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PLANE CARRYING 132 PEOPLE CRASHES IN CHINESE MOUNTAINS

TWO MIN DEATH PLUNGE

Boeing 737 went into sudden terrifying 350mph dive and smashed into mountainside in China killing all 132 people onboard. Media said there was no sign of survivors and the airline said it deeply mourned the passengers and crew who had died.



► THE AIRCRAFT, WITH 123 PASSENGERS AND NINE CREW ON BOARD, LOST CONTACT OVER THE CITY OF WUZHOU, CHINA'S CIVIL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION OF CHINA (CAAC) AND THE AIRLINE SAID.

► THE FLIGHT LEFT KUNMING AT 1:11 P.M. (0511 GMT). FLIGHTRADAR24 DATA SHOWED, AND HAD BEEN DUE TO LAND IN GUANGZHOU AT 3:05 P.M. (0705 GMT).

► THE PLANE, WHICH FLIGHTRADAR24 SAID WAS SIX YEARS OLD, HAD BEEN CRUISING AT AN ALTITUDE 29,100 FEET AT 0620 GMT. JUST OVER TWO MINUTES AND 15 SECONDS LATER, DATA SHOWED IT HAD DESCENDED TO 9,075 FEET.

► IN ANOTHER 20 SECONDS, ITS LAST TRACKED ALTITUDE WAS 3,225 FEET.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A Boeing 737 (MU5735) that plummeted 30,000ft to the ground and burst into flames in China killing all 132 on board suffered a catastrophic 'loss of control event' and plunged to the ground at 350mph in a two-minute death spiral, experts have warned, reports daily-mail.co.uk. The China Eastern Airlines flight nosedived before smashing into the hillside, erupting in a huge fireball and causing a forest fire visible in NASA satellite images taken from Space, near the city of Wuzhou in Teng county in the southern province of Guangxi.

The plane was flying from the southwestern city of Kunming, capital of Yunnan province, to Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong, bordering Hong Kong.

China Eastern said the cause of the crash, in which the plane descended at a final rate of 31,000 feet a minute according to flight

tracking website FlightRadar24, was under investigation.

The airline said it had provided a hotline for relatives of those on board and sent a working group to the site.

Media cited a rescue official as saying the plane had disintegrated and caused a fire destroying bamboo trees. The People's Daily quoted a provincial firefighting department official as saying there was no sign of life among the debris. Crashes during the cruise phase of flight are relatively rare even though it accounts for the majority of flight time.

Boeing found in a report last year that only 13% of fatal commercial accidents globally between 2011 and 2020 occurred during the cruise phase, whereas 28% of fatal

A NOSEDIVE

Flight tracking data suggested the plane lost height rapidly from its cruising altitude before plummeting to the ground. More than 600 emergency responders are said to be at the crash site. Firefighters reached the scene first and managed to extinguish a blaze in the hills caused by the crash. Footage taken by local villagers and shared on Chinese social media - and by state broadcasters - showed fire and smoke from the crash, with plane debris on the ground.

accidents occurred on final approach and 26% on landing. "Usually the plane is on auto-pilot during cruise stage. So it is very hard to fathom what happened," said Li Xiaojin, a Chinese aviation expert. "From a technical point of view, something like this should not have happened." Online weather data showed partly cloudy conditions with good visibility in

Wuzhou at the time of the crash. President Xi Jinping called for investigators to determine the cause of the crash as soon as possible and to ensure "absolute" aviation safety, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

A Boeing spokesperson said: "We are aware of the initial media reports and are working to gather more information."



Russia won't pause military action for peace talks

MOSCOW | Agencies

Moscow will not put on pause its military action against Ukraine while conducting peace talks with Kiev, presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday.

"You see, a pause in the operation, any pause, is used by the nationalist units to regroup, used to continue attacks against the Russian military," the official explained. He claimed Russian troops in Ukraine have experienced this before "on multiple occasions." Russian troops won't give "nationalists' time to regroup, Moscow has revealed.

During the almost month-long attack on Ukraine, Russia declared a ceasefire on several occasions, stating that a pause in front-line fighting would allow civilians to evacuate affected areas and for humanitarian aid to be brought into Ukrainian cities caught up in the hostilities, RT reported.

Moscow and Kiev repeatedly blamed each other for alleged breaches of ceasefire agreements in various parts of the country. Russia said it believed the Ukrainian government not to be in full control of its units, which count radical nationalists in their ranks.

These forces, according to Moscow, are determined to fight to the end and do not hesitate to hold civilians as human shields and to otherwise undermine efforts to prevent casualties.

FAILURE OF TALKS WITH PUTIN MEANS WWII: ZELENKY

"If the talks fail, it would mean that this is a third World War. I'm ready for negotiations with him. I was ready for the last two years. And I think that without negotiations we cannot end this war. I think that we have to use any format, any chance in order to have a possibility of negotiating, possibility of talking to Putin. But if these attempts fail, that would mean that this is a third World War. We have always insisted on negotiations. We have always offered dialogue, offered solutions for peace. And I want everyone to hear me now, especially in Moscow. It's time to meet. Time to talk. It is time to restore territorial integrity and justice for Ukraine. The end of the war, security guarantees, sovereignty, restoration of territorial integrity, real guarantees for our country, real protection for our country."



Zomato announces world's first 10-minute food delivery



Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a global first, food delivery platform Zomato on Monday announced to deliver food under 10 minutes, starting with Gurugram.

Zomato Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said that the food delivery platform will not pressure its delivery partners to ensure

a delivery in 10 minutes. "Time optimisation does not happen on the road, and does not put any lives at risk," Goyal said in a statement.

"Nobody in the world has so far delivered hot and fresh food in under 10 minutes at scale, and we were eager to be the first to create this category, globally," he added.

Zomato recently

acquired Blinkit (earlier Grofers) that delivers groceries in 15-20 minutes. Zomato said that with "accessibility (reduction of delivery time from 30 minutes average to under 10 minutes), and quality (with influence over the supply chain, we will be able to ensure highest grade ingredients and hygiene practices across the supply chain".

The company has narrowed down to eight principles to build Zomato Instant.

These are: Almost as affordable as home-cooked food, Highest quality of fresh food, World class hygiene practices, Minimal use of plastic packaging, Convenient packaging for quick/easy consumption, Traceable supply chain, Delivery partner safety, and Deep collaboration with restaurant partners.

37 DIE AFTER CONSUMING SPURIOUS LIQUOR IN BIHAR SINCE HOLI

Patna: Deaths due to consumption of spurious liquor continue in Bihar. According to an official of Bihar police, so far 37 persons have died after consuming spurious liquor in the three districts of Bihar since the day of Holi. Maximum number of deaths took place in Bhagalpur district where so far 22 persons have died since Saturday morning. Besides, 12 persons lost their lives in Banka district and 3 in Madhepura.

The Bihar police however claim that these are mysterious deaths and an investigation is underway to identify the actual cause of deaths. "Preliminary investigation reveals that some people died after reportedly consuming poisonous liquor while others were suffering from some kind of illness. We are waiting for the post-mortem reports to ascertain the actual cause of deaths," Gangwar said. "We have directed SPs of respective districts to investigate the incidents of death and submit the report to the headquarters at the earliest," Gangwar said.

In Bhagalpur, 22 persons of Sahebganj and villages under Narayanpur block died due to poisonous liquor. In Banka, 12 persons of different villages under Amarpur police station died since Sunday morning. While in Madhepura, three deaths took place in the villages under Murliganj police station.

BREATHER TO SALMAN: Now Raj HC to hear all blackbuck hunting cases



Team Absolute | Jaipur

Bollywood star Salman Khan, accused in the blackbuck hunting case, got a breather from the Rajasthan High Court on Monday as it accepted his plea urging that it hear the three petitions related to the case, instead of the Sessions Court.

Salman had filed a petition in the Sessions Court to transfer the pending appeal to the High Court, and this was accepted on Monday.

A petition was also presented in the High Court on behalf of Salman in which it was pleaded that all matters are related to each other in this case and in such a situation, they should be heard together in the High Court. Public prosecutor Gaurav



Singh had no objection to these cases being heard in the High Court.

Soon after, Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati issued an order to hear all the cases in the High Court itself. Salman's sister Alvira was also present in the court during the hearing on Monday.

Salman's lawyer Hastimal Saraswat said that this comes as a big relief for him.

NO VOTE, NO HELP: BJP MLA TELLS VOTERS IN HIS CONSTITUENCY

Barabanki (UP): It has been just ten days since the UP Assembly results were announced and BJP MLAs are already displaying their attitude and arrogance. BJP MLA Dinesh Rawat, who won from Haidergarh Assembly seat, was heard telling people that those who did not vote for him, should not expect any favours from him.

"These people should not come to me for any kind of help or assistance. I will help only those who have voted for me," he is heard saying at a Holi Milan programme," he said.

A video clip of this speech has gone viral on the social media.

Rawat had defeated his SP rival by a margin of over 25,000 votes. He is a first-time MLA.

A senior BJP functionary, when contacted, said: "These new MLAs will take some time to settle down after their euphoric victory. However, we have been telling them to be humble and treat people with respect."

After 32-yr delay, legal options for Kashmiri Pandits

► THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC) OR KASHMIRI ORGANISATIONS CAN TAKE UP THE ISSUE INDIVIDUALLY OR JOINTLY AND COMPEL THE PRESENT COMPETENT J&K GOVERNMENT TO FORM AN SIT OR JUDICIAL COMMISSION. JUSTICE NEEDS TO BE BROUGHT TO THESE UNFORTUNATE MIGRANT HINDUS WHOSE VOICES WERE NEVER HEARD FOR THE PAST 32 YEARS.

► INDIAN CRIMINAL LAW NOWHERE DEFINES THE LIMITATION TO FILE AN FIR. THERE HAVE BEEN INSTANCES IN THE PAST WHEN AN FIR WAS LODGED BY RAPE VICTIMS AFTER 15 YEARS. EVEN SECTION 473 OF THE CRPC ALLOWS THE COURT TO CONSIDER AN OLDER CASE ONLY IF IT IS IN THE "INTEREST OF JUSTICE" OR WHEN THE "DELAY" IN SEEKING REDRESSAL HAS BEEN PROPERLY EXPLAINED.

► PHOTOS AND VIDEOS ARE AVAILABLE WITH THE FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE VICTIMS, AS WELL AS WITH THE MEDIA, ESPECIALLY NEWSPAPERS AND NEWS AGENCIES IN KASHMIR, WHICH CAN FORM PART OF THE EVIDENCE IN THE COURT.



Ramesh Wangnoo | New Delhi

As the families of the victims could not go back to Kashmir due to terrorism to file the criminal cases against the atrocities committed against them, the question arises as to what are the options after 32 years for them.

The public temper is running high

after watching the movie "The Kashmir Files", which has shown the real incidents of rapes, murders, brutalities, loot and arson committed by terrorists and the locals.

The Supreme Court in the case of Anusha Maruti Shinde and others vs the state of Maharashtra AIR 2009 SC 2609 has held that protection of society and stamping out criminal pro-

clivity must be the object of law which must be achieved by imposing appropriate sentences.

The law as a corner-stone of the edifice of "order" should meet the challenges confronting the society, as any leniency in a case of such heinous nature crimes would amount to travesty of justice and the plea of leniency would be wholly unjustified.

The Supreme Court in the past had held that the evidence of a victim of a sexual offence is entitled to great weight, even without corroboration. If evidence of the prosecutrix inspires confidence, it must be relied upon without seeking corroboration of her statement in material particulars. In the Tulshidas Kanolkar vs the state of Goa, the Supreme Court held that delay in lodging an FIR cannot be used as a ritualistic formula for discarding prosecution case and doubting its authenticity. It only puts the court on guard to search for and consider if any explanation has been

offered for the delay. Once it is offered, the Court has to only see whether it is satisfactory or not.

Now the question arises as to what are the options before the Kashmiri migrants to get justice after 32 years.

The first option is that the J&K government must constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by a Deputy Commissioner of Police on the request of Kashmiri Pandit organisations to probe this genocide. The second option is a judicial commission be appointed under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952. The third option is that suo motu cognizance be taken by the Supreme Court for this Hindu 'genocide' under Article 32 and Article 226 of the Constitution so that severe punishment is inflicted on the top officials/ministers or administrators of that period. It should also provide relief by way of handsome compensation given to the victims of the families who became the target of terrorism.



YOGI TO BE ELECTED AS LEADER AT MLAS' MEET ON MARCH 24

Lucknow | Agencies

Newly elected BJP MLAs in Uttar Pradesh will meet on March 24 to formally elect Yogi Adityanath as their leader, paving the way for his swearing in as chief minister for the second consecutive term. Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the party Vice President Raghuvir Das will be observers at the meeting. According to party sources, after Yogi Adityanath is formally elected as leader of the legislature party, he will formally stake his claim to form government at Raj Bhawan and



Governor Anandiben Patel will then invite him to form government. The swearing-in ceremony is scheduled for March 25 at the Ikana stadium and top leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi are likely to attend the function.

DHAMI STAKES CLAIM TO FORM GOVT IN UTTARAKHAND

New Delhi/Dehradun: Uttarakhand's Chief Minister-designate Pushkar Singh Dhami met Governor Lt Gen (Retd) Gurmit Singh on Monday evening to officially stake claim to form the new government in the state. Sources said that the swearing-in ceremony of the new government is likely to be held on March 23-24. Earlier, Dhami was elected as the leader of BJP's legislative party at a meeting in Dehradun, held in the presence of central observers Rajnath Singh and Meenkshi Lekhi. BJP's Uttarakhand election in-charge Pralhad Joshi, state in-charge and national General Secretary Dushyant Gautam and MPs from the state also attended the meeting. Congratulating Dhami after the legislative party meeting, Rajnath Singh said that all-round development of Uttarakhand will happen under him. "Dhami left an impression by running the government for six months," he said.

SAWANT STAKES CLAIM TO FORM GOVT IN GOA, APPOINTED CM BY GOVERNOR

Panaji: With the support of three Independent MLAs and a two Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) legislators, the leader of the BJP's 20-member legislative party, Pramod Sawant, on Monday staked claim to form a BJP-led coalition government in Goa.

Sawant submitted the party's resolution electing him as a leader of the BJP legislative party to Governor P.S. Sreedharan Pillai, along with letters of support from the three Independent MLAs and MGP legislative party leader Sudin Dhavalikar.

Governor Pillai has appointed Sawant as the Chief Minister, and the swearing-in ceremony is expected to be held on March 23 or March 24 in consultation with the BJP's central leadership.

Sawant, 48, had previously held the post of Chief Minister from 2019-2022 and was serving as caretaker Chief Minister of the state.

Speaking to reporters after being appointed Chief Minister, Sawant thanked top BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, state party leaders, and MLAs for his appointment as Chief Minister for the second time. "My aim is to transform Modi ji's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat in Goa as Swayampurna Goa 2.0 this time. We will work together to realise the Prime Minister's vision of creating a new India and a new Goa. We will work to provide good governance with transparency and zero corruption," the Chief Minister said.

Sawant's candidature was endorsed earlier on Monday at a meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party's 20-member legislative party in the presence of Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, an emissary of the BJP's central parliamentary board, and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who is the party's in-charge of poll-related affairs in

the coastal state. Interestingly, Sawant's key rival for the post of Chief Minister, his former cabinet colleague Vishwajit Rane, proposed Sawant's name for the post of Chief Minister at the meeting.

"Vishwajit Rane proposed Pramod Sawant's name as the leader. Rane's proposal was supported by Ravi Naik, Mauvin Godinho, Nilesh Cabral, Rohan Khaunte and Jennifer Monserrate (all BJP MLAs). After that I asked everyone if they had another option. All of them said, 'we are in support of Pramod Sawant'," Tomar told reporters.

Sawant was tipped to be Chief Minister, but the party had been unable to formalise his appointment reportedly in the wake of a claim for chief ministership made by Rane. Both Sawant and Rane were summoned to Delhi by Amit Shah, who, according to BJP sources, resolved the differences between the two leaders, paving way for Sawant to take charge of the top post for a second term.

Padma Awards 2022: Gen Bipin Rawat conferred award posthumously



Team Absolute | New Delhi

President Ram Nath Kovind presented two Padma Vibhushan, eight Padma Bhushan and 54 Padma Shri Awards for 2022 at a civil investiture ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday.

The two Padma Vibhushan were presented posthumously to Gen Bipin Rawat, former CDS, and Radehy Shyam Khemka of Geeta Press, Gorakhpur.

The Padma Bhushan awards were conferred upon senior Congress leader

Ghulam Nabi Azad, Punjabi singer Gurmeet Bawa (posthumously), Tata Sons' N. Chandrashekharan while Najma Akhtar, Vice Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia was among those who were awarded Padma Shri. Among the dignitaries present on the occasion were the Vice President, Prime Minister and Union Minister for Home Affairs, a communique from the Rashtrapati Bhavan said. Almost a similar number of other awardees would be felicitated in a similar ceremony to be held next Monday.

Sex racket busted in Delhi, 11 women held

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The anti-human trafficking unit of Delhi Police has busted a sex racket being operated from a spa centre in the national capital and arrested 11 women, including a receptionist and the owner of the centre, an official said on Monday. A police team was constituted to verify a complaint against a spa and massage centre

for allegedly running a prostitution racket in Delhi. "After preliminary investigation, a trap was laid by sending a decoy customer to the Wellness Spa Centre in Green Park. Eleven women were produced by the receptionist before the decoy customer for paid sex," DCP Deepak Yadav said. All the 11 women along with the owner of the spa, Rajesh Kumar Gupta, were arrested.

Cabinet approves extension of National AIDS Control Programme till 2026

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has given its approval for the continuation of the centrally-funded National AIDS and STD Control Programme (NACP, Phase V) for a period of five years from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2026.

The total outlay of the programme will be Rs 15,471.94 crore. The national AIDS response was initiated by the government of India in 1992 with the launch of the first



phase of the National AIDS and STD Control Programme. Since then, four phases of NACP have been suc-

cessfully completed. The Phase IV of NACP concluded on March 31, 2021.

The NACP Phase V will take forward the national AIDS and STD response till FY 2025-26 towards the attainment of United Nations' sustainable development goal (SDG) 3.3 of ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030 through a comprehensive package of prevention, detection and treatment services.

Meanwhile, the number of annual new HIV infections in India has declined by 48 per cent against the global average of 31 per cent (base-

line year 2010). The annual AIDS-related deaths have declined by 82 per cent against the global average of 42 per cent (baseline year 2010). As a result, HIV prevalence in India continues to be low with an adult HIV prevalence of 0.22 per cent.

As per the Union Health Ministry, around 14.20 lakh people living with HIV (PLHIV) are taking lifelong, free, high-quality anti-retroviral treatment (ART) from the programme supported facilities, which is one of the world's largest cohorts of PLHIV under government-funded treatment programmes.

AAP ANNOUNCES 5 CANDIDATES FOR RS POLLS FROM PUNJAB

Chandigarh | Agencies

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday announced the names of its candidates for the elections of five Rajya Sabha seats in Punjab.

Former cricketer Harbhajan Singh, AAP's Punjab affairs co-in-charge Raghav Chadha, party's election strategist in Punjab, Sandeep Pathak, Lovely Professional University (LPU) Chancellor Ashok Kumar Mittal and Ludhiana's eminent industrialist Sanjeev Arora filed nomination for the Rajya Sabha seats from AAP in the Punjab legislative Assembly.

All the candidates filed their nomination papers in the presence of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

The AAP had registered a landslide victory in Punjab Assembly elections 2022, and 92 candidates of the party reached the legislative assembly.

Looking at the number of seats and mathematical figures, all the five candidates of AAP are sure to be elected unopposed. Chadha, who is the party's Punjab affairs co-in-charge, is a confidant of AAP's national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind



Kejriwal. In the 2020 Delhi Assembly Elections, Chadha won from Rajinder Nagar Assembly constituency in Fei and became an MLA. Chadha is also the vice-chairman of the Delhi Jal Board. Sandeep Pathak joined the party to contribute to Kejriwal's dream of a corruption-free India. He has been working and strengthening the party by staying behind the scenes for many years now. Famous cricketer and former India off-spin

bowler Harbhajan Singh also filed nomination for Rajya Sabha by joining the AAP.

Harbhajan Singh played for the Indian cricket team from 1998 to 2016 and made a special place in the hearts of the people of the country with his amazing and unique bowling.

Ashok Kumar Mittal, founder and chancellor of Lovely Professional University, has also filed his nomination as a candidate of AAP.

Mittal is known for his commendable work and social service in the field of higher education. Born in a normal family, Mittal achieved success on the basis of his hard work and ability and achieved so much. To contribute to the education sector in Punjab, he established Lovely Professional University (LPU) in Jalandhar. LPU is one of the largest universities in India. Students from more than 50 countries come here for higher education.

Sanjeev Arora, an eminent businessman of Ludhiana, will also go to Rajya Sabha from Punjab quota on behalf of AAP. Arora runs the Krishna Pran Breast Cancer Charitable Trust. He founded it after his parents lost their lives due to cancer and treated more than 160 cancer patients free of cost.

Non-local vendor shot at by terrorists in J&K

Srinagar | Agencies

Terrorists shot at and injured a non-local vendor in south Kashmir's Pulwama district, officials said on Monday.

The officials said that terrorists fired upon and injured a vendor identified as Paras Mandan, a resident of Bihar. He has been moved to the hospital.

Additional police forces have reached the spot, which has been cordoned off, and an operation has been launched to nab the attackers. Earlier, a civilian identified as Tajamul Mohi-ud-din was shot at from close range



by terrorists near his residence in central Kashmir's Budgam district. He was critically injured and moved to hospital where he was declared brought dead.

TMC LEADER ABHISHEK BANERJEE, WIFE MOVE SC AGAINST ED SUMMONS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Abhishek Banerjee -- the nephew of TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and his wife Rujira Banerjee have moved the Supreme Court challenging ED summons to them by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to the alleged West Bengal coal scam.

The ED has summoned Banerjee and his wife to appear for questioning on March 21 and 22. The couple had earlier moved the Delhi High Court against the ED's summons, contending that since both are West Bengal residents, they should not be called by the agency to appear before it in the capital.

On March 11, the High Court dismissed their plea. The couple has moved the apex court challenging the high court order.

Their plea filed through advocate Sunil Fernandes said: "The party to which the Petitioner No.1 (Abhishek) belonged, comprehensively trounced the political party at power in the Centre, thereby giving justifiable cause to 'target' and 'fix' the Petitioner No.1, by misusing the Central Investigation Agencies."

It further added: "It is not only against the basic principles of territorial jurisdiction, but could also result in absurd consequences and situations wherein the officers of the respondent agency situated in any state in



India can summon any person residing in any other state, without any regard to the place of occurrence of offence, or the place of residence of the summoned person."

The plea said the ED did not even attempt to interrogate the petitioners firstly at Kolkata, and it is still unclear as to what are the impediments that ED will face if it interrogates them at their full-fledged office in Kolkata. The plea added: "The petitioners' contention of political victimisation is further fortified by the inscrutable and inexplicable insistence of the ED to interrogate the petitioners at their Delhi office instead of their full-fledged office in Kolkata. The ED seems more interested in causing prejudice to the petitioners herein rather than sincerely and expeditiously investigate the alleged offence."

The petitioners urged the apex court to stay the high court order and direct ED to summon the petitioners under section 50 PMLA only in Kolkata.

Seven banks will infuse Rs 1,500 crore into stalled Amrapali housing projects, SC told

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court was informed on Monday that seven nationalised banks will infuse Rs 1,500 crore into the stalled Amrapali housing projects.

A bench of Justices U.U. Lalit and Bela M. Trivedi was informed by the consortium of banks that all documentation in connection with funding of the projects have been completed and only Indian Bank had not taken any decision.

Counsel submitted before the bench that the remaining documents would be signed within 2-3 days. The consortium of banks includes Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank, Bank of India, State Bank of India, UCO Bank, Indian Bank, and Punjab & Sindh Bank.

The top court-appointed receiver, senior advocate R. Venkataramani informed the bench that the State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank have issued the sanction order for granting money for Amrapali projects.

Indian Bank has also come on board as part of the consortium, but is yet to pass the sanction order. The consortium documents have also



been prepared. The court directed the banks to do the needful and also to release the funds," said Kumar Mihir, counsel for home buyers.

During the hearing, the top court was informed that there are several thousand flats, where homebuyers are untraceable. On March 7, the Supreme Court had directed the consortium of banks to follow the

footsteps of Bank of Baroda, which has issued a sanction order to grant funding for the stalled Amrapali housing projects, and take a decision on funding Amrapali projects within two days. The top court said it hopes the approval order is passed by the banks, since it is in the final stages, and emphasised that the money should be released

by the banks before the next date of hearing. In its February 21 order, the top court had noted that Alok Kumar, advocate for UCO Bank, Bishwajit Dubey, advocate for Bank of Baroda, and Megha Karnwal, advocate for State Bank of India, have accepted that the banks concerned are in the process of reaching final stages of decision within a week's time.

The top court was informed that the matters will be concluded at the topmost levels of the banks, where-after funding can immediately begin. Siddhartha Dave, senior advocate appearing for National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC), submitted that his client has already put in more than Rs 109 crore and the situation requires immediate intervention. Considering the circumstances on record and with a view to ensure steady flow of funds, we direct the members of the consortium of banks to place on record their final decisions within seven days from today and to start effecting the funding within a week thereafter so that at least Rs 300 crore are released by way of first tranche on or before March 15, 2022," said the top court in its order.



NO COVID FATALITY IN MAHA FOR 5TH TIME IN MARCH

In a positive development, Maharashtra on Monday recorded zero Covid-19 deaths, for the fifth time in the past 20 days, health officials said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a positive development, Maharashtra on Monday recorded zero Covid-19 deaths, for the fifth time in the past 20 days, health officials said.

Earlier, the state reported nil fatalities on March 2, 7, 9, and 13, indicating an end to the ongoing third Covid-19 wave which started in December 2021.

The state also recorded new infections in double digits for the second time in three days.

On Monday, the state reported 99 fresh cases while on March 19, there were 97 new patients, the lowest since April 2020.

With only 1,273 active cases, there are no infectees in either institutional quarantine or home isolation since the past almost a fortnight, easing the burden on the health networks.

Of the 99 cases detected on Monday, Mumbai and Pune - which have been at



the top of the hotspots chart since the start, reported 36 and 31 new patients respectively.

There are 14 fresh cases from Nashik circle, 10 from Aurangabad circle, and 2 each from Kolhapur, Latur, Akola, and

Nagpur circles.

Since March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic was declared, the state has recorded a staggering 78,72,512 cases and a whopping 143,767 deaths, both highest in the country.

Spare govt, civic buses from 'bulk' diesel price hike, NCP urges PM

The Nationalist Congress Party on Monday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding that the Centre should exempt all state government and municipal bus services from the steep hike of Rs 25/litre to bulk users.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Nationalist Congress Party on Monday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding that the Centre should exempt all state government and municipal bus services from the steep hike of Rs 25/litre to bulk users.

The government has increased the price of diesel sold to bulk users by around



Rs 25/litre in tune with the almost 40 per cent hike in international oil prices though the retail rates at fuel stations are not changed.

Maharashtra NCP chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said that the Centre's move to hike the diesel prices for bulk users has been implemented due to the increase in diesel prices owing to the Russia-Ukraine war that has shot up the

prices of crude oil in the international markets.

"I take this opportunity to request your good self to kindly exempt all state government and municipal bus services which fall in the bulk users category from this hike in the diesel prices," he said.

Tapase pointed out that the decision of oil marketing companies to include the state government and municipal buses in the list of bulk

users would have adverse financial implications on such public transport services and "must be immediately rolled back".

In view of the Centre's move, state bus transport services and civic bodies operating city bus services, like Mumbai's BEST, are now contemplating a hike in freight rates and passenger fares, which would further hit the consumers already reeling under runaway inflation, officials said.

Some government transport agencies, including the BEST, are planning to line up their bus fleets outside petrol pumps during night hours to avoid paying the extra Rs 25/litre.

However, many private transporters with large fleets of trucks or buses may not be affected by the new hike as they continue to avail their requirements directly from the fuel pumps, the officials pointed out.

Thane: Eerie birthday party - Chills & Cheers on autopsy table in morgue!

In a macabre incident, a group of persons were caught in a sting operation while celebrating a birthday party on the autopsy table inside the morgue of a civic-run hospital in the dead of the night, police said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a macabre incident, a group of persons were caught in a sting operation while celebrating a birthday party on the autopsy table inside the morgue of a civic-run hospital in the dead of the night, police said.

The ghastly celebrations took place in the post-mortem room, adjacent to the morgue with several bodies kept there, on the eve of Holi, around 1.30 a.m. on Friday, said Senior Police Inspector M.B. Patil of Bhayander Police Station.

"Based on a complaint filed by a journalist, we have registered a first information report and are conducting further investigations. No arrests have been made so far," Patil told IANS. According to journalist Anil Nautiyal, in the wee hours of March 18, he got a tip-off about the party with liquor flowing freely, in full swing inside the autopsy room of the Bharat Ratna Pandit Bhimsen Joshi (Tembha) Hospital here, run by Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC). "I rushed there in 10 minutes and witnessed the spirited party celebrations with around 8-9 persons present. When I demanded what was going on, one person identified as Sushant, claimed it was his



birthday," Nautiyal said.

As Nautiyal started filming and taking photos, some of the boisterous revelers got enraged, tried to pin him down and assaulted him, but he somehow managed to escape from their clutches and fled the spot. When Nautiyal reached his vehicle parked outside, one of the accused snatched his car keys and continued to chase him at that ungodly hour. "I left my car there and ran home safely a few minutes later and then called up the police. They promised to probe and also asked me to come and lodge a complaint," said the journalist. By the time the police reached the morgue premises, it was deserted like a graveyard with all the 'party animals' making good their escape at the dead of the night. Nautiyal claimed that the Tembha Hospital was on his radar for several months after he received information of some alleged unsavoury activities purportedly going on there, including clicking

selfies with nude bodies or tampering with them. Among the revelers at the party were some civic staffers, ambulance drivers or helpers, but it was not clear whether they were authorised to enter the morgue premises, usually out-of-bounds for all people. Patil said that at least six accused persons have been booked under sections of the Indian Penal Code and the stringent Maharashtra Mediapersons & Media Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to Property) Act. He said that all the accused are "still around" and none have absconded from the police dragnet but several arrests could follow after the initial investigations are completed.

Not willing to let the matter rest in peace, Nautiyal plans to meet the MBMC administrator and other top civic officials seeking a full-fledged probe into the series of sinister activities that are allegedly ongoing in the morgue and nab the culprits.

Leopard strolls inside Mercedes-Benz plant, rescued after 6 hours

A leopard which strayed inside the sprawling Mercedes Benz factory was rescued after the plant had to be partially evacuated and operations halted for nearly 6 hours, here on Monday.

Team Absolute | Pune

A leopard which strayed inside the sprawling Mercedes Benz factory was rescued after the plant had to be partially evacuated and operations halted for nearly 6 hours, here on Monday.

In an unusual incident, workers at the Chakan plant were rattled to notice an adult leopard prowling on the luxury car manufacturing factory premises around dawn today and sounded an alarm.

After the initial panic subsided, a team of Maharashtra Forest Department arrived and took charge of the situation on the 100-acre production facility.

A Wildlife SOS Team from the Manikdoh



Leopard Rescue Centre was also called in with reinforcements and veterinarians to help trap and rescue the big cat.

Meanwhile, as a precautionary measure, the workers in the immediate vicinity were evacuated to a safe spot on the advice of the local police.

In the operation lasting around 6 hours, the teams comprising Dr Shubham Patil and Dr Nikhil Bangar located the leopard hidden on the shop floor of one of the factory sheds and then secured the area.

The two teams successfully managed to lure and

trap the distressed feline, shot a tranquiliser dart from a safe distance and numbed it before it was captured around 11.30 a.m, nearly 6 hours after it was sighted.

MFD Range Forest Officer Yogesh Mahajan said that the leopard was shifted to a special transportation cage and taken to a facility in Junnar where it continues to remain under medical observation before release into the wild.

Dr Bangar, the Wildlife Veterinary Officer with the Wildlife SOS, said that the leopard is a male, aged around 2-3 years.

After the successful rescue, the Wildlife SOS CEO K. Satyanarayan said that due to rapid habitat loss, leopards of Maharashtra are being compelled to venture into human dominated areas.

"Our team is trained to ensure that such situations are handled with the utmost caution, keeping in mind the safety of the leopard as well as humans," said Satyanarayan.

Following the successful operation, the relieved workers returned to their workplaces and normalcy resumed by noon, said the police.

Cybersecurity company opens data center in Mumbai

Sophos, a global leader in next-generation cybersecurity, on Monday announced that its new data center in Mumbai is now open.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sophos, a global leader in next-generation cybersecurity, on Monday announced that its new data center in Mumbai is now open.

The Sophos data center provides local capacity to address the growing demand

for Sophos Central, the cloud management platform that supports Sophos' portfolio of advanced, next-generation cybersecurity products, the company claims.

"The local data center enables Sophos to address the business issues that impact cybersecurity buying decisions of these organisations. This will make it as easy as possible for customers and partners to access the best threat protection and detection and data storage options available from Sophos," Sunil Sharma, managing director of sales for India and SAARC, Sophos said in a statement.

The data center also provides private and public

organisations of any size with the ability to store, manage and access data in-country, allowing them to meet local data sovereignty regulations.

The initial products and services in the portfolio with access to the new data center include Sophos Extended Detection and Response (XDR), Sophos Intercept X, Intercept X for Server, Sophos Encryption, and Sophos Managed Threat Response services.

The Sophos India data center is hosted by Amazon Web Services in Mumbai and is Sophos' third data center in the Asia Pacific and Japan region. The other two locations are in Australia and Japan.

NAWAB MALIK'S JUDICIAL REMAND EXTENDED TILL APRIL 4

A Special PMLA Court on Monday extended the judicial custody of Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik by 14 days till April 4.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Special PMLA Court on Monday extended the judicial custody of Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik by 14 days till April 4. However, the Special Court has allowed his plea to provide him with a bed, mattress and chair during his judicial custody.

Malik, 62, was arrested in a pre-dawn swoop on February 23 by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with an alleged money-laundering case arising out of a tainted land deal involving

the mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar.

In continuous custody since then, Malik had moved the Bombay High Court last week to quash the ED case and set aside a Special PMLA Court ruling sending him to custody in the case dating back to over 20 years, but his plea was rejected.

Later, the Nationalist Congress Party decided to relieve Malik of his portfolios and Guardian Ministership of two districts which shall be allocated to other Cabinet colleagues by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

Pawar releases Amnesty Scheme for pending sales tax dues before GST launch

- Good news for small traders & dealers hit by corona crisis.
- There will be a complete waiver of the arrears where they are of Rs 10,000 or less per year. As a result, small dealers will be benefited in almost 1 lakh cases.
- Dealers having arrears up to Rs 10 lakh or less will pay an online lump sum of 20% amount
- Waiver will be granted for the remaining amount, as a result, medium dealers will benefit in almost 2.20 lakh cases

Team Absolute | Pune

In a bid to help small traders and industry hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic the Maharashtra Government on Monday announced an amnesty scheme for the pending sales tax arrears before the launch of GST. The Maharashtra Settlement of Arrears of Tax, interest, penalty or late fee scheme 2022 scheme will be implemented from April 1 till September 30, 2022.

The Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who had mentioned about the scheme in his annual budget for 2022-23, today released details during his speech in the state legislature. There will be a complete waiver of the arrears where they are of Rs 10,000 or less per year. As a result, small dealers will be benefited in almost 1 lakh cases.

Dealers having arrears up to Rs 10 lakh or less will pay an online lump sum of 20% amount. Pawar said that waiver will be granted for the remaining amount. As a

result, medium dealers will benefit in almost 2.20 lakh cases.

Traders with arrears of Rs 10 lakh or less as of April 1, 2022 have been given the option to pay 20 per cent of the total arrears without any calculation of non-disputed tax, disputed tax, penalty. If such a lump sum of 20 per cent is paid, the remaining 80 per cent will be waived. It will benefit small traders in about 2.20 lakh cases," said Pawar. He however, clarified that traders, who are not eligible to pay a lump sum or who do not choose this option, will not be given any tax deduction in the proposed scheme for settlement of arrears.

The undisputed tax will have to be paid 100 per cent. However, the disputed tax will have to be paid 30 per cent for the period before March 31, 2005. In addition, 10 percent interest and 5 per cent penalty will have to be paid. In addition, for the period from April 1, 2005 to June 30, 2017, after the payment of 50 per cent of the disputed amount, 15 percent of the

interest, 5 percent of the penalty and 5 percent of the late fee, the government will waive the remainder arrears, said Pawar.

To avail the scheme, taxpayers will have to pay the requisite amount within the stipulated date.

"For dealers having arrears beyond Rs 50 lakh, there's an option to pay the amount in installments. The total installment discount is divided into 4 parts. The first instalment of 25 per cent is required to be paid by September 30, 2022 and remaining 3 instalments will have to be paid in next 9 months. If the payment is less than the required amount, the trader will be given a proportional benefit," said Pawar.

Pawar said the amnesty scheme will be implemented entirely online and in a transparent manner. "The scheme will play a vital role in the revival of industry and trade affected by the Corona crisis and will get a good response from industry and trade sector," he added.

Maharashtra partners with Khan Academy to improve math learning outcomes in Govt schools

Since 2021, the Government of Maharashtra and Khan Academy India are working together to recreate Khan Academy's math content consisting of 700 videos, articles, and practice exercises in Marathi which will be available on SCERT Maharashtra website in addition to Khan Academy.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

MAHARASHTRA: The Government of Maharashtra's School Education and Sports Department has partnered with Khan Academy India to improve math learning outcomes for students across classes 1-10 in government schools in Maharashtra. This partnership will enable access to high quality math learning content in Marathi so that students can learn in their own language. The first phase of the implementation will empower 488 model schools in Maharashtra with new math content and advanced online resources. All teachers in these government schools will be trained to leverage online teaching resources and offer personalized learning experience based on progress data of individual students.

Since 2021, the Government of Maharashtra and Khan Academy India are working together to recreate Khan Academy's math content consisting of 700 videos, articles, and practice exercises in Marathi which will be available on SCERT Maharashtra website in addition to Khan Academy. This will allow students to build a foundational under-

standing in Math, at their own pace, using any device and free of cost.

Further, teachers will have access to necessary online tools and real-time data to identify learning gaps and address them, at a classroom and individual-level.

As a part of this partnership, the team at Khan Academy is working with the Maharashtra government to educate over 2000 teachers, 36 District Nodal Officers, and 488 principals on the use case of Khan Academy and how to use its learning content and effectively implement personalized math learning in the classroom. In its first phase, the focus will be on successfully implementing a personalized math learning environment across 488 schools for over 1,00,000 learners in Maharashtra. This will further be extended to more schools and independent learners who can benefit by accessing the entire library of content for free.

Launching the Khan Academy initiative on International Women's Day, Varsha Gaikwad, minister of School Education, Maharashtra, in a statement said, "It is our duty to offer the best quality education and facilities to our students who are the future of the society and the country."

"Our partnership with Khan Academy is aimed at offering the best learning infrastructure to our learners aided by technology and world-class content in their own language. As schools are reopening, we are enabling a superior classroom experience that will help us address the learning gap in students by offering them personalized learning," said Vishal Solanki, Commissioner, Education, in a statement.

"I am happy that the new math learning content will be on SCERT Maharashtra website in addition to Khan Academy enabling students to access world class education for free of cost," said, Director, Devendra Singh, the SCERT, statement. "The Government of Maharashtra on this project of improving learning quality in government schools. We are jointly aligned in our vision towards making high quality educational content available for free in Marathi," said Sandeep Bapna, MD, Khan Academy India, in a statement. Khan Academy is committed to making world-class education accessible to students in India and all over the world and currently available in English, Hinglish, Hindi, Kannada, Punjabi, and Gujarati, aligned to the Indian curriculum.



EDITOR'S SPECS

HARD POLITICAL BARGAIN IN UP

Small parties that have made a big splash in the recently concluded Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, are now demanding their proverbial pound of flesh. These small parties that are caste-based and have limited areas of influence, had contested the elections in alliance with either the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or the Samajwadi Party (SP). They have benefited immensely from the bipolar contest. These parties managed to push national parties like the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Congress to the periphery. Both the BJP allies -- Apna Dal (S) and Nishad Party -- have performed well. The Apna Dal won 12 seats out of the 17 that it contested. The Apna Dal won 12 seats. According to sources, the Apna Dal now wants a greater share of the pie in the government. Another BJP ally, Nishad Party president Sanjay Nishad is an MLC, his son Pravin Nishad is a MP and his younger son Sarvan Nishad had been elected MLA. With his entire family in politics, Sanjay Nishad now wants to be nominated as Deputy Chief Minister. BJP leaders admit that they sense trouble from Sanjay Nishad "who is politically over-ambitious". In the SP alliance, the smaller parties are also aiming at bigger gains even though the alliance ended up under-performing in the assembly elections. The RLD - normally a reticent political outfit - is wanting a larger share of seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections as well as the legislative council. The RLD, however, has said that it wishes to continue its alliance with the SP and may not exert undue pressure. The Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP), which has won six seats in alliance with the SP, is already emerging as a potential trouble maker. All the smaller parties, however, are now looking to the Lok Sabha elections and want a share in tickets for the same.

INDIA ACTS BIG BROTHER TO SRI LANKA

Asad Mirza

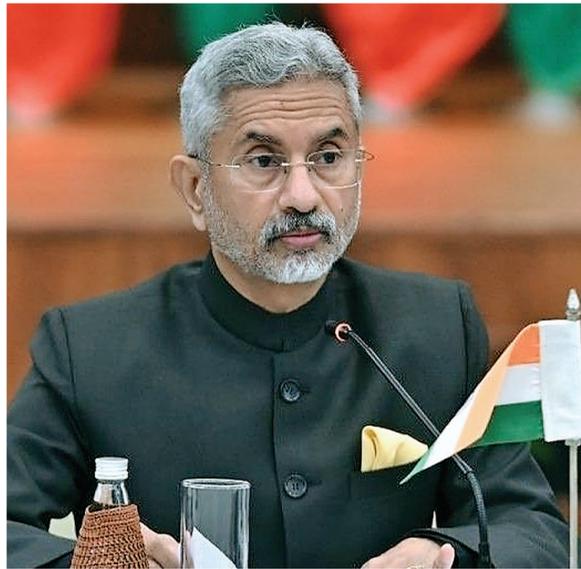
Indian policy in the region towards smaller countries, seems to be paying dividends, as compared to China, which is more and more being seen as a hawk, intent on taking over smaller countries natural resources. The recent example of this is the manner in which India has handled Sri Lanka, a neighbour under extreme financial burden. Ties between two neighbours expanded to another level during the visit to India by Sri Lankan Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa. He met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in New Delhi. Later, an announcement was made of a \$1 billion credit facility to Sri Lanka on March 17, which is in the midst of a severe economic crisis triggered by a shortage of foreign exchange.

In his tweet after the meeting, Jaishankar reiterated importance of India's "Neighbourhood first" policy. **Indian largesse** Indian assistance in the last six months comprises of; a \$500 million oil line of credit; \$1 billion line of credit for essentials to be imported from India; currency swap of \$400 million; deferral of \$515 million under Asian Clearing Union; 40,000 MT of fuel on credit; 100,000 Rapid Antigen Test kits and supply of 1,000 tons of liquid medical oxygen, according to reports.

India is also expected to extend a food and health security package to Sri Lanka on an urgent basis, along with an energy security package and currency swap, and also push Indian investments.

India's NTPC last week also signed an agreement for setting up a solar plant in Sampur in the eastern province of Trincomalee, while the Adina group has signed up for another wind/solar project in the Mannar and Ponneryn areas of northern Sri Lanka. Indian Oil's subsidiary Lanka India Oil Corporation and Ceylon Petroleum have signed an agreement to jointly develop the Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm. Delhi is also pushing for joint development of the Palaly airport and Kankesanthurai harbour in the northern Jaffna peninsula.

Sri Lanka Economic Crisis As per a report of the Financial Times, the Sri Lankan Economic disaster was partly manmade as pointed out by former CBSL Deputy Governor Wijewardana, blaming the government for making serious policy errors when it announced an unsolicited, attractive tax concession to income taxpayers. The con-



sequence of this extraordinary move was the building up of inflationary pressure in the domestic economy on one side, and the depletion of foreign reserves putting pressure on the rupee to depreciate in the market, on the other.

A substantial drop in tourism-related earnings in 20/21, heavy debt repayments and an increase in pandemic-related expenses, also added to the woes. The result of all this was that 500,000 people according to the World Bank have fallen below the poverty line, whilst food inflation hit 21 per cent. Dependence on oil has further aggravated its problems after the start of the Ukraine crisis.

Political Crisis On March 17, as his brother Basil Rajapaksa arrived in Delhi, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said in an address to the nation that his government would work with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to tide over the crisis.

This presidential speech came after days of massive protests over the shortages and steep prices that have created day-to-day uncertainties for Sri Lankans across the country. Political observers say that in just over two years, Sri Lanka's first family has presided over a series of crises mostly of its own making.

Sri Lanka currently is facing its worst eco-

nomical upheaval in a decade. The badly timed fertiliser ban led to a dramatic fall in yields of crops like rice and tea, added to its failure to deal with a foreign-currency crisis that's now a humanitarian emergency. Relying until now on help from its two major backers - India and China - and stubbornly refusing wider international aid, the country is on the verge of payments default.

Many regional observers blame Rajapaksa clan for all this. Gotabaya, who won office in the November 2019 presidential elections, appointed his brother, Mahinda, as Prime Minister. Their eldest brother, Chamal, is a Cabinet minister, while his son is a non-Cabinet minister. One of the Prime Minister's sons is also in the Cabinet, another is his chief of staff, and a nephew is an MP. According to some estimates, about 75 per cent of the budget is under the control of Rajapaksa ministers in government. But the Rajapaksa family has not been able to do what needed to be done to help Sri Lanka out of this mess.

Things are so bad that the brothers' resistance to seek support from the IMF has softened. Sri Lankan officials began talks with the IMF from March 14 and may present policy proposals by early next month.

There are increasing demands for the government to clearly articulate some con-

crete solutions. Sri Lanka has asked both Beijing and New Delhi to consider restructuring its debt repayments.

The country is also seeking to negotiate a new loan with China. The Hambantota Port, part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, is widely viewed as an example of China's over-ambitious infrastructure drive. Sri Lanka borrowed heavily to build the port, couldn't repay the loans, and then gave China a 99-year lease for debt relief. Gotabaya is hardly the unifying figure Sri Lanka needs right now. He'll continue to be the President till 2024 and the opposition protests are unlikely to loosen his grip on power. Any delay in securing an IMF agreement may bring the country one step closer to being a defaulter, and adding to people's disenchantment with the Rajapaksa.

India, on its part to build more robust and long-term strategic ties with Sri Lanka, needs a soft approach with added measures crucial to securing stability and preventing conflict recurrence over there on ethnic lines.

(Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)

international

FOLLOWING INDIA'S \$1BN CREDIT LINE, SL REQUESTS \$2.5BN FROM CHINA

Colombo | Agencies

Days after India announced a \$1 billion line of credit to financially strapped Sri Lanka, China on Monday said that Beijing is studying Colombo's request for a \$2.5 billion financial assistance.

Chinese Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Qi Zhenhong said new request for \$1 billion financing facility and \$1.5 billion buyer's credit were raised by Sri Lankan government to Chinese government recently. Lankan government's request for financial support in the backdrop of last Thursday's Sri Lanka signing of \$1 billion credit line with India in the presence of visiting Sri Lankan Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa. The Indian credit line was for the procurement of food, medicines and other essential items at a time when the island nation is fac-



ing worst-ever economic crisis with dollar crunch leading lack of essential items such medicine, dairy products, fuel, gas resulting complete break of transportation and long hours of daily power cuts. Speaking to the media in Colombo, the Chinese Ambassador on Monday announced details of various financial assistance provided to Sri Lanka and said \$1 billion term financing facility (\$500 million on March 2020 and \$500 million in April 2021) was provided by China Development Bank (CDB) to Sri Lankan Finance Ministry to support Sri Lanka fighting Covid-19 and reviving the

economy. In August 2021, \$300 million term financing facility was provided by CDB and \$1.5 billion bilateral currency SWAP agreement was signed between the People's Bank of China (PBoC) and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) in March 2021, to stabilise the forex level of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Qi Zhenhong said. The Beijing representative also told media that China is the biggest source of FDI for Sri Lanka with SL's Central Bank's annual report record by the end of 2020, the stock of China's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Sri Lanka was \$2,188 million.

AMID UKRAINE WAR, BIDEN TO TRAVEL TO POLAND

Washington | Agencies

As Russia's war on Ukraine is nearing a month, US President Joe Biden will embark on a visit to Poland this week after his scheduled meetings with NATO and European Union (EU) allies in Belgium, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki announced.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Psaki said the President will travel to Poland on Friday following his meetings in Brussels, on Wednesday "with our NATO Allies, G7 leaders, and EU leaders to discuss international efforts to support Ukraine and impose severe and unprecedented costs on Russia for its invasion". In Warsaw, he will hold a bilateral meeting with his Polish counterpart Andrzej Duda. During the meeting, Biden will "discuss how the US, alongside our allies and partners, is responding to the humanitarian and human rights crisis that Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war on Ukraine has created", Psaki added. The President, however has no plans to visit Ukraine, according to the Press Secretary. On Monday, Biden is scheduled to speak with French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the Ukraine crisis.



Ukraine rejects Russia's offer to surrender Mariupol

Kiev | Agencies

Ukraine has rejected Russia's offer to provide a safe passage for civilians to evacuate from Mariupol if Kiev surrendered the strategic port city, which has been one of the hardest hit since the invasion began 26 days ago, the media reported on Monday.

On Sunday, Colonel-General Mikhail Mizintsev, Director of the Russian National Centre for Defence Management, laid out the country's offer under which Ukraine had until 5 a.m. (Moscow time, about 7.30 A.M. IST) on Monday morning to accept the terms, the BBC reported.

Under the proposal, Russian troops would have opened safe corridors out of Mariupol from 10 a.m. (Moscow time), initially for Ukrainian troops and "for-



eign mercenaries" to disarm and leave the city.

After about two hours, Russian forces would have then allowed humanitarian convoys with food, medicine and other supplies to enter the city safely, once the demining of the roads was complete.

But, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Iryna

Vereshchuk rejected the offer, saying her country would not stop defending the strategic port city where around 300,000 people are believed to be trapped with supplies running out.

"There can be no question of any surrender, laying down of arms," she was as saying on Sunday night by Ukrayinska Pravda.

FERRY SINKS AFTER COLLIDING WITH CARGO VESSEL IN B'DESH, AT LEAST 6 DEAD

Dhaka | Agencies

Rescuers have recovered six bodies from a river in Narayanganj district outside Bangladesh's capital Dhaka after a ferry collided with another vessel and capsized on Sunday, a senior official said. Jayedul Alam, Narayanganj district's police chief, told a news agency that the ferry named "MV Afsar Uddin" sank after being hit by the cargo vessel in the



Shitalakkhya River in Narayanganj district. "The bodies of six people including three women, two children and a man have so far been retrieved," he was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency. According to the official, the ferry carrying some 25 to 30 passengers sank in the river at around 2:15 p.m. local time (0815 GMT) Sunday. Alam said one person has been confirmed missing. But local media reports put the number of missing people at dozens and feared the death toll may rise with the search and rescue operation still underway. Bangladesh's river police seized the cargo vessel, "MV Rupshi-19", and detained its master and eight other crew members.

PUTIN CHANGES TACTICS FOR UKRAINE WAR

Kiev | Agencies

After failing to capture Kiev, Russian President Vladimir Putin has been forced to change his war tactics in Ukraine and is moving to a strategy of "protecting key territorial goals".

This was reported by The Wall Street Journal citing unnamed high-ranking US officials, said UNIAN. One of the interlocutors said that, given the data received, the effective defence of the Ukrainian Armed Forces prompted Putin to adjust his tactics.

Now the Russian President wants to force Kiev to accept Moscow's claims to the southern and eastern territories of Ukraine. Thus, Russia wants to create a "land corridor" between the west of the



country and the occupied Crimea in 2014, as well as expand control over Donbas. At the same time,

Putin will continue his military pressure, including shelling of cities, hoping that this will force Zelensky

to give up hopes of joining the alliance with the West and agree to neutral status and other demands of the Kremlin, the report said.

If Putin's demands are not met, then, according to US officials, Russia will try to keep all the territories occupied by its regular troops and continue to escalate.

"Based on our military assessments, it seems that Putin is returning to the blockade tactics," one of the officials said.

According to him, for citizens in the surrounding cities, this means weeks, and possibly months of missile and artillery attacks by the Russian army.

Former senior State Department official Daniel Fried said Putin's goal of seizing Ukraine has not changed, "only his tactics have changed".

AFGHAN FINANCE MINISTER IS NOW UBER DRIVER IN WASHINGTON

Washington | Agencies

Former Afghan Finance Minister Khalid Payenda, who fled the country just before the Taliban takeover in August last year, now drives an Uber in Washington, the Guardian reported.

"If I complete 50 trips in the next two days, I receive a \$95 bonus," the Guardian quoted Payenda as saying to The Washington Post, from behind the wheel of a Honda Accord. The 40-year-old once oversaw a US-supported \$6 billion budget. The Post reported that in one night earlier this week, he made "a little over \$150 for six hours' work, not counting his commute - a mediocre night". Payenda resigned as Finance Minister a week before the Taliban seized Kabul, as his relationship with former President Asraf Ghani deteriorated. Fearing the President would have him arrested, he left for the US, where he joined his family.

"We had 20 years and the whole world's support to build a system that would work for the people," Payenda said in a text message to a World Bank official in Kabul on the day the capital fell, quoted by the Post. "All we built was a house of cards that came down crashing this fast. A house of cards built on the foundation of corruption." The Post recorded Payenda telling one passenger his move from Kabul to Washington had been "quite an adjustment".





BHOPAL WILL REGAIN ITS HOCKEY NURSERY STATUS: CHIEF MINISTER

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Bhopal was once a hockey nursery, we want to establish Bhopal as a hockey nursery again. Hockey is the pride of our country, the pride of Bhopal as well as honour of the people of India. There was a time when if India bagged medals in the Olympics, it was only in hockey. Our players are full of enthusiasm, if they are provided with the right resources and the best coaches, then India can once again be lead in hockey.

Chouhan was addressing the inaugural ceremony of Obaidullah Khan Heritage Cup Hockey Tournament 2022 inaugural ceremony of this tournament held at Major Dhyani Chand Hockey Stadium. Chouhan also planted two saplings of Spice in the stadium premises. Chief Minister unveiled the trophy of Obaidullah Khan Heritage Cup and also acquainted



with the participating teams of the hockey tournament. Chouhan said that the state gov-

ernment will not allow any shortage in sports facilities. All possible arrangements will be made for the

convenience of resources, coaches and players. The Obaidullah Khan Cup was established in 1931. It got discontinued once, later it was also interrupted due to Corona. Chouhan said that my heart is full of joy and happiness on the resumption of this tournament. This tournament in Bhopal will run from March 21 to 27 and will prove to be important in taking hockey to new heights once again.

Chief Minister Chouhan felicitated Madhya Pradesh's badminton player Gauranshi Sharma and tennis player Dhananjay Dubey selected for Dealympics, Brazil 2022 by presenting them a symbolic cheque of Rs. one lakh each. Principal Secretary Sports and Youth Welfare Deepthi Gaur Mukherjee, Director Sports and Youth Welfare Ravi Kumar Gupta, famous Olympian hockey player Inam-ur-Rahman, Shri Jalaluddin, Coach of Madhya Pradesh State Hockey Academy, Sameer Daad besides senior players and officials were present.

CM Chouhan takes leaf out of Yogi's book to use bulldozer against criminals

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan seems to have taken a leaf out of UP CM Yogi Adityanath's book to punish the wrongdoers in the state. It is evident from the recent order of demolition of several houses in two districts, Sheopur and Raisen of Madhya Pradesh.

On Sunday, bulldozers were used to demolish the house of a rape accused in Sheopur district. The action came after a minor girl was allegedly gang-raped by three persons, which sparked tension in the district.

As per the police, the accused, identified as Mohisin, Riyaj and Shahwaz were arrested for alleged gang-rape of a minor girl. The incident led to communal tension in the district. Subsequently, the Chief Minister asked the district administration to demolish houses of the accused involved in the gang-rape.

Their houses, according to the district administration, were built on government land. The houses were demolished using bulldozers in the presence of heavy police force and the officials of the district administration.

"Chouhan ordered Sheopur district administration to take strict action against those involved in the gang-rape of a minor girl. Their houses were demolished in the presence of police. People in the district have welcomed the government's action," a statement from the office of the Chief Minister said.



A similar action was initiated in Raisen district where a violent clash broke out between two communities recently. During the clash, one person was reported dead and over 50 persons were injured. The deceased, succumbed to bullet wounds, has been identified as Raju Aadivasi. The incident had occurred in a village under Silwani tehsil in Raisen district. Several injured persons have been shifted to Bhopal's Hamidia hospital for treatment. Chouhan visited them in hospital on Sunday. According to the police, FIR has been registered against over 200 people from both the communities, out of which 15 have been arrested. Subsequently, an order was issued by the Chief Minister for strict action against those involved in creating communal disharmony. Following the Chief Minister's order, the district administration along with the local police used bulldozer to demolish several houses.

Rabindranath Tagore University organized Eco Next Programme for students of Vidisha

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Centre for Science Communication and Faculty of Science, Rabindranath Tagore University Bhopal in collaboration with NCSTC (DST), Govt of India has organised a 5-days Residential Training Programme "Mission: Eco-Next" during 8th March to 12th March 2022, for the participants of Vidisha district (MP). The programme was sponsored by DST where 45 students attended who were selected through a Talent hunt Exam conducted on 18th Feb 2022. Participants were from Government Girls College, Vidisha, Naveen College, SSL Jain College Vatsalya College and Govt Excellence School from Vidisha. The students were divided into two groups under Eco-Eureka and Eco-Studio Training. In those 5



days free of cost training, participants learned various nature related activities and short film making to spread the message for protection of nature, environment and ecology. During the Training, the students were also taken to an outdoor trip at Bhojpur to collect natural samples of flora and fauna and to shoot video clips for making film on environment.

On the valedictory day on 12th March, '22 their outcome were evaluated and ten (10) students from each group

were awarded cash awards of Rs.10,000/- per group. Chief Guest of the valedictory programme was Nakul Parashar, Director Vigyan Prasar, New Delhi and guests of honour Anil Kothari, DG MPCST, BP Pethia, Vice Chancellor, RNTU, Nimish Kapur and Kapil Tripathi, Scientists from Vigyan Prasar, New Delhi distributed the certificates and awards to all the participants. Prabal Roy, Director, Centre for Science Communication RNTU proposed the vote of thanks.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES DA HIKED

Bhopal: The state government has issued orders to hike the rate of dearness allowance payable to government servants by 11 percent from March 2022.

According to the order issued by the Finance Department, the payment of increased dearness allowance in the seventh pay scale will be available from the month of March paid April 2022. After the above hike, the rate of dearness allowance will increase to 31 percent from March 1, 2022.

It is noteworthy that the government servants are being given dearness allowance at the rate of 20 percent in the seventh pay scale from October 2021 (payment month November 2021).

Facing ground realities is most effective way of experience: Governor Mangubhai Patel

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that the most effective way to gain experience is to face and be aware of the ground realities. He said that information regarding the hard work and efforts behind the brilliance of achievements must be sought if they have to be followed.

Patel was holding a discussion with the members of the study team from the National Defense College today. The team included soldiers from Indian and Allied countries besides senior officers of police and civil services. Patel said that the country's largest scheduled tribes' population, abundant forests, natural resources, peace loving citizens and communal harmony are the hallmarks of Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh is self-sufficient in energy production. Noteworthy achievements have been made in all areas of infrastructure including drinking water supply, sanitation, health, education, skill development, employment, self-employment, sports, agriculture, rural, urban development, industry and irrigation. The state bagged



third award in the country's Swachh Bharat Survey 2020-21, Indore's fifth time first award and Bhopal first award for clean capital. Madhya Pradesh is the first state in the country to have implemented Public Service Guarantee Act in the country along with online solution to the problems of citizens. He said that during the training, there should be mutual reflection on the efforts to make internal security, strategic arrangements effective. Experiences on internal security, obstacles to peace and order and efforts to resolve them must be shared with each other. The Governor was informed

regarding the training programme by Faculty member of National Defense College, Major General Hari B. Pillai. He said that since its establishment in 1960, the college conducts an annual course of 47 weeks for India and allied countries every year. This 62nd training involves 120 officers from the military and civil services, including 22 friendly countries. He informed that eight teams of 15 participants are touring different areas of the country. The team that visited Madhya Pradesh includes Indian participants as well as officials from Korea, Sri Lanka, Oman and Uzbekistan.

Concerted efforts of people's representatives, administration and public helped to develop Indore model: Chief Minister

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that today will prove to be a milestone in the development of Indore. Indore is number one in many areas including cleanliness. Today is the day of the manifestation of another resolution. It is the beginning of efforts to ensure last miles connectivity of public transport service to ensure clean air and green mobility in the city along with smooth, accessible transport system. Chouhan was virtually dedicating the new building of Sarvate Bus Stand in Indore constructed at a cost of Rs.14 crore 80 lakh. Chief Minister while participating virtually in the programme of Indore from the residence office, also dedicated the Indore Public Bicycle Scheme costing Rs.10 crore to rent 3000 bicycles from 300 places. The scheme will be operated on PPP model. Chouhan also performed bhoomi-pujan of the construction of 35 MLD capacity sewerage water treatment plant near Laxmi Memorial



Hospital costing Rs 39.18 crore and 20 MLD capacity sewerage water treatment plant to be built near Sirpur pond at a cost of Rs 40 crore 15 lakh. Water Resources Minister Tulsi Silavat, Culture and Tourism Minister Usha Thakur were also present in the programme organized in Indore.

Chouhan has said that peoples' representatives, administration and the public should come together in Indore. It is this initiative of public participation that helped established the Indore model in the whole country. This is an ideal arrangement.

Chouhan has said that Indore is the city of my dreams, I take pride in calling myself Indori. Chief Minister said that Indore has set such an example, which fills my heart with pride and joy. Chouhan said that upcoming festivals of Gair and Rang Panchami should be celebrated without any discriminations, spreading the colors of Indian culture with love. The whole world witnessed the festivity and decency of Gair and Rangpanchmi of Indore. Chouhan said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has prepared a roadmap for environmental protection

for year 2030, 2050 up to 2070. By encouraging the use of battery-operated vehicles, bicycles for short distances and reducing the consumption of diesel-petrol in cities, every person can contribute in fulfilling the goal of Modi. Chouhan said that all the facilities of the passengers have been taken care of at Sarvate Bus Stand in Indore. The effort is to make the passengers feel comfortable. Parking, passenger waiting room, drinking water system, police post, restaurant, sitting area as well as locker room have been arranged at the new bus stand. In the second phase, a hotel will also be constructed on the PPP model above the bus stand building. Chouhan said that bhoomi-pujan of two sewerage treatment plants is also being performed. Pure water will flow into the Kanheri river from the plant being built near Devnagar Laxmi Memorial Hospital. Similarly, the treatment plant being built near Sirpur pond will increase the ground water level of Sirpur area and will have a positive effect on the beautification works of Sirpur pond.

RAPHAEL CO-ED SCHOOL OPENS PORTAL

Team Absolute | Bhopal

St. Raphael Co-Ed School Bhopal opened their portals to all students after a long hiatus, with joyous hearts. Hundreds of excited students brought cheer to the desolate school campus, when they returned for offline classes after a long Covid-19 induced gap on Monday morning. Students where back, ecstatic and rejuvenated. The school was all geared up to welcome their students from Class I to Class XII. The school was sanitized and decorated to welcome children adhering to Covid protocols.

A special assembly was conducted by teachers. Melodious voices resounded across the portals as students and teacher invoked God's blessings. During the assembly the new Principal of the school Lissy Jose, Vice Principal Alvina and Bursar



of the school Litty were given a warm welcome and introduced to the students by the Senior Academic Coordinator Mrs. Shali Sam. New teachers who joined the school for the new academic session 2022-23 were also introduced. Unveiling of the theme for the year "Towards a Positive and Productive Year" was done by the Principal Lissy Jose. Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an

indomitable willing spirit. After being confined to the four walls of their homes for nearly two years, students were elated to be able to attend offline classes. Teachers conducted fun activities to help students break the ice bringing back their energetic vivaciousness that they had so dearly missed. After a short break regular classes resumed for the students in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines and regulations.

POST BUDGET MP CABINET MEET TO HELD IN PACHMARHI

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will chair a two-day brain storming cabinet meeting in Pachmarhi, a popular hill station in Narmadapuram district of the state.

The post annual budget cabinet meeting of the Shivraj Singh government will be held on March 26-27, during which a detailed discussion on every development project of the state will be held. Usually, the state cabinet is held either at official residence or at the Secretariat in Bhopal, but the post budget cabinet will meet out of the state capital. As per the agenda of the meeting, talks will revolve around the issue of development and making the Madhya Pradesh self-reliant. Making the state self-reliant has been a repeated slogan of chief minister Chouhan and his cabinet ministers.

On why state cabinet meeting is scheduled out of the state capital, a senior minister said, "Nothing of that sort should be read into it as such meetings were held at places other than Bhopal in the past as well."

As per the schedule, the chief minister, along with his 30 cabinet colleagues, will leave for Pachmarhi in a bus on Friday evening. They will return to Bhopal on March 27.

In Pachmarhi, Chouhan and other cabinet members will stay in a hotel operated by the state tourism department. "During the meeting, talks will be held on how to make the state self-reliant. Chouhan is also likely to hold one-on-one interaction with ministers," the chief minister's office said.

IGRMS from Ideas to reality

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya under the celebrations of its 46th Foundation Day is organizing various programs and activities at its premises. The exhibition of the 'Manav Sangrahalaya Journey from the Intangible to the Tangible' (From Ideas to Reality). This exhibition, organized on this occasion, is an attempt in the form of a retrospective to understand and explain the relentless story of this Museum starting from an idea and becoming a reality, its expansion and development encompassing its various stakeholders and audiences. The exhibition was inaugurated by Shri Shiv Shekhar Shukla (IAS) Principal Secretary, Culture and Tourism, Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Later, chief guest, special guest lighted the 1001 wicks traditional lamp of Kerala Aal-Vilakku at Veethi Sankul premises of Manav Sangrahalaya, and a

team from Malayalam Society residing in Bhopal the sound of a famous instrument Chenda Melam played on this occasion

On this occasion Director, Manav Sangrahalaya, Praveen Kumar Mishra presented the report on museum activities and said that Manav Sangrahalaya has been working with the community for the development of the museum since its inception. Today, for the first time, the people of the community living in Bhopal have given meaningful cooperation in fulfilling the objectives of the museum. Through this, while receiving the education of customs, values, beliefs, and social adjustment, according to the religious sentiment, the person also receives knowledge of spiritual development and rituals from the community. On this occasion, Assistant Curator Rakesh Bhatt delivered the welcome address.

Chief Guest of the program Shri Shekhar Shukla (IAS) while congratulating Manav Sangrahalaya said Manav

Sangrahalaya is not only a unique museum in the world but also a cultural institution that is well known for its work of preserving the culture of the Indian community. I thank the Director, Manav Sangrahalaya Dr. Praveen Kumar Mishra and community artists from the states of Kerala, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh residing in Bhopal, who came here for the program dedicated to culture also appreciated the research work done by the Museum in the field of culture and tribal lifestyles. The museum, in the form of its unique exhibitions, has kept the cultural heritage of our country in front of the people, which in fact is very important to prove to the world our knowledge-skills and development of civilization. In the festival of regional cultures, for the first time in the history of the museum, regional communities residing in Bhopal like Kerala, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal performing arts were presented in front of the visitors.



IMPAR STATE COUNCIL MEETS IN CAPITAL

Bhopal: IMPAR State Council meeting that took place in Bhopal was joined by 50 plus prominent Muslims from social, educational and development sectors. Speaking on the occasion, MJ Khan emphasised the need for introspection and coming up with workable solutions for course correction. He asked the members to accelerate documentation work and social work through coordinated actions by NGOs and community institutions.

Improving access to government schemes and flagship programs was discussed and action plan suggested. The meeting was coordinated by Mehrul Hasan, IMPAR State Coordinator and hosted by Tajwar M Khan, IMPAR EC member and chairman, KB Nursing College at his house.



'DON'T LOOK UP', 'CODA' WIN TOP HONOURS AT WRITERS GUILD AWARDS 2022



Los Angeles | Agencies

'Don't Look Up' and 'Coda' added momentum to their hopes for Oscar gold by nabbing the top film honours at the 74th annual Writers Guild Awards. Sunday's wins for the Apple TV Plus and Netflix titles come as film award season heads into its final seven-day countdown leading into the 94th Academy Awards on March 27, reports 'Variety'. The Writers Guild of America West and East joined forces this year to present Sunday's kudos in a virtual format, hosted by actor-writer Ashley Nicole Black, out of Covid-related precaution. The leaders of both guilds, WGA West president Meredith Stiehm and WGA East president Michael Winship made a brief side-by-side video appearance to assure members that the Writers Guild Awards will be back in person next year.

On the TV side, the HBO/HBO Max platform stood tall. 'Succession' scooped up more hardware, taking the trophies for drama series and episodic drama, the latter snared by the memorable shareholders meeting romp 'Retired Janitors of Idaho'. 'Hacks' continued its freshman-year streak with wins for comedy series and new series. Episodic comedy honours went to Hulu's offbeat period vehicle 'The Great', for creator/showrunner Tony McNamara's 'Alone At Last' episode. 'Coda' screenwriter Sian Heder made a point to thank "people from the deaf community" who gave her "a really incredible education" to understand the culture depicted in the film. She also thanked her ASL consultants Anne Tomasetti and Alexandria Wailes. 'Succession' made history on Sunday, finishing its 2022 sweep of the major guild awards with two big WGA wins. The show has already collected the SAG Award for drama ensemble, the DGA Award for drama series (for director Mark Mylod) and the PGA honor as well. In animated series, the 'Tuca & Bertie' episode 'Planteau', written by creator Lisa Hanawalt, beat out episodes from 'The Simpsons', 'Family Guy' and 'Bob's Burgers'. Awards presenters included Ariana DeBose, Pamela Adlon, Diederich Bader, Vanessa Bayer, Nicholas Braun, Chris Hayes, Alanna Ubach, Kel Mitchell and Paul Reiser.

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Awards season is 'weird' without alcohol: Chrissy Teigen

Los Angeles | Agencies

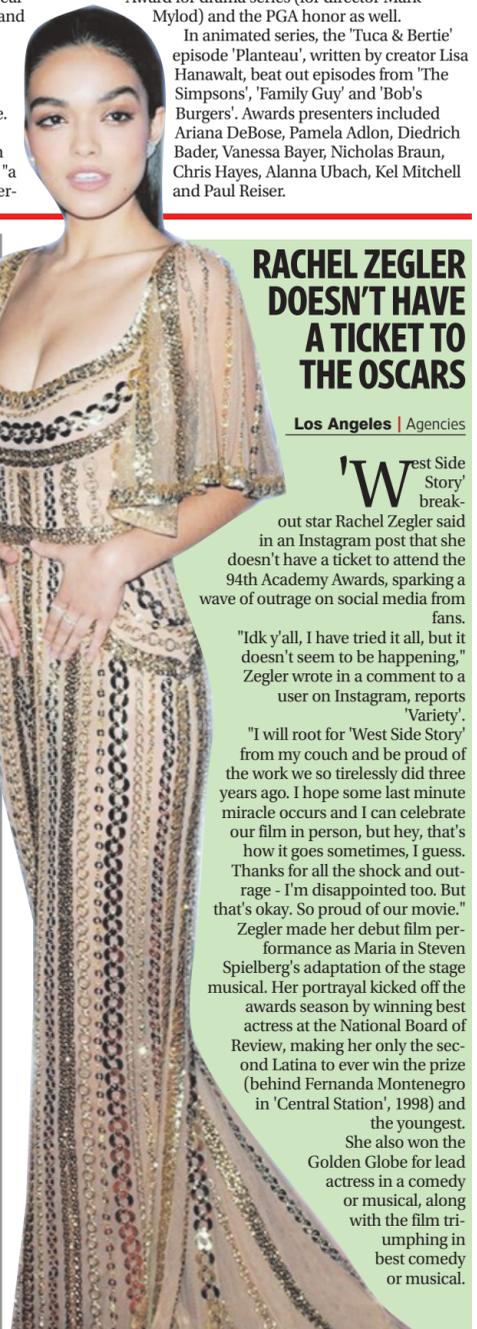
Model Chrissy Teigen, who celebrated six months of sobriety back in January, now finds awards ceremonies strange to attend because she is "used to getting hammered". Speaking at the Hollywood Beauty Awards, she said: "These things are very weird for me, because I'm so used to getting so hammered at these things!" However, Teigen then went on to explain that while she "connects" to enjoying alcohol at awards nights, she also enjoys not having "immense regret" over something she may have said or done whilst intoxicated, reports femalefirst.co.uk. She told ET: "Awards season, I very much connect to enjoying yourself and having champagne, but I also connected with those feelings of immense regret or stupid moments. Like, 'I can't believe I said that' or 'I can't believe I did that' and 'I'm so embarrassed'. So, it's so nice not to have those feelings anymore." The star also revealed that she has completed her last round of IVF after announcing she and her husband were trying for another child via in vitro fertilisation. She said: "I finished my IVF part, so I feel so much healthier and so much better with that. So, the sobriety journey is fun, we'll see if I'm gonna make it through this awards season with nothing."



RACHEL ZEGLER DOESN'T HAVE A TICKET TO THE OSCARS

Los Angeles | Agencies

'West Side Story' breakout star Rachel Zegler said in an Instagram post that she doesn't have a ticket to attend the 94th Academy Awards, sparking a wave of outrage on social media from fans. "Idk y'all, I have tried it all, but it doesn't seem to be happening," Zegler wrote in a comment to a user on Instagram, reports 'Variety'. "I will root for 'West Side Story' from my couch and be proud of the work we so tirelessly did three years ago. I hope some last minute miracle occurs and I can celebrate our film in person, but hey, that's how it goes sometimes, I guess. Thanks for all the shock and outrage - I'm disappointed too. But that's okay. So proud of our movie." Zegler made her debut film performance as Maria in Steven Spielberg's adaptation of the stage musical. Her portrayal kicked off the awards season by winning best actress at the National Board of Review, making her only the second Latina to ever win the prize (behind Fernanda Montenegro in 'Central Station', 1998) and the youngest. She also won the Golden Globe for lead actress in a comedy or musical, along with the film triumphing in best comedy or musical.



SHAWN MENDES FEELS LONELY AFTER CAMILA CABELLO SPLIT

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Shawn Mendes reflected on his life following his split from singer Camila Cabello. He took to his Instagram account to share a video in which he addressed some personal struggles he faced. "A lot of the things that also is like, resonating in the lyric for me is like, oh, f**k, you know, you don't realize, like, when you're like, breaking up with someone," Shawn shared while sitting at a piano. "You like think it's the right thing to do, you don't realise all this s**t that comes after it." The star added, "Like, who do I call when I'm like, in a panic attack? Who do I call when I'm like, f**king, on the edge? I think that's the reality that kind of hit me. It's like, oh, I'm on my own now. Now I feel like finally, like, I'm actually on my own, and I hate that. That's my reality, you know?" Shawn and Camila were first linked in July 2019, though they announced their breakup last fall, reports aceshowbiz.com. "Hey guys, we've decided to end our romantic relationship but our love for another as humans is stronger than ever," the exes said in a joint statement. "We started our relationship as best friends and will continue to be best friends. We so appreciate your support from the beginning and moving forward. Camila and Shawn," the statement continued. Later in January, Shawn admitted to having a "hard time" after the split. "I'm having a little bit of a hard time with social media at the moment and just kind of my relationship with it," the "In My Bloods" singer wrote on Instagram at the time. "But I have lots of people sending me videos and telling me what's going on."



'The Batman' crosses \$300 mn in North America

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Robert Pattinson's superhero movie 'The Batman' has minted over \$300 million in North America. That feat is not surprising because March has been relatively light in terms of new releases. But even though there hasn't been much competition, 'The Batman' has managed to score impressive week-to-week holds. The movie collected \$36.8 million from 4,302 theatres between Friday and Sunday, representing only a 45 per cent decline from last weekend, reports variety.com. Those ticket sales push 'The Batman' past \$300 million in North America, making the comic book adaptation the second pandemic-era movie to cross that benchmark after 'Spider-Man: No Way Home'. At the international box office, the film opened in China, where 43 per cent of the country's theatres are closed due to a Covid resurgence to a muted \$12.1 million. In total, 'The Batman' added \$49.1 million from 76 overseas markets, taking its global total to a mighty \$598 million. Those returns represent a needed commercial win for Warner Bros., which spent \$200 million to produce 'The Batman' and many millions more to market the film to audiences across the world.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Elsa Hosk

'Godzilla Vs Kong' sequel to be shot in Australia later this year

Los Angeles | Agencies

Currently untitled sequel to 2021 blockbuster 'Godzilla Vs Kong' is set to shoot in Queensland, Australia, according to government agency Screen Queensland. According to 'Deadline', State Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said today that cameras will roll later this year in locations across the Gold Coast and the southeast on the Legendary picture which will be the fifth in its Monsterverse franchise. Details of the sequel have been kept under wraps, although 'Godzilla Vs Kong' director Adam Wingard told Deadline last year he



would "absolutely love to continue" with the franchise, reports 'Deadline'. He added, "The clear starting point we teed up (in GVK), exploring Hollow Earth, I think there is a lot more to do there. This is a pre-history of Planet Earth, where all the titans come from. We tee up some mystery in this film, things I want to see resolved and explored and pushed to the next level." Legendary/Warner Bros' 'Godzilla Vs Kong' previously shot in Queensland and went on to gross over \$468M globally. Prior to GVK, 2017's Kong Skull Island also set up shop in the region.



MOOD IN CAMP POSITIVE AHEAD OF MUST-WIN GAME AGAINST BANGLADESH: SNEH RANA

Hamilton | Agencies

India cricketer Sneha Rana said that the mood in the side was positive despite the defeat to Australia in the previous ICC Women's World Cup match, and the team was looking forward to the game against Bangladesh at Seddon Park on Tuesday.

India, who were the runners-up in the 2017 edition of the World Cup, have suffered two consecutive losses -- to England and Australia -- and are currently fourth on the table after three losses and two wins in the tournament.

India will need to win Tuesday's game and the last league outing against South Africa -- and also wait for the results of other league games -- in order to qualify for the semi-final knockouts.

Asked whether the team management would make changes to the side for the clash against World Cup debutants Bangladesh, Rana said, "The team management will decide on any changes. However, the mood in our team camp is positive. When you lose a match it tends to lower your confidence. However, as a team



unit, we have sought positives out of that."

Asked about the kind of conversation the seniors and juniors have before and after every match, Rana said the seniors mostly share their experiences, which is a great way to learn. "There is always a healthy conversation between seniors and juniors. The seniors never pressurised us as it's a first World Cup campaign for almost all of us. They always share from their experiences. Even during the New Zealand series, they were planning for upcoming

games and they were supporting us." Pace bowler Jhulan Goswami's workload management has become the topic of discussion of late, but Rana said that the stalwart knows how to manage it.

"She (Jhulan) has come a long way and she knows how to manage her workload. She is a legend, obviously, so we do not need to tell her about her workload. The management and medical teams have discussion it and adjust these sorts of matters." On her own good performance with the bat and the ball, Rana

said her motto was to keep performing and the World Cup was a huge platform to showcase one's skills.

"See, when you perform well on such a huge platform, obviously you feel good. When I performed in the first match of my first World Cup, I was pretty happy at that time. However, on such a huge platform you can't be happy with just one performance. You need to do more and perform well in most of the games. I want to perform whenever my team needs me to perform."

On World Cup debutants Bangladesh, she said, "If Bangladesh are part of this World Cup, it means they have performed well in the past to be at such a huge platform. I have seen Bangladesh improving. We are playing match by match, irrespective of who it is against - Bangladesh or any other team. We won't take any match easy. As it's a must win game, we will give our 100 per cent."

Indian batting performance has been patchy in the tournament. India scored 270-plus against the Aussies but were below par against England and New Zealand. However, Rana said that ups and downs were part of the game.

Taylor Fritz stuns Rafa Nadal to clinch Indian Wells title

Indian Wells | Agencies

American Taylor Fritz claimed the biggest paycheck of his tennis career, winning his maiden ATP Masters 1000 title by defeating Spanish stalwart Rafael Nadal 6-3, 7-6(5) in the BNP Paribas Open final on Monday (IST).

It was 21-time Grand Slam-winner Nadal's first defeat of the 2022 season, while it was the biggest career win for the 24-year-old American, who lifted his second ATP Tour trophy.

The San Diego native, who nearly pulled out ahead of match with an ankle injury, launched a full-scale attack on the 35-year-old Nadal to deny him a record-tying 37th ATP Masters 1000 title and end his personal-best 20-match win streak this season.

After twisting his ankle in the semifinal win over Russian Andrey Rublev on Saturday, Fritz further aggravated the problem in his



warm-up ahead of the final.

"I can't even begin to describe how ridiculous it is that I was able to play how I could play today," Fritz was quoted as saying by aptour.com. "I've never experienced worse pain in my life before a match."

"We did a lot of work leading up to the match and I went through a roller-coaster

of emotions before the match, from thinking there was no way I could possibly play to then doing all this work on the ankle, doing so much stuff to it... I came out here and it didn't really affect me at all."

In fact, Fritz's team advised him not to play the final as he risked doing irreparable damage to the ankle.

WOMEN'S CRICKET WORLD CUP

Pakistan beat West Indies claiming first victory

Hamilton | Agencies

Pakistan clinched their first victory of the 2022 ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, beating West Indies by eight wickets in a match reduced to 20-overs each due to morning rain, to register their first points on the board. However, the result was a big dent in the West Indies' hopes of qualifying for the semi-finals. Earlier, a brilliant performance by their spinners helped Pakistan restrict West Indies to 89/7 before the batters kept their calm to seal an eight-wicket victory in Hamilton. Chasing a target of 90 in 20 overs, Muneeba Ali and Sidra Amin provided a solid platform for Pakistan. The latter was dismissed in the sixth over, with Afy Fletcher knocking her



over for eight as she tried to up the ante. But Muneeba, joined by skipper Bismah Maroof, would then stitch together a vital 35-run stand while keeping the required rate under control to take Pakistan closer to their first CWC22 victory. In the first innings of the match, Pakistan's spinners were in full flight as West Indies were restricted to 89/7 after 20

overs in Hamilton. Nida Dar, in particular, was mighty impressive, registering figures of 4/10 in her four overs.

Brief scores:

West Indies 89/7 in 20 overs (Deandra Dottin 27, Nida Dar 10/4), Pakistan 90/2 in 18.5 overs (Muneeba Ali Siddiqui 37, Bismah Maroof 20*, Omaima Sohail 22*, Shakera Selman 16/1).

Man City, Liverpool, Crystal Palace, Chelsea into FA Cup semifinals

London | Agencies

Manchester City face an FA Cup semifinal against Liverpool after both sides won their quarterfinals on Sunday night. City won 4-1 away to Southampton in an entertaining match that was in the balance until just after the hour mark.

Raheem Sterling put City ahead after Kevin de Bruyne's cross wasn't dealt with in the 12th minute. It could have been 2-0 when Ilkay Gundogan hit the post, but Southampton recovered after a period of City dominance and levelled in first-half injury time when Amieric Laporte screwed a low cross into his own goal.

Diogo Jota poked home the only goal of the game to give Liverpool a hard-fought but deserved 1-0 win away to Nottingham Forest, who had soaked up a lot of pressure before the goal. The last time Liverpool played Forest in the FA Cup was at the



Hillsborough Stadium in 1989, which was the scene of a tragedy in which 97 Liverpool fans lost their lives, and the home side paid homage to the event 33 years ago which was the catalyst for the modernization of the English game. Crystal Palace eased into the semifinals with a 4-0 win at home to Everton. The away side had the best of

the opening stages, but everything changed when Marc Guehi celebrated his England call-up with the 25th minute opener, and the game was virtually over when Jean-Philippe Mateta doubled Palace's lead before half-time. Wilfried Zaha and Will Hughes ended the rout with further goals in the 79th and 87th minutes. Crystal

Palace will play Chelsea, who booked their place in the semifinals on Saturday with a relatively comfortable 2-0 win away to Middlesbrough, thanks to first-half goals from Romelu Lukaku and Hakim Ziyech. In the Premier League, an own goal from Kurt Zouma and two from Son Heung-min saw Tottenham win 3-1 at home to West Ham, who looked tired after their marathon Europa League win against Sevilla on Thursday. Spurs were 2-0 up by the 24th minute, and although Said Benrahma pulled a goal back from a corner, Son sealed the win with his second goal two minutes from time. Arsenal recovered from their midweek defeat to Liverpool with a 1-0 at Aston Villa on Saturday, with Bukayo Saka netting the game's only goal. Goals from Timothy Castagne, who returned after three months out through injury, and James Maddison gave Leicester a 2-1 home win over Brentford, who netted a late consolation from Yoane Wissa.

Barca conquer Bernabeu with 4-0 thrashing of Real Madrid in Clasico

Madrid | Agencies

FC Barcelona outplayed Real Madrid for almost the entire 90 minutes to claim a crushing 4-0 win in the Santiago Bernabeu here. Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Ousmane Dembele led a dominant all-round performance from Barca on Sunday night, which serves to confirm the massive turnaround in their form since the arrival of Xavi Hernandez as coach and the January signings of Ferran Torres and Aubameyang.

It should have been 3-0 just 25 seconds into the second half when Torres was put through the middle of the Madrid defence, but with time to pick his spot and just Courtois to beat, he fired wide.

It was 4-0 in the 52nd minute when Torres controlled a long ball and fed Aubameyang, who clipped it over



Courtois and after a delay for a VAR check, the goal was given despite the protests of the Real Madrid players.

Second-placed Sevilla failed to take advantage of Real Madrid's setback, however, as they were held to a 0-0 draw at home to Real Sociedad, who had the better chances against a rival that looked tired after playing 120 minutes in their Europa League defeat away to West Ham on March

17. Mallorca's defeat saw them drop into the bottom three after Cadiz took advantage of that result with a 1-0 win at home to Villarreal, who rested several key players and suffered a hangover after their 3-0 Champions League win away to Juventus in midweek. Villarreal had most of the ball, but Cadiz were more aggressive in attack, although it wasn't until the last minute that Ruben Sobrino's far-post

finish gave them their second home win of the campaign.

Celta Vigo and Real Betis played out a 0-0 draw, although the home side deserved more after having the better chances, only to be denied by Claudio Bravo and Marc Bartra on various occasions. Earlier, Koke's goal in the second half gave Atletico Madrid a narrow 1-0 win away to city neighbours Rayo Vallecano.

Iga Swiatek triumphs at BNP Paribas Open; rises to No.2 in the world

Indian Well | Agencies

Polish tennis star Iga Swiatek won her 11th straight match on way to defeating Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-1 to lift the 2022 BNP Paribas Open trophy at Indian Wells on Monday (IST).

The victory in the WTA 1000 event has given the 20-year-old player a jump of two places, to World No.2, in the latest rankings released on Monday.

Swiatek's dominance at the WTA 1000 events this season continued unabated here, as the No.3 seed became the first Polish



woman to claim the title at Indian Wells, surpassing the result by 2014 BNP Paribas Open runner-up Agnieszka Radwanska. Swiatek will also tie former world No.2

Radwanska as the highest-ranked Polish player in history.

With the win, which came in just 80 minutes, Swiatek also became the first woman to reach 20 match-wins this season. Swiatek's victory also marks her career-best 11th straight match-win on the WTA Tour, with that streak coming at the first two WTA 1000 events of the season. Swiatek claimed the title last month at the WTA 1000 Qatar Open in Doha. By backing that crown up at her next event in Indian Wells, she improves to an undefeated 11-0 at WTA 1000-level so far this year.

Brathwaite, Da Silva save the day for West Indies in drawn Test against England

Bridgetown (Barbados) | Agencies

West Indies skipper Kraigg Brathwaite and wicketkeeper-batter Joshua Da Silva saved the day for the hosts as the second Test against the Joe Root-led England ended in a thrilling draw at the Kensington Oval on Monday (IST).

Brathwaite survived two gruelling sessions on the final day, scoring an unbeaten 56 in his four-hour vigil at the crease, while Da Silva remained not out on 30 as West Indies closed the day on 135/5 chasing 281 to set up a third-Test decider against England in Grenada.



Brathwaite, who followed up his momentous 489-ball 160 from the first innings with a gritty unbeaten half-century, faced a total of 673 deliveries in the match, the most by a West Indian in a single Test, surpassing Brian

Lara's previous record of 582 balls against England at St John's in 2004.

Only seven players since the end of timeless Tests in 1939 have ever faced more deliveries in a Test than Brathwaite's extraordinary stint, according to ICC.

Brief scores:

England 507/9 declared and 185/6 declared (Zak Crawley 40, Dan Lawrence 41, Veerasammy Permaul 2/29, Jayden Seales 2/34) drew with West Indies 411 and 135/5 (Kraigg Brathwaite 56 not out, Joshua Da Silva 30 not out; Jack Leach 3/36, Saqib Mahmood 2/21).

3RD TEST, DAY-1 PAKISTAN RESTRICT AUSTRALIA TO 232/5

Lahore | Agencies

Australia looked set for a big score before Pakistan's fast bowlers brought the hosts back into the contest in the last session of the first day of the third and final Test in Lahore, with the visitors ending Day One on 232/5, here on Monday.

Left-arm pacer Shaheen Afridi rocked Australia's batsmen early by dismissing opener David Warner and Marnus Labuschagne with a score of just eight. After 2.5 overs, Australia found themselves at 8/2, with Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith tasked with withstanding the Pakistan pace assault.

Thereafter, opener Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith hit fighting half-centuries to help the Aussies



recover in the second session. They did precisely that, playing with a watchful mindset while punishing

the bad deliveries. Despite Pakistan's best efforts, another breakthrough would not come around as Australia

headed to lunch at 70/2. Khawaja's golden run in the series continued as he brought up his third fifty-plus score. And Steve Smith would also follow suit, notching up his milestone. It was a dominant session for the Australians as they added 75 runs without losing a wicket. The final session would finally bring some joy for Pakistan on the back of some disciplined bowling. Young quick Naseem Shah took the scalps of Smith and Travis Head as Australia battled their way to 232-5 by stumps.

Brief scores:

Australia 232/5 in 88 overs (Usman Khawaja 91, Steven Smith 59, Travis Head 26; Shaheen Afridi 2/39, Naseem Shah 2/40) vs Pakistan



It's going to be addictive: Hiba Nawab

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Hiba Nawab has come on-board new show 'Woh Toh Hai Albelaa'. The title of the show is quite unique and the actress shared that she had a feeling that it's going to be different. "When I first heard the name 'Woh Toh Hai Albelaa' I was very sure the show would be very albelaa and very different, the characters would be very albelaa. I knew that my fans would love to watch such a show. So, I was really thrilled. Also, when I heard about my character and the whole storyline, I was excited because it's something really different from the daily soaps that you do." "As you go from one sequence to another, there are a lot of twists and turns and the audience will be glued to it. I am sure they would eagerly wait to watch the new episodes. I can say it is going to be addictive because even while we are working I want to know what's going to happen next," she said. The young actress plays Sayuri Sharma, the eldest of the three daughters in the Sharma family. Speaking about her character, she said: "She is a very strong, level-headed woman. She is someone who has taken up the responsibility of her whole family. There is no man in the family so she has become one to take care of everyone's needs. With time she has become really mature and responsible as she was dealing with all the ups and downs the family was going through. At the same time, she is very colourful and vibrant and full of love." Hiba also revealed that she could relate to her character and said: "Sayuri is a multi-tasker, she is very spontaneous, she is very mature and I feel with time I have also become very mature and a multi-tasker with all the work that I do at home or when I am shooting."



Shreya Jain is excited on doing movie

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer, songwriter and composer Shreya Jain seems quite excited with her new project, John Abraham's 'Attack'. She opens up about her working experience in the film.

As she says: "This was a rousing album that has a mix of pulsating and heart wrenching tracks."

The 23-year-old singer, who made her debut in Bollywood with three songs 'Bomb', 'Crazy Now' and 'Durga Gayatri Mantra', is all thankful to music composer Shashwat Sachdev for giving her opportunity to be part of Lakshya Raj Anand's upcoming film 'Attack'.

"I am grateful to Shashwat who allowed me to work on the score of the film and sing for such a diverse album. I am so excited for the world to listen to it." Hailing from Nagpur, Maharashtra, she has been learning Indian Classical music from the age of 5 years. Despite holding a degree in interior design, music is like a passion for her. Currently with the release of the full sound-track of 'Attack', she is gaining a lot of popularity on social media and she calls it a great experience to work in this movie.

Aamir Khan learns dance from Jr NTR, Ram Charan



Team Absolute | New Delhi

RAM CHARAN: PAN-INDIA MOVIES CAN BE A GAME CHANGER FOR INDIAN CINEMA



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Telugu star Ram Charan is elated to be a part of a pan-India film of the scale of "RRR" and agrees that directors such as S.S. Rajamouli have opened the floodgates for all actors to gain the experience of working with other directors from different states. Addressing a press conference in the Capital, Ram Charan said pan-India films can be a game changer for Indian cinema. "He (Rajamouli) is absolutely right," he said. "He does not start something that will be loved by each and everyone, but somehow, at the end, that is how it turns out to be."

He added: "The floodgates have been opened for all actors to experience other Indian directors from different states and for the directors to experience us. There are huge boundaries that have been erased and we are fortunate to be in this era of experiencing other directors and they experiencing us." The film, which is slated to be released on March 25, also stars Jr NTR, besides Ajay Devgn and Alia Bhatt in extended cameo appearances, while Samuthirakani, Alison Doody, Ray Stevenson, Olivia Morris and Shriya Saran play supporting roles.

It is a fictional story centred around two real-life revolutionaries, Alluri Sitarama Raju (Ram Charan) and Komaram Bheem (Jr NTR), who fought against the British Raj and the Nizam of Hyderabad, respectively.

Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan was seen shaking-a-leg with stars NTR Jr and Ram Charan during a fan event for their upcoming film 'RRR'.

The cast of 'RRR' including Alia Bhatt and filmmaker S.S. Rajamouli were in the national capital to promote the film. Aamir joined the cast during the fan event.

Aamir was seen asking the two actors on how they did the step, which the 'PK' star felt could not perform.

He said: "They are very fast."

Alia then chimed in saying that it's an easy step and even she has tried it. Finally, Aamir and Alia joined Ram Charan and NTR Jr. Finally, Aamir then called fans on stage to perform the hook step for Rajamouli, NTR Jr, Alia and Ram Charan.

The film includes a star-studded lineup including Ajay Devgn and Olivia Morris.

Jayanti Lal Gada of PEN Studios has bagged the theatrical distribution rights across North India and has also bought worldwide electronic rights for all languages. Pen Marudhar will be distributing the film in the North Territory.

The Telugu-language period action drama film is produced by DVV. Danayya of DVV Entertainments. RRR will release on March 25.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On her 44th birthday on Monday, actress Rani Mukerji opens up about her plans to handpick the best scripts going forward and how she is excited to find 'movies that are about hope and love' like 'Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway'.

Rani says, "It has been an exhilarating journey in cinema so far for me and I hope that it remains the same in the years to come. I have been fortunate enough to collaborate with some of the best minds in the form of directors, producers, actors and technicians who have pushed me to excel on screen and reinvent myself every single time."

"I want to continue doing that with every project because I always want to push my boundaries to see where I land. I always knew that my journey will be tough but I sailed through the last 25 years with the audience's love by my side and my hard work and perseverance."

The actress adds that she has never accepted to be typecast or fit in a mould.

"I have always tried to be part of

meaningful films with a very strong female protagonist at the centre of the story. I wanted to be a part of good films with important stories about Indian women. There have been times where I have been blessed with films that have worked and some that missed to make a mark with the audience but I think that's the best part about our industry."

"You win some and lose some and that helps you to grow from strength to strength to carve a special place as an individual artiste in a cut throat industry like ours."

About her next, 'Mrs Chatterjee vs

NISHA RAWAL REVEALS SECRET OF KISSING ANOTHER MAN WHILE SHE WAS MARRIED

Team Absolute | Mumbai

TV actress and 'Lock Upp' contestant Nisha Rawal spoke about her abusive relationship with her ex-husband Karan Mehra and how she kissed her close friend while she was married.

She also talked about miscarriage and her trauma after going through all this.

During the show, Bollywood actress and host Kangana Ranaut asked Nisha to share her secret if she wants to save herself from elimination.

Nisha revealed: "I got married in 2012 and in 2014 I miscarried my baby. I was already in an abusive relationship. Miscarriage was a shocker for me. The incidents of abuse were constant, no one supported me. As a woman I was going through a lot. I wished for therapy or something."

She shared further: "I had an old friend and I shared a lot with him about my ex-husband and all other issues. And during that course of time only we both got close to each other and I kissed him. I also informed my ex-husband the same day. I told him that I kissed my friend. My ex-husband didn't take this positively and this is my secret: I was attracted to a man when I was married."

Rani Mukerji: Hope my next few years in cinema are studded with brilliant scripts



Norway', Rani opens up saying, "My next project 'Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway' is a film very close to my heart. I'm hoping that the story of this film will resonate with every Indian the way it did for me and my team. It's an incredible story of human resilience that will appeal to audiences across the country and across every age-group."



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Avneet Kaur