuvuori of Finland and Joao Sousa of Portugal entered the singles semi-finals of the Tata Open Maharashtra tennis tournament, with Majchrzak upsetting second seed Lorenzo Musetti of Italy in a thrilling three-setter here on Friday.

Majchrzak, the unseeded Polish player, beat Musetti 6-2, 6-7(5), 6-4 in the quarter-finals of the fourth edition of South Asia's only ATP-250 event. He was joined in the last four by Ruusuvuori, who stunned defending champion Jiri Vesely packing with a 6-3, 6-4 win while Sousa got the better of Germany's Daniel Altmaier 6-2, 6-3 at the Balewadi Sports Complex here.

Majchrzak will now face Ruusuvuori in the semi-finals on Saturday. He sent defending champion Vesely packing in another quarter-finals contest, played later in the day.

The 22-year-old Ruusuvuori, who kickstarted his campaign by defeating last edition's runner-up Egor Gerasimov, extended his brilliant run in the tournament as he took just one hour and 17 minutes to complete the straight-set victory over Vesely without breaking a sweat.



Sousa served well and won 79% of his first serve points as compared to 64% by Altmaier. He broke Altmaier's service in the second game of first set and held his serve to jump to 3-0 lead. The Portuguese player broke serve again in the eighth game to win the set 6-2. In the second, Sousa broke Altmaier's service in the fourth game and went on to easily win the match.

India women's ODI series against New Zealand to start from Feb 12

Auckland | Agencies

India women's team ODI series against New Zealand will now begin on February 12, said New Zealand Cricket (NZC) on Friday. As per the now revised schedule, the first of the five ODIs will begin from February 12, a day later than the original date.

"NZC has made changes to the dates of the KFC India Tour of NZ between the WHITE FERNS and India Women, to be played exclusively at John Davies Oval in Queenstown. The date of the first KFC T20I remains the same but there has been some adjustments made to the subsequent five match KFC ODI series," read a statement from NZC.

The change in date of first ODI also means that there is change in second and third ODI dates. The second ODI, originally scheduled for February 14, will now happen on February 15, while the third ODI will be played on February 18 instead of February 16. The dates of final two ODI matches for



February 22 and 24 have been retained. Originally, the series was to be played at three venues: McLean Park in Napier hosting the one-off T20I at and first ODI. It was to be followed by Saxton Oval in Nelson hosting the second and third ODIs and the

last two ODIs to be played at John Davies Oval in Queenstown. But NZC moved the whole series to Queenstown last month in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19. The Indian team, led by Mithali Raj, had left for New Zealand from Mumbai on

January 24 and are currently in Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) in Christchurch. After the series ends, India and New Zealand will move towards the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup scheduled to run from March 4 to April 3.

Australia's tour of Pakistan after 24 years confirmed to begin from Rawalpindi

Lahore | Agencies

Cricket Australia (CA) and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Friday confirmed that Australia men's team tour of Pakistan will start with Rawalpindi hosting the first Test on March 4. It also means that Australia's first trip to Pakistan for the first time since 1998 is all set to happen.

After the first Test at Rawalpindi, the next two Tests will be played in Karachi and Lahore. It will be followed by three ODIs and a T20I to be played at Rawalpindi from March 29 to April 5. The schedule has been revised to ease logistical and operational challenges as well as to avoid



cal and operational challenges as well as to avoid

Pakistan Day rehearsals, which usually commence

in Islamabad in the second week of March.

The two cricket boards have also agreed that the Australia Test side will complete their isolation in Australia, before arriving in Islamabad on February 27 on a chartered flight. After a one-day room isolation, they will hold training sessions at the Pindi Cricket Stadium. Australia's white-ball players are expected to arrive in Lahore on March 24 following isolation in Australia. After a one-day isolation upon arrival, they will integrate with other members of the side and travel to Islamabad for the first ODI in Rawalpindi on March 29.

EGYPT, SENEGAL TO CLASH IN AFCON FINAL

Yaounde:

Egypt defeated host nation Cameroon 3-1 through penalty shootout in the African Cup Nations (AFCON) semifinal to reach the final in style. The North Africans will clash with Senegal who beat Burkina Faso 3-1 at the Ahmadou Ahidjou Stadium.

Egyptian goalkeeper Mohamed Abou Gabal was the champion for the Egyptians on Thursday night, saving from both Harold Moukoudi and James Lea-Siliki in the shootout at the Olembe Stadium before Clinton Njie blazed wide with Cameroon's last chance to keep their dream alive, Xinhua reports. Egypt will be looking forward to earning the trophy for the seventh time when they clash with Senegal on February 6. Cameroon will face Burkina Faso in the third-place play-off on February 5.



Afghanistan to tour Bangladesh for white ball series in February-March

Dhaka | Agencies

Afghanistan will tour Bangladesh for three ODIs and two T20Is in February-March this year and the series is likely to have DRS as well, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) confirmed.

Notably, BCB recently came under a lot of criticism for not having DRS in the BPL. They failed to put the system in place due to the surge of Covid-19 cases worldwide as none of the experts at Hawk-Eye - a company that offers DRS services - were ready to visit the country to provide the service during the tournament.

However, the BCB has now said that they are likely to have DRS in place during the upcoming home series against Afghanistan, an



ESPNcricinfo report said.

Meanwhile, the board hasn't confirmed if crowds will be allowed into the stadiums as the rise in Covid-19 cases last month forced the BCB to stage the BPL behind closed doors.

Afghanistan are scheduled to arrive in Bangladesh on February 12 and will have a week-long training camp in Sylhet before heading to Chattogram for the ODI series, which begins with the first match on February 23.

ENGLAND SACK GRAHAM THORPE AS ASSISTANT COACH OF MEN'S TEAM

London: Graham Thorpe on Friday became the third big casualty of England's Ashes 4-0 debacle with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announcing his departure.

On Wednesday, Ashley Giles was sacked as the managing director of the men's team while head coach Chris Silverwood left the post on Thursday. ECB also said that coaching arrangements for the West Indies tour will be announced in due course.

"I've been very fortunate to have worked with so many good players and coaches who I consider my friends for life," said Thorpe in a statement by the ECB. "I'd like to thank Graham for his work over many years on the England coaching staff and wish him the best for the future," said Sir Andrew Strauss, Interim Managing Director of men's cricket.

PR Sreejesh on winning Olympic medal BECAME EMOTIONAL, I THOUGHT ABOUT MY 21-YEAR-LONG JOURNEY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Recalling the iconic moment from the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, veteran Indian goalkeeper PR Sreejesh has said that he became emotional and thought about his 21-year-long journey after making a last-ditch save against Germany in the bronze medal playoff to secure the country's first Olympic medal in hockey in 41 years.

The 33-year-old, who recently won the World Games Athlete of the Year 2021 Award, formed an important part of the bronze-medal winning Indian team. He made a vital save in the thrilling final moments of the match against Germany, ensuring India's podium finish at Tokyo Olympics.

Recently, in his appearance on the 'Hockey Te Charcha' podcast, the goalkeeper reflected on the highs and lows of his International career and also



spoke about the Olympics. "My first thought when we

conceded the penalty corner with six seconds of the game remain-

ing was like any other hockey fan; I was really disappointed because we knew Germany was capable of turning the game around in the dying moments.

"We had conceded many times in the past in the last seconds of the game and all those painful memories flashed in my mind. However, I knew I had to focus on the moment and I then began to assign everyone their duties, because it becomes hard to focus on one's responsibilities in such a pressure situation," Sreejesh was quoted in a release as saying. "After making that save in the end and winning the match, I became emotional as I thought about the incredible 21-year-long journey I had since I began playing hockey at the GV Raja Sports School," he added.

Sreejesh also spoke about his battle with an ACL injury setback that threatened to bring his career to an early end in 2017.

WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP: CHINESE TAIPEI BEAT THAILAND, INCH CLOSER TO WORLD CUP BERTH

Navi Mumbai: Chinese Taipei defeated Thailand 3-0 in the playoff series on Friday to inch closer to a berth in the FIFA Women's World Cup to be held in Australia and New Zealand next year.

Su Yu-Hsuan scored a brace of goals (45th and 84th min) and Chen Ying-Hui (90+3) contributed one goal for Chinese Taipei at the D.Y. Patil Stadium here. The three points they bagged by beating Thailand mean Chinese Taipei's tie against Vietnam on Sunday will be a showdown for the sole automatic qualifying slot to Australia/New Zealand 2023. Vietnam had beaten Thailand in the first match of the playoff series. Thailand's FIFA Women's World Cup hopes now depend on them navigating the Inter-Confederation playoffs. With Vietnam having won the first tie of the round-robin playoffs on Wednesday, there was no margin for error for both Chinese Taipei and Thailand.

Thailand, having been on the receiving end of a 2-0 defeat in the first playoff tie, needed victory to keep their hopes alive while a win for Chinese Taipei would mean playing Vietnam in a more comfortable position on Sunday.





NORA FATEHI IS OUT OF INSTAGRAM!



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Fans were left shocked on Friday afternoon as they were unable to check Bollywood actor Nora Fatehi's Instagram profile. While netizens are wondering what could be the reason, it is not yet known if it is some technical glitch or if the actor has deactivated her social media handle. If you try to open Nora Fatehi's Instagram profile, it shows 'content unavailable'.

Some of the fans also took to Twitter wondering what went wrong with Nora Fatehi's Instagram account. "I think Nora Fatehi Instagram handle deactivated or blocked," one of the fans wrote.

For the unversed, Nora Fatehi was an active user of Instagram and had 37.6 million followers on it. The actor often used to share her too-hot-to-handle pictures on the platform, leaving fans stunned. Just a few hours back, Nora, who is currently in Dubai, dropped a couple of pictures from her vacation on Instagram. In these clicks, Nora was seen posing along with two white lions. "It's that Lion energy from now on they are so beautiful though (sic)," Nora captioned the post. On the work front, Nora Fatehi was recently seen in the Dance Meri Rani music video along with Punjabi singer Guru Randhawa. The video and the song was widely loved by the audience and Nora's sizzling chemistry with Guru also made headlines. The song was crooned by Guru Randhawa and Zahrah S Khan, written by Rashmi Virag and composed by Tanishk Bagchi. Dance Meri Rani was the second collaboration between Nora Fatehi and Guru Randhawa. The duo earlier worked together on the song Naach Meri Rani. Apart from this, Nora's dating rumours with Guru Randhawa also made headlines recently after they were spotted together in Goa.



ANUPAM KHER'S HILARIOUS TAKE ON SAMANTHA'S 'OO ANTAVA' ITEM NUMBER

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Bollywood's favourite character actor Anupam Kher uploaded a humorous video of a 'Hum Aapke Hain Koun' song edited to the tune of Samantha Ruth Prabhu's item number 'Oo Antava' from 'Pushpa: The Rise'.

Kher's edited video features late actress Reema Lagoo as she seems to lip-sync to the item song, followed by the entire scene edited in a way that is in sync with Devi Sri Prasad's Telugu composition, which is burning the charts. Adding to the humour, Kher wrote: "Samdhan Ji is back."

He added: "Keeping with the trend. An iconic song from #HumAapkeHaiKoun appreciates a very popular song from #Pushpa in its own inimitable style! Enjoy! #Koka #AajHamareDilMei @alluarjun@Samanthaprabhu2."

The item number has been covered in many different renditions, which have increased the buzz around the sizzler exponentially from the time of the Allu Arjun, Rashmika Mandanna-starrer's release.



ALIA BHATT EYEING ANOTHER FILM WITH JR NTR?

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

A hint dropped by Alia Bhatt at the trailer screening of 'Gangubai Kathiawadi' in Mumbai on Thursday evening has intensified speculation that she will join hands with Jr NTR for an upcoming Telugu movie.

Tentatively titled 'NTR30', Jr NTR's upcoming movie is reported to be helmed by Koratala Siva of 'Mirchi' fame. The yet-to-be-launched movie is rumoured to have Alia Bhatt as the female lead opposite Jr NTR.

In the interesting turn of events at the trailer launch of the Alia Bhatt-starrer 'Gangubai Kathiawadi', the actress was quizzed about her upcoming movies.

In her reply, she said: "There is 'RRR' obviously. Then there is another project, which I shouldn't be commenting about just yet." Tollywood insiders said it was a confirmation of the news doing the rounds that Alia and Jr NTR will collaborate for the second time after S.S. Rajamouli's magnum opus. Jr NTR, meanwhile, is all set for the launch of two of his big-ticket movies, one of which

is to be directed by Koratala Siva and the other by 'Julayi' director Trivikram Srinivas. NTR is also in talks for another interesting script, which is to be directed by Buchi Babu Sana of 'Uppena' fame.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood couple Riteish Deshmukh and Genelia D'Souza are all set to star in the upcoming Shaad Ali film, 'Mister Mummy'. The comedy drama will tell the story of a grumpy man, played by Riteish, inexplicably getting pregnant.

At the core of the movie is the story of a couple with opposing choices on the matter of children. Destiny, though, has something else planned for the childhood sweethearts as they set off on a mad, bumpy ride in this comedy drama of revelations and realisations.

The film will also mark the reunion of Riteish and Genelia on screen after a decade. They were last seen together in the 2012 release, 'Tere Naal Love Ho Gaya'.

T-Series Films and Hectic Cinema have joined forces to roll out the film. Directed by Shaad Ali, 'Mister Mummy' has been co-produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Shaad Ali and Siva Ananth.

Riteish, Genelia to reunite on screen with quirky comedy



'ROCKET BOYS': A MEANINGFUL PERIOD DRAMA THAT EDUCATES AND INSPIRES



FILM REVIEW

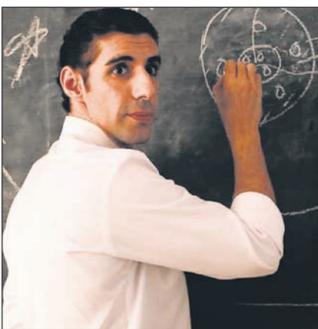
TROY RIBEIRO

Direction: Abhay Pannu.

Cast: Jim Sarbh, Ishwak Singh, Regina Cassandra, Rajat Kapur, Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Saba Azad, Arjun Radhakrishnan, Namit Das, K.C.Shankar, Darius Shroff, Mark Bennington and K.S. Sridhar.

Duration: 45 minutes per episode (eight episodes in all).

Ratings: *** (three stars)



al interest.

The first six episodes mainly spend too much time focusing on their personal lives rather than their hard work. The last two episodes give us a rushed and superficial glimpse of what they have achieved at the national level.

Jim Sarbh plays the confident and "self-interested" Dr. Homi J Bhabha with aplomb. His over-familiarity with the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, constantly addressing him as "Bhai" is a bit repugnant.

Regina Cassandra essays Vikram's wife, the Bharatnatyam dancer Mrinalini and the slender Saba Azad portrays Parvana Irani, whom Homi Bhabha fascinates but does not muster the courage to hold her back. Both the ladies cast opposite the leading men, deliver their acts with dignified composure and distinguished grace.

Rajat Kapur, otherwise a brilliant actor, as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is preposterously dramatic and over the top. He sticks out like an eye-sore in the series, with his irritating tone and demeanour.

Overall, despite its shortcomings, 'Rocket Boys' is a meaningful series that succeeds in both educating and inspiring the viewers, especially young minds inclined towards science.

'LOOP LAPETA': BRILLIANT CINEMATOGRAPHY AND EDITING ELEVATES THE CINEMATIC



FILM REVIEW

TROY RIBEIRO

(Streaming on Netflix)

Direction: Aakash Bhatia

Cast: Tahir Raj Bhasin, Taapsee Pannu, Shreya Dhanwanthary, Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Manik Papneja, K.C. Shankar, Rajendra Chawla.

Duration: 131 minutes.

Ratings: *** and 1/2 (three and a half stars)



Mounted as a 'stoner drama', Director Aakash Bhatia's film 'Loop Lapeta' is an astutely crafted concept movie. It is an adaptation of Tom Tykwer's 1998 German experimental thriller, 'Lola rennt', also known internationally as 'Run Lola Run'. With its obtuse colour palette, racy Konkani number with a techno beat, 2D animation, and multiple split-screen frames, the film could be repulsive for a regular cinephile at the first go. But as you get soaked into the narrative, the film grows on you. It kicks in a vibrant film in a deceptive way. It begins with Savina Borkar, aka Savi (Taapsee Pannu), an athlete with a funky plait, consuming drugs on her birthday as she reflects on her dreams, hope, and how life has treated her to date. The narrative picks up momentum when her boyfriend Satya (Tahir Raj Bhasin) calls to tell her that he lost a bag containing rupees fifty lakhs belonging to his boss and his life is at stake if he does not return it, "before the turkey is cooked". His boss is a mafia-cum-chef whose lines are blurry and character ambiguous. With literally about 20 minutes left to return the money, they con-

template how to raise the amount and return it in time as a last resort, Satya even suggests robbing a nearby jeweller's store.

Savi desperately runs through the streets in her attempt to save Satya, and beyond the hyper-ventilating nature of this film, there is a heart that nudges you with life's lesson. It strongly tells you, "All it takes is a moment to change one's life." It also tells you to attempt and keep trying till you get it right. And to accept your problems and deal with them.

The title does not lie to you. It is the mythical quality of the loop-de-loop plot, that makes the narrative intriguing and compelling. The script intelligently interweaves the analogy of the legendary tale of Satyavan and Savitri to help with some quick rewinding in the story. In a nutshell, this is the trigger for all the three identical episodes you see with entirely different outcomes.

Overall, the film is directed with real verve and energy, bristling with confidence and fabulous camera work. A special mention is a must to its editing team for seamlessly layering the film to make it a consistent, entertaining unit.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Shweta Bapjai