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Urgent need to boost immunisation, integrated disease surveillance

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As fears grow about the alarming rise in tomato flu, ebola, measles and other infections amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, leading healthcare experts have stressed upon the need to strengthen national health programs such as around key immunisation and boost the Integrated Disease Surveillance Project (IDSP).

The IDSP is a decentralised, state-based surveillance program in the country. It is intended to detect early warning signals of impending outbreaks and help initiate an effective response in a timely manner.

"Re-emerging infections like measles, drug resistant tuberculosis are major public health challenges in the current time in India. During the pandemic, existing national health programs suffered a lot due to diversion of resources and changing priorities," Dr. Harshal R Salve, Professor at Centre for Community Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi, said.

"It is high time that we should focus on strengthening national



health programs such as immunisation, tuberculosis, IDSP with more resources, infrastructure development and capacity building with renewed political will," Salve emphasised.

Repeated re-emergence of new and varied infection causing organisms has posed a danger to the population especially taking

into consideration the recent pandemic.

According to Dr Neha Rastogi, Consultant, Infectious Diseases, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, "we are now witnessing a shadow of pandemic".

"Antimicrobial resistant superbugs/bacteria have created a major super pandemic owing to

the rampant usage of antimicrobials in the current scenario. With an ongoing transmission of these multidrug resistant pathogens, it is imperative to combat this silent pandemic," Dr Rastogi said.

With a complex interplay of the immune system and changed environmental settings, newer viruses and their ever-evolving variants are rising.

Climate and environmental change and rapid urbanisation with increased global movements due to enhanced easy connectivity, will increase risk of such bugs in coming decades.

Changes in environment and changes in land use patterns have led to increased contact between animals and humans. As a result, viruses in animals are getting transmitted to humans and thus creating problems for humanity.

"Global warming, by itself, is another important cause for the emergence of new viruses. There is a strong need to strengthen disease surveillance and to understand the biological factors for the growth of vectors like mosquitoes, ants, etc and to take appropriate measures to control them," Dr Gupta noted.

Jaishankar criticises Rahul for using 'pita' word for Indian soldiers

Team Absolute | New Delhi

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Monday criticised Congress MP Rahul Gandhi for using the word "pita" in the context of clashes between Indian and Chinese troops in Arunachal Pradesh. While criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi for being "indifferent" towards Chinese designs on India, in the context of transgression by Chinese troops in Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh, the Congress leader had used the word "pita" for Indian troops, while describing the clashes between Indian and Chinese troops there. "We have no problems if there are political differences, even if there is political criticism. I have heard sometimes that my own understanding needs to be deepened. When I see who is giving the advice, I can only bow and respect, but I think we shouldn't directly or indirectly criticise our jawans. Our jawans are standing in Yangtze at 13,000 feet, defending our border, they do not deserve to have the word 'pita'. The word 'pita' shouldn't be used for our jawans," Jaishankar said in Lok Sabha while replying to a discussion on the Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill. Last week, Rahul Gandhi had said that the "external affairs minister keeps giving statements, but he should deepen his understanding". Gandhi had said this while referring to the Indian and Chinese soldiers face-off in Tawang. Jaishankar further said that if the government had been indifferent towards China's transgressions, "then who sent the Indian Army to the border. If we were indifferent to China then why are we pressurising China for de-escalation and disengagement today? Why are we saying publicly that our relations are not normal?"

"IN MARKET OF HATRED": RAHUL GANDHI JABS BJP OVER BHARAT JODO YATRA

Alwar (Rajasthan): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi urged BJP leaders criticising him to "open up shops to spread love in the market of hatred" as he was doing through his Bharat Jodo Yatra. Addressing a poll rally here, he also asked each minister in the Rajasthan Cabinet to undertake a yatra once a month across the desert state to reach out to the common people and redress their grievances.

He accused the BJP leaders of abusing him and spreading hatred.

"I don't hate them but I stand by my ideology. They ask me what I am doing and why am I walking from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. Some of them (of BJP) ask me what I am doing and why am I walking, my answer is: 'Nafrat ke bazaar mein, mohabbat ki dukaan khol raha noon' ('I am opening a counter for spreading love in the market of hatred)', he said on why he was undertaking the Bharat Jodo Yatra. "You hate me, you abuse me, this is your heart. Your 'bazaar is of nafrat' (the market is of hatred), but my shop is of love," he stressed.

Noting that all great leaders also did the same, he said, "I'm not talking just about myself, the entire organisation which gave India its independence. What are we before people like Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Patel, Azad, they have opened shops of love in the market of hate." "This is my reply to all those in the BJP, open up a shop of love in the market of hatred. Because our country is of love and not of hate," he said addressing a major rally.

Twitter bans all links to FB, Insta, Mastodon & other rivals on its platform



TWITTER USERS VOTE IN FAVOUR FOR ELON MUSK TO STEP DOWN AS ITS CEO

Twitter Inc. users voted for Elon Musk to step down from his role as head of the social platform in a poll the billionaire entrepreneur said he would respect, a sharp rebuke of his chaotic tenure less than two months since he took over. About 58% of the 17.5 million votes cast were in favor of Musk stepping back from the leadership role, despite there being no clear successor. If Musk heeds the results, it would mark the end of 53 chaotic days at the helm, which has involved dismissing top executives, eliminating roughly half of its employees and spooking advertisers.

to their profiles on other social networks in their Twitter bio.

"If violations of this policy are included in your bio and/or account name, we will temporarily suspend your account and require changes to your profile to no longer be in violation. Subsequent violations may result in permanent suspension," said Twitter. The move did not gel well with many Twitter users. "This is such a desperate move. Honestly hard to remember the last time a tech company did something this baldly antagonistic to users and just so pathetic," tweeted Farhad Manjoo, an opinion columnist at the New York Times. "He (Musk) must be losing a lot of money. But this whole thing is making him so so small," he added.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Censoring other social media companies on its platform, Elon Musk-owned Twitter on Sunday announced it will no longer allow users to promote their presence on Facebook, Instagram, Mastodon, Truth Social, Tribel, Nostr, and Post -- a move that has irked millions of users.

Twitter said that while it recognises that many of its users are active on other social media platforms, "we will no longer allow free promotion of certain social media platforms on Twitter". The company said that it will remove accounts created solely for the purpose of promoting other social platforms and content that contains links or usernames for the following platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Mastodon, Truth Social, Tribel, Nostr and Post.

Twitter will still allow cross-posting content from any social media platform. "Posting links or usernames to social media platforms not listed above are also not in violation of this policy," said the company.

Twitter said it will take action against accounts that violate this policy "at both the Tweet level and the account level."

It means users can no longer include a link

9-YR-OLD BOY BEATEN TO DEATH BY TEACHER IN K'TAKA SCHOOL

Gadag (Karnataka): A Class 4 student, who was allegedly beaten by a guest faculty with a thin iron rod in a government-run school here, succumbed to his injuries on Monday. The shocking incident had taken place on Saturday.

The deceased boy has been identified as Bharat Barakeri, a nine-year-old student of Government Model Primary School in Hadali village near Nargund town in Gadag. The accused teacher is identified as Muttu Hadali.

According to police, the accused teacher has disappeared after the incident and a manhunt has been launched to nab him. The accused had also assaulted the mother of the boy, Geetha Barakeri for questioning him.

The accused assaulted Bharat with a thin iron rod when he was talking to his friends. The boy then ran to his mother Geetha, also a teacher in the school.

When Geetha tried saving her son, the accused attacked her also. The seriously injured, bleeding boy was shifted to the KIMS hospital of Hubballi, where he succumbed to his injuries.

Naragunda police have registered a case and launched a hunt for the accused teacher. The trigger for his anger is yet to be ascertained. An investigation is on.

Operation underway after militants seize counter terror compound in Pak

Bannu (Pakistan) | Agencies

Pakistan security forces have launched an operation to clear the area after militants took over a compound of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Bannu and held the officials hostage in the centre, sources said on Monday. According to the sources, security forces are on high alert in the vicinity due to the operations, Geo News reported.

Internet services have been suspended in Bannu and the roads leading to and from the Bannu Cantonment have been blocked, the reports said. Miranshah Road and Jumma Khan Road are closed for all sorts of traffic movement. The sources have claimed that the terrorists are demanding a safe air route to Afghanistan. On Sunday, four police personnel were killed and as many others were wounded in an overnight terrorist attack on the Bargai police station in the Lakki Marwat area.



Terrorists launched an armed assault on the police station from two sides. A fierce exchange of fire took place between the police and the outlaws that left four policemen dead and as many injured.

The attackers escaped after the assault. Police have launched a search operation in the area for the saboteurs. The law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has gone south over the last few weeks as an increase has been noticed in threats and

attacks on security forces as well as high-profile political personalities. According to a The News report, the police are on high alert across the province after the recent spike in attacks in areas including Peshawar, southern districts, and the Mardan region.

The publication, citing a source, said: "Apart from the police, senior politicians have complained of receiving threats. The houses of some of them have also come under

grenade attack." Provincial spokesperson of the Awami National Party (ANP) Samar Bilour has also shared that their provincial president Aimal Wali Khan had received a call about a plan of attack on his life. The wave of terrorist attacks has risen across the province in the last few months, the report said. At least 118 terrorist incidents were reported in KP from mid-August till the last week of November, according to official numbers.

Nearly 200 nations adopt landmark biodiversity pact to protect 30% lands, oceans

Montreal | Agencies

Nearing the conclusion of a sometimes fractious two-week meeting, nearly 200 nations of the world on Monday agreed on a historic package of measures deemed critical to addressing the dangerous loss of biodiversity and restoring natural ecosystems.

Convened under UN auspices, chaired by China, and hosted by Canada, the 15th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the "Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework" (GBF), including four goals and 23 targets for achievement by 2030.

Among the global targets for 2030 are: Effective conservation and management of at least 30 per cent of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal areas and oceans, with emphasis on areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning and services.

The GBF prioritizes ecologically-representative, well-connected and equitably-governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories and practices.



Currently 17 per cent and 10 per cent of the world's terrestrial and marine areas respectively are under protection.

The GBF warns: "Without such action, there will be a further acceleration in the global rate of species extinction, which is already at least tens to hundreds of times higher than it has averaged over the past 10 million years."

The framework's four overarching global goals: **Goal A** The integrity, connectivity and resilience of

all ecosystems are maintained, enhanced, or restored, substantially increasing the area of natural ecosystems by 2050; Human induced extinction of known threatened species is halted, and, by 2050, extinction rate and risk of all species are reduced tenfold.

Goal B Biodiversity is sustainably used and managed and nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, are valued, maintained and enhanced, with those currently in decline being restored, supporting the achievement of sustainable development, for the benefit of present and future generations by 2050

Goal C The monetary and non-monetary benefits from the utilization of genetic resources, and digital sequence information on genetic resources, and of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, as applicable, are shared fairly and equitably, including, as appropriate with indigenous peoples and local communities, and substantially increased by 2050.

Goal D Adequate means of implementation, including financial resources, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, and

access to and transfer of technology to fully implement the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework are secured and equitably accessible to all Parties, especially developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States.

Held at Montreal's Palais des Congres from December 7-19, representatives of 188 governments on site (95 per cent of all 196 Parties to the UN CBD, as well as two non-Parties -- the US and The Vatican), finalised and approved measures to arrest the ongoing loss of terrestrial and marine biodiversity and set humanity in the direction of a sustainable relationship with nature, with clear indicators to measure progress.

In addition to the GBF the meeting approved a series of related agreements on its implementation, including planning, monitoring, reporting and review; resource mobilization; helping nations to build their capacity to meet the obligations; and digital sequence information on genetic resources.

COP15 delegates agreed to establish within the GBF a multilateral fund for the equitable sharing of benefits between providers and users of DSI, to be finalized at COP16 in Turkey in 2024.

Endangered white Himalayan porcupines seized in West Bengal

Kolkata | Agencies

Two white Himalayan porcupines have been rescued from the clutches of wildlife traffickers at the Burdwan railway station in West Bengal, forest department officials said on Monday.

The three persons who were ferrying these rare species were nabbed by the Government Railway Police (GRP) personnel from a compartment of Kanchanjunga Express late on Sunday night.

The arrested persons have been identified as Ganesh Shaw, Pintu Kumar and Tarun Kumar Ghosh. Tarun Ghosh is a contractual employee with the railways who's from Kolkata, Shaw is a resident of Giridih in Jharkhand, while Kumar is a resident of Delhi.

The GRP officials have

handed over the porcupines to the local forest range office.

Forest officer Kajal Biswas told media persons on Monday that veterinary officials of the state of forest department are currently examining the health condition of the two rescued animals.

"They seem to be in good health. After check-up, our officials will decide about their next destination," Biswas said. Initial interrogation has revealed that the porcupines were being taken to Sealdah in Kolkata, where they were supposed to be handed over to another person. The arrested persons have confessed that they got the consignment from Dharmanagar in Tripura and boarded the Kanchanjunga Express with the intention of bringing them to Kolkata.



FINANCE MINISTER SAYS NEED TO SIMPLIFY REFUND PROCESS FOR DEPOSITORS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday accepted, in the Parliament that the process of recovering money by small depositors from bad debts is very complicated and lengthy, and there is a need to simplify it. Replying to a question by NCP member Supriya Sule during Question Hour in the Lok Sabha on writing off of bad loans and their recovery and problems faced by depositors, Sitharaman said: "Unfortunately, the processes (of recovering money) are so layered that by the time justice is sought to be delivered, many of the small depositors are put to extreme difficulty. There is definitely a need to look at how we can simplify the process without denying justice."

Sule had sought to know how the process of facilitating refund of depositors' money can be shortened, as it takes a long time for depositors to get their money back once bad loans are written off.

The NCP lawmaker also cited the example of PMC Bank case while



highlighting the plight of the common depositors through her question. In her reply, Sitharaman said: "I quite understand the sentiment... and I am fully appreciative of that part. It does take a long time. The processes are very layered... Financial creditors and operational creditors are very

much at the bottom. These claims are probably never heard. It should rightly be heard also.

"When there are these many claims on, let us say, a property of a so-called willful defaulter, approaching the court for release of a portion of what was attached becomes difficult... I

agree with the honourable MP that unfortunately the processes are so layered that by the time justice is sought to be delivered, many of the small depositors are put to extreme difficulty. There is definitely a need to look at how we can simplify the process without denying justice."

Gehlot's 'political classes' statement triggers debate in BJP, Cong

Jaipur | Agencies

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's statement of "starting political classes after his retirement" has triggered a major debate in the political circles of the desert state.

Gehlot, when asked to speak on the political model of Rajasthan during a press conference on Saturday (December 17) organised on four years of completion of the Congress government in Rajasthan had quipped, "I will start taking political classes after my retirement."

BJP state president Satish Poonia said, "God forbid! If a person sees such a day that someone has to go to the Ashok Gehlot School of Politics, then he will learn to lie, make false declarations and break promises... You can definitely get training on these issues, but there is no scope for training in traditional ethical politics, which Rajasthan was once known for in some era," he said.

Not only the BJP, but the Congress' own leaders cannot resist to speak on the



issue. Sushil Asopa, former secretary, Rajasthan unit of the Congress tweeted, "I don't want to go to any class to learn politics. Whenever I am in trouble, I sit down to read the incomplete autobiography of Pandit Nehru, the knowledge of moral politics becomes strong." His tweet clearly went with Gehlot's satirical statement on starting the political classes.

Meanwhile, speculations are also rife in the state about the statement of Gehlot. "Gehlot has been a politician over the last four decades and a politician never thinks or announces his retirement plan. His statement has added fuel to fire amid the ongoing political tussle in Rajasthan over leadership issues," said a senior leader on condition of anonymity.

Violence rocks Allahabad University, many injured

Prayagraj (UP) | Agencies

The Allahabad University was rocked by violence on Monday when students fought a pitched battle with security guards and then the police.

Trouble began when the guards stopped a student leader from entering the campus. The student leader said that he was on his way to the bank inside the campus.

This led to a scuffle that paved the way for stone pelting by the students.

Additional police were called in and several vehicles parked inside were vandalized. According to reports, several students and policemen were injured in the fra-



cas. There was no official statement from the university authorities till the time of filing this report. Students have

been peacefully agitating since the past 101 days on the issue of fee hike in the university.

Foreign couple who adopted abandoned baby in UP, charged with conversion

Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh) | Agencies

An FIR has been filed against a Malta-based couple and an orphanage official here for 'wrongful conversion' of an abandoned baby girl who was adopted by the foreigners.

Three years ago, the baby was found abandoned in an earthen pot here and was adopted by the couple.

Right-wing activists have now lodged an FIR against the orphanage in Bareilly and the Malta-based couple that has adopted the baby.

This comes a week before the child, named Sita, was supposed to travel to Malta.

The FIR has been registered under IPC sections 420 (cheating), 467 (forgery), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating), 471 (fraudulently using document as genuine which is actually a forged one) along with sections 3 and 5 (1) of UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021 against an orphanage official, child's adoptive parents and an unidentified person on the complaint of Bareilly-based activist Anshu Kumar. Kumar had alleged that the orphanage staff had changed the



baby's faith and made her an Aadhaar card with a 'new Christian name'.

Refuting the allegations, the orphanage superintendent, Primrose Edmond, said, "The adoption was done through the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) following the guidelines of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children)

Act, 2015 and under the directions of the Delhi High Court. I do not have any direct role in it. The baby's name is still 'Sita' and her new parents from Malta call her by that name."

An orphanage staff, requesting anonymity, added, "A local politician wanted to adopt Sita but he could not and now he is doing everything possible to delay the adoption process. They have not changed her name. Her name in the records has only been updated to 'Manuela Sita Camilleri' as 'Camilleri' is the surname of her new parents and 'Manuel' is the father's first name."

The staff member further said, "Sita falls under 'special needs' category as she suffers from seizure disorder. She was hospitalised at a private hospital thrice this year as she was gasping for breath. Delay in her adoption process is risking her life as well."

Meanwhile, Superintendent of Police (Bareilly city), Rahul Bhati, said, "The FIR was registered on a complaint that the orphanage has been changing the religion of children living there and Sita's example was given as one such case. The facts are being verified."

Kerala HC raps state govt for soft-peddalling on recovering damages from banned PFI

Kochi | Agencies

The Kerala High Court on Monday rapped the Pinarayi Vijayan government over the delay in recovery of damages from banned Popular Front of India (PFI) and its office-bearers, for the day they had called for a state-wide shut down in September.

The state had informed the court that the total damages caused to properties across the state had come to Rs 5.20 crore during the flash shut-down called by the PFI on September 23 to protest the arrest of their top brass by Central agencies the previous day.

Incidentally, it was the division bench of Justice A.K. Jayasankaran Nambiar and Justice C.P. Mohammed Nias took suo moto proceedings against the PFI and directed all the lower courts, wherever the cases have



been registered, to see that no one from it should be given bail unless the compensation is paid.

If the compensation is not paid, then proceedings should be taken to confiscate personal assets of all those who indulged in the destruction, it said. "Whenever the word hartal is said, it has a different meaning among

the citizens. People are living in perpetual fear. What does a common man have to do with this? Common man suffers, and for what? Not supporting an ideology of yours?" the court asked.

It came down heavily on the Vijayan government for not having done anything substantial to this

effect, despite being asked to do so by the court. Incidentally the government had informed the court last month that necessary directions to initiate revenue recovery has been given to the Revenue Department and it would be done in a month's time.

Unhappy with the tardy progress, the court told off the government for such a callous attitude when called upon to implement the directions, especially in matters of public interest and involving destruction.

It then asked the Additional Chief Secretary to appear before the court on Friday with a road map for collecting the Rs 5.20 crore, adding that under no circumstances would this be allowed to go beyond January 31.

The government informed the court that 487 cases were registered in the state with 1,992 people arrested and 687 taken into preventive custody.

CBI raids educational institution owned by K'taka Cong President Shivakumar

Bengaluru | Agencies

The sleuths of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday conducted raids on educational institution owned by Karnataka Congress President D.K. Shivakumar in Bengaluru.

The sleuths raided the National Education Foundation located in Rajarajeshwari Nagar in Bengaluru and conducted verification of documents. Shivakumar is the chairman of the foundation and his daughter Ishwarya is the secretary. Shivakumar stated that CBI has conducted raids on his educational institutions. "They (CBI) are conducting inquiries on our land and business. Our family is being hounded by the investigating agencies," he said.

"All probing agencies have lodged complaints and conducted investigations. CBI officers have issued notices to my partners and relatives and got the information. I have not done anything wrong and I don't fear," Shivakumar stated. The investigating agencies are being used to target opponents. The main objective is to torture Congress leaders through the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Income Tax Department (IT) and CBI,



Shivakumar explained. "I will believe in the judiciary and God. BJP MP V. Srinivasprasad has spoken about money transactions during operation lotus carried by BJP. Srinivasprasad had stated that money was given by BJP MLC H. Vishwanath. There are statements on making payments of Rs 5 to 6 crore for the post of the Governor. Mysuru-Kodagu MP Pratap Simha has also given a similar statement. The investigating agencies have not issued any notices to them. No one is questioning even a huge money transaction is discussed," Shivakumar reacted angrily. Shivakumar stated that the agencies are being used to snub Congress leaders. Earlier, notice were issued for gifting of mobiles, he said.

1 KILLED, 4 INJURED IN FIRING IN ODISHA'S NAYAGARH

Bhubaneswar: One person has died while four others have sustained injuries when the miscreants opened fire at Krushnprasada village in Odisha's Nayagarh district on Monday, the police said. The deceased was identified as Anirudha Nayak, a retired army personnel. The miscreants, stated to be from the same village, opened several rounds of fire while the victims were standing on the road.

Nayagarh Superintendent of Police Alekh Chandra Pahi said one person has been killed in the firing and the injured were taken to the Nayagarh hospital. Further investigation into the incident is underway, he said.

Though the exact reason behind the firing is yet to be ascertained, it is suspected that land dispute might be the reason for which one group opened fire on the family of Anirudh.

Delhi court lists Nora Fatehi's defamation case against Jacqueline for Jan 21

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Patiala House court has listed the defamation case filed by Bollywood actor Nora Fatehi against actor Jacqueline Fernandez for hearing on January 21. The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) of Patiala House court transferred the defamation case to Metropolitan Magistrate Kapil Gupta, who listed it for next month. On December 12, Nora had filed a defamation case in a court here against Jacqueline, alleging that the latter made defamatory allegations against her for "malicious reasons" and to destroy her career.

According to Nora, Jacqueline sought to criminally defame her in order to destroy her career to further her own interests, since they are both working in the same industry and have similar backgrounds, amongst other reasons. Contending that her image is being tarnished, she, stressing that artists' career is solely based on their reputation, had alleged that defamatory remarks were made against her by Jacqueline to ensure her financial, social, and personal downfall. In the complaint accessed by reporter, Nora had also claimed that Jacqueline has also maliciously attempted to absolve herself from her actions in another criminal proceedings which are absolutely unrelated to her.



"Jacqueline Fernandez is also an actress, and is pretty well known in the film industry. She has also been made an accused in the Suresh Chandrashekar Rs 200 crore money-laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate. That the defamatory imputations were made by Fernandez due to malicious reasons. Apart from that, Fernandez sought to criminally defame the complainant in order to destroy her career to further her own interests since she is also in Bollywood," read the complaint moved by Nora through her counsel

advocate Vikram Chauhan.

Nora had further alleged that Jacqueline made a false statement against her despite being an actress too. She "has unnecessarily dragged and defamed me as I am in the same industry. She is fully aware that the business of any artiste and their career is solely based on their reputation. This clearly establishes that the said imputation has been made with the intention and knowledge that such imputation will harm the reputation of the complainant," her plea read. She had also accused a few media firms for quoting Jacqueline which lowered her reputation in the same plea. On December 2, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had questioned Nora regarding content Chandrashekar's money laundering case. Both actresses had recorded their statement as witness in the case. Earlier, fixed deposits worth Rs 7.2 crore belonging to Jacqueline were attached by the ED, which termed these gifts and properties as proceeds of crime received by the actress. In February, the ED filed its first supplementary prosecution complaint against Chandrashekar's aide Pinky Irani, who introduced him to Bollywood actresses. It had been alleged in the charge sheet that Irani used to choose costly gifts for Jacqueline and later used to drop it at her house after the payments were made by Chandrashekar.

Punjab Police arrest 271 drug smugglers in one week

Chandigarh | Agencies

Amid the ongoing war against drugs launched on the directions of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Punjab Police have arrested 271 drug smugglers and suppliers after registering 192 FIRs under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in the past week.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sukhchain Singh Gill, while addressing his weekly press conference here on Monday, said the police have also recovered 10.08 kg heroin, 13.52 kg opium, 5.52 kg ganja, 3.43 quintals of poppy husk, and 54,123 tablets, capsule and injections of pharmaceuticals, besides recovering Rs 17.66 lakh drug money from their possession.

He said with 11 more proclaimed offenders (POs) and absconders in NDPS cases arrested in the last week, the



total number of arrests reached 573 since the special drive was started on July 5. Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav had given strict instructions to all the CPs and SSPs to investigate backward and forward linkages minutely in each and every case, especially related to drug recoveries, even if they recover a meagre amount of drugs.



HONORARIUM AND ALLOWANCES OF PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES OF URBAN BODIES WILL BE DOUBLED: CM CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that people's representatives should earn the respect of the people by serving the people. On the basis of his long experience, Chouhan gave tips for success in public life in a one-day training session for newly elected public representatives of urban bodies from all the districts of the state. He said that it is necessary to remain active with enthusiasm while remaining humble and egoless. Common people have a lot of expectations from the public representatives. Therefore, keeping patience, it is necessary to listen to the problems of the people and make every possible effort to solve them and remain in dialogue with the public. CM Chouhan announced to double the honorarium and allowance of mayor, chairman, vice-chairman, chairman and councillor of urban bodies. CM Chouhan said that the newly



elected public representatives should be aware and inquisitive. Know and understand the government schemes and work according to the rules and procedures. Do what you say, but don't do anything or use words that affect your reputation. He said that every poor person needs a place to live. The state government is

making every possible effort for that. The poor who were living in the state till December 31, 2020, will be given the lease of that place. CM Chouhan was addressing the training session of newly elected office bearers of urban bodies at Motilal Nehru Stadium today. Chief Minister Chouhan has said

that work should be done with the cooperation of all to make the cities of urban bodies clean, beautiful and better in terms of civic amenities. An amount of Rs 80 lakh each will be provided to the newly formed urban bodies for various works. Rs 770 crore will be provided for repair and improvement of roads in urban areas, Rs 1 crore each for decoration of office buildings and development of facilities. We have to stop the irregularities and give priority to the welfare of the general public.

CM Chouhan said that the honorarium and allowances of public representatives of urban bodies have been doubled. In municipal corporations with a population of more than one million, at present the mayor is getting honorarium of Rs. 11,000, hospitality allowance of Rs 2,500, chairman Rs 9,000, hospitality allowance of Rs 1,400 and councilors Rs 6,000 per month. All these honorarium and allowances have been doubled.

Have kept opposition chair warm for CM Chouhan: Kamal Nath

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The first day of the winter session in the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly witnessed verbal exchanges between the ruling and opposition leaders, with the former Chief Minister Kamal Nath saying that he has kept the opposition chair warm for CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

Before the session began, Speaker Girish Gautam chaired the meeting of the business advisory committee. Finding Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan absent during the question hour, state Congress president Kamal Nath said he has kept the chair of opposition warm for him.

"He (CM Chouhan) is not here, I want to tell him through you that I have kept this chair (opposition seat) warm for him," Kamal Nath said, referring to state Home Minister Narottam



Mishra. Responding to that, Mishra, who is also the state Parliamentary Affairs Minister, said, "This is the day dream." Notably, CM Chouhan left the House after the formal beginning of the session as he had to address the gathering of newly-elected municipal councillors, who had been called for a meeting by the state urban development ministry. The verbal tussle between the ruling and the opposition continued. Mishra accused the opposition of not allowing the House to function properly and evading from the debates on public

issues. Responding to that, Kamal Nath said, "You know who does not allow the House to function."

Earlier, Nath said that the Congress has decided to bring a no-confidence motion against the present BJP government in the state. "I hope it will be followed and accepted as per the rules. We always want the Assembly to run and the term should be extended."

Meanwhile, the House paid tribute to the departed leaders and distinguished people. After which the proceedings of the Assembly were adjourned.

MAN ARRESTED FOR OBJECTIONABLE ACT IN TEMPLE

Indore: A man, caught on CCTV camera doing an objectionable act in a temple, was arrested by the police on Sunday. After the residents came to know of the act, they created a ruckus and washed the temple. Later, police were informed about the incident, and they registered a case against the accused. Sanyogita Ganj police station in-charge Tahjib Kaji said that the accused named Ghanti, a resident of the Azad Nagar area was arrested, and further investigation is underway into the case. He runs a shop in the Gwaltoli area of the city. He had reached the temple in Prakash Nagar where he did an objectionable act. His act was captured in the CCTV installed in the temple. Mic member Manish Sharma 'Mama' also reached the temple. He and the residents washed the entire temple to purify the place. Based on the CCTV footage and technical investigation, the police managed to arrest the accused. He is being questioned by the police to know his motive.

Maoist with Rs 12 L reward killed in encounter in MP's Balaghat

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Police on Monday claimed to have killed a Naxalite, carrying a reward of Rs 12 lakh, in an encounter in Balaghat district of the state.

Based on a tip-off about the movement of the wanted Naxalite, a joint team of Hawk Force and district police launched a search operation in the area. There was a gunfight after Maoists opened fire at the team. During a search after the firing, the body of one Maoist was found on Sunday, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sanjay Singh said.

According to Singh, the Naxalites were asked to surrender but they opened fire, which was retaliated by the police team. The slain Naxalite was identified as Rupesh aka Hoonga, a member of Bhoramdev Dalam. "He was carrying a reward of Rs 12 lakh and was wanted by the



police in Maharashtra, MP, and Chhattisgarh," Singh added.

Briefing the media this morning, State Home Minister Narottam Mishra said that the killing of the wanted Maoist was a major breakthrough as he was wanted in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. "Security forces are continuously taking effective action to drive out the Naxalites from Madhya Pradesh. I congratulate our police team and Hawk Force for the

success of this operation," Mishra added.

Last month, Hawk Force had killed two Maoists during an encounter in the forest of Balaghat. A senior police officer said there has been an increase in the movement of Maoists in Mandla district and its adjoining Balaghat, which shares a border with Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra but security forces have been able to thwart Maoist plans of strengthening their presence.

CONGRESS NEVER TOOK DECISION WITH NARROW MINDSET WHEN THE PARTY WAS IN POWER: DIGVIJAYA SINGH

Bhopal: Former chief ministers Kamal Nath and Digvijaya Singh have condemned the atrocities committed on Congressmen in Sagar district. Digvijaya Singh and other Congress leaders visited Sagar on Saturday and met the affected people. "We never took decisions with narrow mindset when the Congress party was in power," he said. Both the leaders interacted with media here on Sunday.



Digvijaya Singh alleged that the state government tortured Congress workers on political grounds. "FIR is registered in false cases. They are tortured in police stations and jails," he said. Maximum numbers of atrocities on Congress leaders are reported in Surkhi, Khurai, Rahli in Sagar district and Datia, according to Nath. Houses, shops and dhabs of Congress workers have been demolished under pressure from BJP leaders. Their four-wheelers were crushed with bulldozers and JCBs. According to Nath, party will soon announce a panel of two lawyers in each district who will fight the cases of affected workers and their families free-of-cost. Former chief ministers Digvijaya Singh, Kamal Nath and Leader of Opposition Dr Govind Singh have written a letter to chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, asking to form a committee led by Speaker to conduct inquiry about atrocities committed on Congress leaders. The three met chief minister in Bhopal on Sunday.

The letter states that Congress leaders in Sagar, Tikamgarh and Datia are facing atrocities and FIRs have been registered against SC, ST people. They demanded that a committee be formed comprising BJP, Congress and MLAs of other parties to look into complaints. The law department secretary should be made the committee secretary to review the cases impartially. They also asked to complete investigation within four months and make the report public. Besides, they have demanded to withdraw the cases registered against the Congressmen with mala fide intention

Gautam Gambhir raised India's pride says Chief Minister Shivraj

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, former cricketer and Member of Parliament Gautam Gambhir participated in the Prem Sundar Memorial Cricket Tournament in Rehti (Sehore). The CM also tried his hand in batting and won the hearts of everyone. Chouhan said that Gautam Gambhir had raised India's prestige abroad. He appealed to Gautam Gambhir to cooperate in giving cricket training to children of Madhya Pradesh. Gautam Gambhir congratulated the organisers



for organising the tournament and said he grew up playing in such tournaments. The cricket tournament started on December 12 and 14 teams from Budni assembly constituency participated. The final

match was played between Budni and Bhairunda teams on Sunday. Sadhna Singh, MP Ramakant Bhargava, organising committee chief Kartikeya Singh Chouhan were present on the occasion.

MENTALLY CHALLENGED BHPAL MAN SODOMISED, ACCUSED HELD

Bhopal: Govindpura police have arrested a 23-year-old man on charges of having unnatural sex with a mentally challenged youth, police said. SHO of Govindpura police station, Lokendra Singh said that the accused had picked up the victim, who lived in the neighbourhood, on Saturday night around 11 pm on the pretext of introducing him to someone. He had taken the mentally challenged youth near drainage where he sodomised him.

The survivor returned home and informed his mother about the incident. Later a complaint was lodged. The police took the accused into custody on charges of unnatural sex, SHO Singh said.

JD(U) slams Sushil Modi, says MP has highest deaths in liquor tragedy

Team Absolute | Bhopal/Patna

Amid criticism of the Nitish Kumar government over the hooch tragedy in Bihar's Saran, Lalan Singh, the national president of JD(U) attacked the BJP while citing data from other states and said that Madhya Pradesh topped the chart of deaths.

Lalan Singh, while tagging Sushil Kumar Modi, asked him in a tweet to look into the data from other states too before levelling allegations on the Bihar government.

"Making and selling of spurious liquor is a criminal act. It is not only the incident in Saran but it happened in the entire country. You should look at the data before speaking to others. Bihar had made the largest human chain against liquor and BJP was part of it. He has to



remember it," Singh said in the tweet.

Citing data in the tweet, Singh said, "The Nitish Kumar government had imposed a liquor ban on April 1, 2016. 1322 persons have lost their lives due to hooch tragedy or due to consumption of liquor in Madhya Pradesh from 2016 to 2021. On the other hand, Bihar had registered only 23 deaths during the period, which was the lowest in the country.

"Besides Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, 1013 in Karnataka, 852 in Punjab, 425 in Uttar Pradesh, 330 in Rajasthan, 487 in Jharkhand, 234 in Himachal Pradesh, 489 in Haryana, 535 in Chhattisgarh, 293 in Andhra Pradesh, 172 in Puducherry, 116 in Delhi, 54 in Gujarat, and 24 in West Bengal. "A total of 1054 persons lost their lives due to liquor tragedy in 2016 across the country, 1510 in 2017, 1365 in 2018, 1296 in 2019 and 947 in 2020." Earlier on Sunday, Sushil Kumar Modi targeted the Nitish Kumar government for not giving compensation to the family members of the deceased. He alleged that the current Bihar government was insensitive towards the family members of the victims. Majority of them were poor women and children who have now lost their bread earners in the hooch tragedy, said the BJP leader.

CM PAYS HOMAGE TO MARTYRS RAM PRASAD BISMIL AND ASHFAQ ULLAH KHAN ON THEIR MARTYRDOM DAY



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid tribute to martyrs Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaq Ullah Khan on their martyrdom day. CM Chouhan garlanded their portraits in the residence office auditorium and paid floral tributes.

Martyr Ram Prasad 'Bismil' and Ashfaq Ullah Khan were the prominent fighters of the revolutionary stream of the Indian independence movement. After the Kakori incident in the year 1925, they were sentenced to death. Martyr Bismil was hanged in District Gorakhpur Jail and Martyr Ashfaq Ullah Khan was hanged in Faizabad on 19 December 1927.

TRIBAL GIRL KIDNAPPED BY 4 MEN, GIVEN INSECTICIDE, DIES

Khandwa: A minor girl belonging to Falia tribe of Jawar, Madhya Pradesh who was abducted by four men and given insecticide, died during treatment in the hospital, the police said. The girl child of a Falia tribal family had gone missing since Saturday night. After searching for the entire day on Sunday when she was not found anywhere, her relatives went to Jawar police station late in the evening to lodge a missing report, the police said.

On the same day, the police found a girl lying unconscious near a field. Foam was coming out of her mouth. The girl was rushed to the hospital, the police said. Khandwa SP, Vivek Singh said that the minor girl in her statement said that four miscreants made her drink insecticide after which she fell unconscious. The victim was not able to identify any of the accused as they wore masks.

Police parades 8 accused who tied up and brutally beat woman in Alot

Team Absolute | Alot

Alot police took out a foot procession on Monday, of the eight accused of a case in which a 30 year old woman was tied up to a tree and brutally beaten. One of the accused in the matter is the victim's husband. The matter was reported from Taragarh village under Alot police station limit on Sunday morning, in which, a 30-year-old woman was brutally beaten by her husband and seven others after she returned to her in-law's place. The accused husband and others even tied her to a tree with a rope and attacked her with an axe.

Meanwhile, local police rushed to the spot and rescued the woman after some locals alerted the police. Police freed the woman and admitted her to the civil hospital in Alot, from where she was referred to Ratlam in serious condition. During preliminary investigation, it was revealed that sometime back the woman had left her husband and gone to live with her lover. When she returned home on Sunday, her in-laws and husband thrashed her and threw



her out of the house. The woman alleges that her husband tied her to a tree and assaulted her. During this, the people of the village kept watching the entire incident like mute spectators.

On the complaint of the woman, the police had registered an FIR against eight persons including Vishnu, son of Mangu, his brother Mukesh, Dinesh, Mohan, son of Ganpath, Jagdish, son of

Lallu, Narayan, son of Ratanlal, Thanu Lal, son of Chandra, Kamal, son of Uday Singh under Sections 326 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons), 342 (wrongfully confines), 294 (obscene act in any public place), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of Indian Penal Code.

MERCURY LEVEL SLIDES, CHILL IS BACK

Bhopal: Temperature went down on Sunday, infusing chill in atmosphere. Temperature reduced drastically in Bhopal, Narmdapuram and Jabalpur divisions as clouds disappeared, according to meteorological department officials. On Sunday, Bhopal recorded a maximum temperature of 25.7 degrees Celsius after drop of 1.6 degrees while it recorded a minimum temperature of 11.6 degrees Celsius after drop of 2.6 degrees. Indore recorded maximum temperature of 27.1 degrees Celsius after drop of 2.2 degrees while it recorded a minimum temperature of 17.4 degrees Celsius after drop of 1 degree.

Senior meteorological department officer Ved Pratap Singh said, "Temperature reduced because clouds disappeared. After couple of days, temperature will start increasing again. This is temporary change witnessed in Bhopal,



EDITOR'S SPECS

Growing health inequalities post pandemic spur infectious diseases

Raising concerns about growing health inequalities after the Covid-19 pandemic, global health experts have called to improve healthcare capabilities to respond to established infectious diseases like malaria, measles and tuberculosis while also responding to emerging threats. Infectious disease specialists have faced numerous medical challenges, including the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, Ebola, Zika, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and Covid-19. A latest study by Queen Mary University of London, published in *BMJ Open*, found that only 75 per cent of children are receiving the first dose of the MMR vaccine on time, compared to the 95 per cent needed to prevent outbreaks of measles, a highly infectious disease. Measles is of particular concern because it can cause serious complications for some children, including pneumonia or brain swelling, and it is very infectious -- one person with measles typically infects 12-18 other people in an unprotected population. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that 95 per cent of children receive both doses of their MMR vaccine to avoid a measles outbreak. In India, more than 10,000 laboratory-confirmed cases of measles and 40 deaths due to it among children have been reported to date. Maharashtra reported 3,075 cases and 13 deaths, followed by Jharkhand with 2,683 cases and eight deaths. Meanwhile, a new study led by faculty at the University of Georgia, published in *The Lancet Global Health*, said that current vaccination strategies are unlikely to eliminate measles. Despite marked reductions in the number of new measles and rubella cases worldwide, gaps remain between current levels of transmission and disease elimination. Measles is one of the most contagious respiratory infections out there, and it moves quickly, so it's hard to control. It's critical to remain vigilant to surveil for rubella and measles cases and rapidly respond to potential outbreaks even after elimination is achieved.

IS THERE A PLACE FOR A UNIFORM CIVIL CODE IN A DIVERSE INDIA?

Kavya Dubey

BJP has gathered momentum in its push for the Uniform Civil Code, a proposed common law pertaining to inheritance, marriage, divorce, maintenance, and adoption for all Indian citizens. Currently, these practices are regulated under different personal laws (pertaining to family matters and domestic relations) that are based on the concerned individual's religion. The proposed law seeks to ensure equality.

Personal laws differ from public laws as they do not pertain to community in general or public at large, nor do they apply to all Indians.

Of the significant number of private bills introduced in Parliament this Winter Session, the Uniform Civil Code Bill was tabled by Kirodi Lal Meena of the ruling BJP in the Rajya Sabha.

There exists a provision to introduce private members' bills independently in Parliament. However, the chances of such bills getting passed are minimal. So far, the Parliament has passed all of 14 private member's bills. And no such bill has been passed since 1970.

Code of Contention

This proposed civil law intends to be for all Indian citizens in India irrespective of their religion, gender and/or sexual orientation.

This proposal touches upon certain socially sensitive matters, the most prominent of these being the state's commitment to secularism and people's affinity to their respective religions.

As matters stand, personal laws are drawn from religious scriptures of different communities. As a matter of Fundamental



Right, Articles 25-28 of the Constitution grant Indian citizens the freedom of religion, allowing them to practice and profess any religion of their choice and engage in activities accordingly.

Conversely, Article 44 points towards a Uniform Civil Code as a Directive Principle for the state, in the absence of a method to make it happen. Directive Principles are not enforceable or justiciable in a court of law.

Further, the Uniform Civil Code will enforce a positive impact LGBTQIA+ community in this country as it will dissolve differences between individuals due to gender or sexual orientation. Same-sex marriages are legally not recognised yet in India.

Goa is the single exception of an Indian state to have a common family law known as the Goa civil code, a legacy it carries from its Portuguese colonisers.

Genesis of Uniform Civil Code

The inception of personal laws happened in colonial times, primarily for Hindu and Muslim

communities. The British, to avert any possible opposition from these community leaders, decided to refrain from intervening in their personal and domestic matters, thereby granting them some powers to govern themselves.

After Independence, Hindu code bills were introduced. There were largely codified and reformed personal laws in various sects including religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism; and exempted Christians, Jews, Muslims and Parsis, identifying them as distinct from Hindu communities.

The Shah Bano case of 1985 was a controversial maintenance lawsuit whereby the Supreme Court pronounced in favour of giving maintenance to a divorced Muslim woman. Then, the Congress government enacted a law about granting the right to maintenance for a certain socially sanctioned period after divorce (called iddat).

This legislation shifted the onus of her maintenance and was interpreted as discriminatory as it denied right to basic maintenance available to Muslim women under secular law.

While Uniform Civil Code may be understood as another step pushing the boundary of colonial hangover, the need to emerge as a more independent nation in spirit through this means calls for deeper deliberation.

Constitutional mandate

Article 44 in Part IV of the Constitution holds that the state "shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India".

It indicates that the founders of the Constitution had in their vision a uniform set of laws, notwithstanding the distinct personal laws.

There was substantial debate in the Constituent Assembly about placing Uniform Civil Code under either Fundamental Rights or under Directive Principle. The matter had to be settled by vote.

Members of the Assembly took very contrasting stances on the matter. Some even felt that India was too diverse a country for such a provision.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had an ambivalent stand on the matter. He maintained that it should remain "purely voluntary" in the initial stages, adding that the Article "merely" proposed that the state shall endeavour to secure such a provision but it would not impose it on citizens. The amendments to safeguard personal laws from a uniform civil code were eventually rejected.

Uniformity vs celebrating diversity

Although India has uniformity in most criminal and civil matters

such as the Criminal Procedure Code, Civil Procedure Code, and the Contract Act, states have legislated several amendments to these codes and civil laws for the sake of better governance.

As a matter of fact, all Hindus are not governed by a homogeneous personal law despite the Hindu Code Bill, neither are Muslims and Christians under their respective personal laws.

It is thus debated how 'one nation, one law' could be applied to a country of diverse personal laws of various communities. Also, such uniformity is susceptible of coming in clash with the prevalent diversity in the country.

The Narendra Modi government in 2016 requested the Law Commission of India to determine how to form a code in the presence of "thousands of personal laws" in the country.

In 2018, the Law Commission submitted a 185-page consultation paper on the reform of family law.

The paper stated that a unified nation did not necessarily need "uniformity", adding that secularism could not contradict the plurality prevalent in the country. In fact, the term "secularism" had meaning only if it assured the expression of any form of difference, the Commission noted.

Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said in Parliament this year that the government currently had no plans to set up a panel to implement the UCC and requested the 22nd Law Commission of India to undertake an examination of various issues relating to it.

The chairperson and members of the said Law Commission, which was set up in 2021, have not yet been appointed.

international

China reports 2 Covid deaths as designated crematoriums see surge

Hong Kong | Agencies

China on Monday officially confirmed two new deaths from Covid-19 after its National Health Commission (NHC) reported no death from the respiratory disease since December 3, as reports surfaced that number of Covid-positive dead bodies arriving at Covid-designated crematoriums increased.

A total of 1,344 Covid-19 patients were discharged from hospitals after recovery on the mainland on Sunday, said the NHC in its daily report. Sunday saw two new deaths from Covid-19, with the total death toll at 5,237, reports Xinhua news agency.

Chinese news website Caixin reported three deaths, including two state media



journalists, after contracting Covid over the weekend. The government, however, did not confirm those.

China is also facing a crunch in medical workers as many succumb to Covid-19 amid a surge in cases throughout the country.

Caixin learned that several hospitals in Beijing have faced staffing constraints, as

more doctors get struck down by the virus. Smaller cities are also faced with similar constraints.

"In a county-level city in Central China's Hubei province, one doctor estimated that 20 per cent of medical staff in his hospital had been infected, and that percentage reached 50 among those working in high-risk settings,

including fever clinic and emergency department," the report mentioned.

Meanwhile, a top Chinese health official believed that China is experiencing the first of three expected waves of Covid infections this winter. However, there are concerns that these numbers are an underestimate due to a recent reduction in Covid testing, BBC reported.

Epidemiologist Wu Zunyou said that he believes the current spike in infections would run until mid-January, while the second wave would then be triggered by mass travel in January around the week-long Lunar New Year celebrations which begin on 21 January. Millions of people usually travel at this time to spend the holiday with family, the BBC reported.

31 SAILORS MISSING AFTER THAI WARSHIP CAPSIZES IN STORM

Bangkok | Agencies

At least 31 sailors remain unaccounted for after a navy warship capsized in a storm, the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) said on Monday, adding that search and rescue operations were underway. A total of 106 crew were on board the corvette HTMS Sukhothai which had been on a patrol in waters just 32 km off the coast of Bang Saphan district, in the Prachuap Khiri Khan province, when it got caught in the storm on Sunday at around 11.30 p.m.

As of Monday noon, 75 of them had been rescued, Xinhua news agency quoted the RTN as saying in a tweet.

The HTMS Sukhothai sank following a loss of power and consequently flooding of the ship, RTN spokesperson admiral Pokkroong Monthapalain said.

The RTN has dispatched three frigates and two helicopters with rescue equipment to the scene, but strong winds and waves prevented rescue efforts.



Researchers find 7000-yr-old cotton fibres in Israel

Jerusalem | Agencies

Israeli researchers have discovered ancient cotton fibres dating back 7,000 years, the northern University of Haifa (UH) said.

The fibres were found in Tel Tsaf, a prehistoric village located in the Beit She'an Valley near the Jordanian border and north of the West Bank on Sunday.

It was a large village in the Chalcolithic period, which flourished during the transition period between small agricultural societies and large urban state cities, Xinhua news agency reported. An investigation conducted by UH, in collaboration with Stanford University in the US and the Lower Saxony State Museum in Hannover, Germany, revealed that it is the earliest evidence in the ancient Near East for the use of cotton fibres.

Prior to this discovery, the earliest known evidence of cotton fibres used by humans in the ancient Near East



was collected in eastern Jordan.

The researchers estimated that the origin of the fibres found at Tel Tsaf is in the Indus Valley, today's Pakistan, one of the first places where cotton was domesticated.

They noted that the villagers had trade relations with Egypt, Iraq, and Anatolia areas, and it now appears to have reached the Indus Valley, thousands of kilometres away.

The cotton fibres, which were found together with wool and flax ones, were brought to the village as part of fabrics or clothes from ancient textiles, the team concluded.

5 DEAD, SUSPECT KILLED IN TORONTO SHOOTING

Toronto: Five people were killed in a shooting incident in Canada's Toronto city, authorities said, adding the suspect was shot dead by the police. Police found a "horrendous scene" on Sunday at a condo unit in Vaughan where the five people were killed, Xinhua news agency quoted the authorities as saying. The suspect's motive is yet to be ascertained. Further details were not immediately available as an investigation is underway.

36 INJURED DUE TO SEVERE TURBULENCE ON HAWAII-BOUND FLIGHT

Honolulu | Agencies

At least 36 people were injured due to severe turbulence on a Honolulu-bound Hawaiian Airlines flight from Phoenix, Arizona, the carrier said. The incident took place on Sunday shortly before flight HA35, carrying 278 passengers and 10 crew members, was scheduled to land at the Daniel K. Inouye International Airport, the BBC reported.

Of the 36, 11 people sustained serious injuries. At least 20 people were taken to local hospitals with injuries ranging from lacerations, bruising and loss of consciousness to head injuries. Thunderstorms were reported in the area at the time of the turbulence. In a series of



tweets, the airlines said: "HA35 from PHX (Phoenix) to HNL (Honolulu) encountered severe turbulence & landed safely in HNL at 10.50 a.m. today. Medical care was provided to several guests & crewmembers at the airport for minor injuries

while some were swiftly transported to local hospitals for further care." "We are continuing to support our guests and employees who sustained injuries... We are also conducting a thorough inspection of the aircraft before returning it to service."

17 INJURED IN FERRY BOAT EXPLOSION IN MYANMAR'S YANGON

Yangon: An explosion occurred on a ferry boat in Myanmar's largest city of Yangon, injuring 17 people, according to a fire brigade official at the Kyauktada township in downtown Yangon.

Local media reports on Sunday said the boat runs on Yangon's Pansoedan-Dala route, Xinhua news agency reported.

"The ship was going to depart from Yangon to Dala. The explosion happened in the lower room of the boat. A total of 17 were injured, four of them currently in a critical condition", said the fire brigade official.

The injured were sent to Yangon General Hospital for treatment.

South Korea's sea level rises nearly 10 cm over 33 yrs

Seoul | Agencies

South Korea's sea level rose nearly 10 cm over the past 33 years as a result of climate change, government data revealed on Monday.

The country's average coastal surface height grew 9.9 cm between 1989 and 2021, with the yearly average coming to 3.01 mm, Yonhap News Agency quoted the Korea Hydrographic and Oceanographic Agency as saying. The East Sea saw the largest increase of 3.53 mm per year on average, followed by the Yellow Sea with 3.08 mm and the southern sea 2.55 mm per year, the



data showed. The analysis was based on data collected from 21 observation posts in the country's coastal areas.

According to the data from the oldest post in the southwestern city of Mokpo, the sea level rose 15.4 cm over the past 62 years, or 2.49 mm per year, the agency said.



MAHARASHTRA'S 55 VILLAGES WISH TO BE MERGED WITH GUJARAT

Navsari (Gujarat) | Agencies

Fifty-five villages under Surgana taluka, which currently falls in Nashik district of Maharashtra, wish to be merged with Gujarat, as they want to 'taste development', which has not reached them even after 75 years of Independence. A memorandum submitted to Vansda Deputy Collector by Surgana taluka Sangharsh Samiti is being forwarded to the state government. Navsari District Collector Amit Yadav told reporter on Monday, "Vansda Deputy Collector had informed me that a delegation from Surgana taluka visited him and submitted a memorandum. They wish to merge their villages with Gujarat, the said memorandum is being forwarded to the state government." Surgana taluka's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) unit president Chintaman Gavit had told the delegation and submitted a memorandum to the Vansda Deputy Collector, M.S. Vasava two weeks ago. Along with the memorandum, he also submitted a resolution

passed by 55 villages requesting merger with Gujarat. He alleged that development has reached the villages of Gujarat while in Surgana taluka and its villages, which are adjoined to Gujarat border, but on Maharashtra side, there is no development. Another villager Hemant Vaghre stated, "There may be district hospitals, bus terminus, school and colleges at the district level, but at the Taluka headquarters government hospital does not have specialised doctors, no colleges. Villagers of 55 villages have to travel in private vehicles." Both of them claimed that they have social connection with villagers on the Gujarat side, they marry their daughters to males in Gujarat and vice versa. So if the 55 villages of Surgana taluka are merged with Gujarat, it will be socially good and the villages will soon see development. The Deputy Collector told the media that if any village or taluka wishes to get merged with neighbouring state, both states' assemblies will have to pass a resolution accordingly. Then only it is possible.

Maoists issue public threats to kill NCP MLA; govt assures security

Nagpur | Agencies

In a bizarre development, Maoists have allegedly issued a press statement threatening to kill an Opposition lawmaker following certain local mining disputes, the Maharashtra Legislature was informed here on Monday. Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar said that his party colleague and Nationalist Congress Party MLA from Aheri, Dharmarao Baba Atram was given the threat and demanded immediate security cover for him. The threats came in the form of an announcement from the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist)'s Western Sub-Zonal Bureau to Atram, recently in the Maoist-infested Gadchiroli. The Maoist groups have raised strong objections to the expansion of the Surajgarh Steel Project for mining iron ore, awarded to a Mumbai-based company, despite purported opposition by the local tribals and farmers, and have demanded that the project be stopped. They claimed that tribals' opposition to the project was bulldozed by the government in 2013 and it came up by 2016, but though the company was allowed to mine around three tonnes of iron ore per year, the government has now raised it to 10



tonnes annually. The 'reds' have said besides the tribals' resentment, the project is also playing havoc with the environment as hundreds of hectares are being dug up for the iron ore, and now it will go up to 1,000 hectares, hitting at least 40 villages that depend on farming and foresting activities. Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Devendra Fadnis said the government has taken serious note of it and directed that Atram will be accorded security immediately. On his part, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said that the Surajgarh Steel Project has provided jobs to over 6,000 people and another 10,000 will get employments in the next phase of the project. "Developmental and industrialisation activities in the Gadchiroli district will not be halted due to the fear of Maoists. There will be no laxity in providing security to Atram and he will be given proper security," assured Shinde. Other prominent leaders like Congress President Nana Patole, Dr. Jitendra Awhad, Dilip Walse-Patil also raised the issue of the death threats to Atram and demanded action from the government. Earlier, there have been violent repercussions to the project including killings and torching of vehicles belonging to the mining company.

"Maharashtra Misled": Congress on Basavaraj Bommai's 'Fake Tweets' row

Nagpur | Agencies

Senior Congress leader Ashok Chavan claimed Maharashtra was being misled over the issue of Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai's 'fake' Twitter handle amid the boundary dispute between the two states. Talking to reporters in the Vidhan Bhavan complex here, Chavan asked why the Maharashtra government was silent in the matter and said it seemed the state government was helping Karnataka to brush aside the controversy over the issue of the 'fake' Twitter account from which "provocative comments" were made. Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde last week said tweets in the name of his Karnataka counterpart claiming some areas of Maharashtra were not actually posted by Bommai. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who last week met the chief ministers



of Maharashtra and Karnataka to defuse the border tensions between the two states, had said fake tweets in the name of top leaders also escalated the issue. The dispute centres on Maharashtra's claims on Belagavi and

the surrounding region in northern Karnataka which has a sizable Marathi-speaking population. Chavan on Monday said the provocative language used in the tweets was objectionable. "It was clarified that the Twitter

handle was fake. But the handle was active since January 2015 and has been verified by Twitter. Till now, the official decisions taken by the Karnataka government are posted on that handle," the former Maharashtra CM said. If the Twitter handle was fake, why the tweets related to Maharashtra have not been deleted. How is the Twitter account still active? he asked. "The Maharashtra government is being misled over the fake Twitter handle issue," he alleged. Chavan said Maharashtra's stand was always that of understanding. The Karnataka chief minister makes "provocative remarks" and it is not countered, he claimed. "It looks like the Maharashtra government is helping Karnataka to brush aside the controversy over the fake Twitter handle. Why is the Maharashtra government going soft on this?" he asked.

K'taka police disallow holding Maha Melav by MES in Belagavi

Belagavi | Agencies

Karnataka police have refused permission for the Maharashtra Ekikarana Samithi (MES) to hold Maha Melav on Monday against the commencement of winter session at the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha by the government. The MES, a political outfit, is fighting for the merger of Belagavi city into Maharashtra state and organises Maha Melav every time on the first day of the winter session. This time, the authorities have taken strict action and refused permission for the event. ADGP (Law and Order) Alok Kumar on Monday stated that there is no scope to hold meetings and programmes as curfew is clamped in the Tilakwadi area of Belagavi. "If someone tries to arrange a meeting, they will be taken into custody," he warned. Belagavi Police Commissioner Dr M.B. Boralingiah has released curfew orders in the half kilometre stretch of the Vaccine Depot area of Tilakwadi to maintain law and



order situation. The police have also vacated the stage erected by the MES at the Vaccine Depot area. About 5,000 police personnel, 6 SP's, 11 ASP's, 40 DySP's, 106 CPl's, 16 platoons of City Armed Reserve (CAR), 35 platoons of Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRRP) and 10 Quick Response Teams (QRT) have been deployed in Belagavi. The police department has also got 50 CCTV cameras installed at sensitive points in the city. MES workers had started an online campaign on social media, giving calls to Marathi people to attend the Maha Melav. They had also started the 'Vaccine Depot Chalo' campaign. However, the police department has refused permission and district administration has banned the entry of Maharashtra MP Dhairyashil Mane, who is also the President of Maharashtra Gadi Samithi. The security has been tightened at border check posts to prevent the entry of any politician from Maharashtra.

Woman loses Rs 1.24 lakh to fake cop

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A 39-year-old woman filed an FIR against an unknown fraudulent who allegedly duped her by posing as a CBI officer. According to the woman, the unknown person who claimed to be a CBI officer duped her on the pretext of investigating a money laundering case. According to police sources, the victim received a robotic call from an international courier company on December 16. As per the statement given to the police by the complainant, "In the call, I was told that some courier has come in my name and I was asked to pay the delivery charge. The caller told me to press the 9 number button for more details. However, I didn't receive any courier so to reply to them pressed the 9 number button. Talking to a customer care person who told me that the courier sent for me was carrying drugs and fake documents.



The police will further investigate the matter." The statement added, "A couple of moments later, I received another call from an unknown woman pretending to be a police officer. She asked me to report to Andheri police station immediately. She later transferred the call to another officer who possesses a CBI officer and told me that the parcel contain a fake Aadhar card using which several unwanted transactions has been done. As the victim got scared, taking an advantage of the situation, the fraudsters asked her for her Aadhar card photo and bank account details. To avoid the arrest, and harassment, she immediately provided the entire details including the OTP. By using the details, the accused transferred about Rs 1.24 lakh from her bank accounts, the police officer said. Realising the fraud, the victim approached the MHB police station, Borivli had registered the complaint.

Women Panel asks cops to take "Stringent Action" in Maharashtra gang-rape

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra State Commission for Women has taken suo moto cognisance of the alleged rape of a 16-year-old girl by eight men at a village in Palghar district and directed police to take stringent action against the culprits, the panel's chairperson, Rupali Chakankar, has said. The incident took place during the intervening night of Friday and Saturday. The accused, including a friend of the girl, allegedly raped her at an unoccupied bungalow in the beach village before taking her to the seashore where they again sexually assaulted her, a police official earlier said. Based on the victim's complaint, the police arrested the eight accused in the early hours of Sunday and registered a case against them under various Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections including 376 (D) (gang-rape),



366 (A) (procuration of minor girl), 341 (wrongful restraint), 342 (wrongful confinement) and 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), and sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, he said. Chakankar in a video message

said the commission came to know about the incident through social media and has taken suo moto (on its own) cognisance of the same. The commission has directed the Palghar district superintendent of police to take stringent action

against the arrested accused, she said. Chakankar said she has spoken to the police chief and got detailed information about the incident. The culprits will be convicted and stringent action will be taken against them, she said, adding the commission always makes efforts to ensure such incidents do not occur. The commission through the 'Damini squad' (women specific cells of police) does counselling of girls in schools and colleges and informs them about the pros and cons of the use of social media. While befriending a person on social media, one should verify his/her credentials, she said. "We all should try to ensure such incidents do not occur and it is the responsibility of the Parents Teachers' Associations and others in the society to educate girls as they grow up about the hazards of such a friendship," she said.

Cuddling baby in arms, NCP MLA attends Maha Legislature

Nagpur | Agencies

A new mother and Nationalist Congress Party MLA Saroj Ahire-Wagh turned heads when she arrived at the Maharashtra Legislature with her 10-week-old infant son in arms, here on Monday morning. Her husband, Dr. Pravin Wagh and her mother-in-law are also accompanying and staying with her at Nagpur to take care of the infant, Prashansak, who is all of two-and-half months old, on his first 'political day out' in the state's highest law-making institution. Clad in a brown-grey sari, the comely legislator walked casually inside the legislature premises cuddling her little

one, bundled in a creamish baby blanket to ward off the Nagpur cold weather, informed her aide, Adv. Anup Vanshe. Interacting with the media, the radiant Wagh-Ahire, 37 -- who got married in February 2021, after her election as MLA in 2019 -- said that she would like to bring her son to the legislature daily so she could nurse him as and when needed. "However, there is no proper feeding room or even a creche for the women lawmakers... I feel the government should take note of this and make some arrangements so that legislators can bring their minor children," said Wagh-Ahire. "This is the first time in India that any MLA has come to the legisla-



ture to fulfil her legislative duties towards her constituents... It has been widely appreciated." Adv. Vanshe told reporter. Elected from Deolali (SC) constituency in Nashik, the former LIC employee travelled with her family via the newly-inaugurated Mumbai-Nagpur Super Expressway to Nagpur, around 500 kms away to reach the legislature on time. Adv. Vanshe said that the infant will remain with "MLA Madam" for the entire duration of the Winter Session, barring any health exigencies in view of the climatic differences between Nashik and Nagpur. At her wedding in February 2021, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic,

top leaders, including NCP President Sharad Pawar, Chhagan Bhuwal and others had gone to bless the newly-married couple. Adv. Vanshe said that in recent times we have seen similar examples of women leaders in Europe, Australia or some Arab countries taking their infants or even feeding them, and now Wagh-Ahire has taken the first of its kind step in India which will inspire other women. Other legislators, including many women were seen greeting Wagh-Ahire, playing and blessing the peacefully napping baby, and even clicking selfies with the tiny bundle - perhaps the youngest ever to 'enter' any legislature in the country!

1 DEAD, 10 INJURED AS BUS RETURNING FROM WEDDING PARTY HITS TRUCK

Mumbai: One person was killed and 10 people sustained injuries in a collision between a private bus and a container vehicle in Mumbai's Raigad, police said. According to the police, the incident took place in Raigad area, adjacent to Mumbai, under the limits of the Khopoli Police Station. The bus was returning from a wedding ceremony and was carrying 35 passengers, Raigad Police said. "The container hit a private Volvo bus returning from a wedding ceremony in Sindhudurg. The bus driver died in the collision. There were 35 passengers in the bus, out of which 10 people were injured," a police official said. Police said the injured have been admitted to the nearest hospital. More details awaited.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Catherine Zeta-Jones reveals never getting to play a female James Bond is her biggest acting regret. The Oscar-winner claimed former 007 star Sean Connery backed her as a replacement for him as the spy after they became close filming the 1999 crime caper "Entrapment" together, reports.

"I would have loved to have played Bond. I had such a wonderful relationship with Sean Connery - we did a movie called 'Entrapment' years ago - and he was like my elder brother, my dad, my support," she said.

"I really loved him. I am a Bond fanatic and he said to me once, 'You would have made a great Bond, girl'. I asked, 'A Bond girl or Bond?' He went, 'Bond - girl.' I said, 'Oh my gosh, I would have loved to have played Bond! But I think that time has passed.'"

I would have loved to play Bond: Catherine Zeta-Jones

Despite recent calls for the first female Bond, the film franchise's producer Barbara Broccoli has insisted the role will remain played by a man.

Catherine, who shares son Dylan and daughter Carys with her husband of 22 years Michael Douglas, is now on screens playing Morticia in the new Netflix TV series "Wednesday" in a reboot of "The Addams Family".

Focusing on the teenage issues of Wednesday, Morticia's only child and shot by "Batman" director Tim Burton, the actress said about joining the cast, which features Jenna Ortega in the title role, "It was a real treat because it's an iconic show and characters like Fester and Morticia are indelible, they're in our subconscious."

"It's more than pop culture, really. My niece knows 'The Addams Family' and my grandmother, God bless her, she loved 'The Addams Family'. You throw in the brilliant mind of Tim Burton and a fantastic casting and I'm just thrilled it's going so well."



I didn't want to be seen as a sexual being: Anita Rani

Los Angeles | Agencies

"I didn't want to be seen as a sexual being!" Anita Rani discusses covering up in her youth as she recalls wearing a sari on the BBC and admits showing 'side ass' on Strictly was 'terrifying'. And in a new interview, Anita Rani discussed covering up in her youth, explaining how she wore 'big, baggy stuff' because she 'didn't want to be seen as a sexual being.' The Countryfile presenter also recalled wearing a sari on the BBC for the first time - which she did during the Queen's Platinum Jubilee coverage in June - and admitted that showing 'side ass' on Strictly was 'terrifying.' 'It was about me saying I don't want to be seen as a sexual being. I want to be seen as a young woman, who is part of a youth culture, that isn't really about my sexuality; I don't care about being attractive to men. And it's complex, and layered. And that's just from clothes.'



Jake Gyllenhaal feels his movie reflects how we treat environment

Mumbai | Agencies

Hollywood actor Jake Gyllenhaal, who lends his voice to the character of Searcher Clade in animated film 'Strange World', feels that the movie is about how people treat the environment at large. Calling 'Strange World' incredible, Gyllenhaal said: "It's so rich and alive and mysterious. There are things and layers in the images that are just you could watch three, four, five times, and there's always something to discover. The illustrations, the artistry, are mind-blowing." Talking about how the theme of family and environment is key to the story, Gyllenhaal added: "It all starts with us seeing ourselves within our family, taking responsibility, being a part, being a good listener. And in that space, the family's microcosm then affects the world's macrocosm. The environment is a space and how we treat it, I think, is essential. We cannot dismiss it. The listening part is everything. So, I think this movie is a lot about how we treat the environment, what we're doing to it, and in the end, what we're doing to ourselves as a result of it. Because, in truth, I think the environment will continue." But, he said that he cannot say the same about the human species if they would thrive on this planet given the environmental crisis.

Jeff Brazier reveals he's split from wife Kate

Los Angeles | Agencies

Jeff Brazier has revealed he's split from his PR director wife Kate Dwyer after nine years together. Taking to Instagram, Jeff said: "I have so much to be grateful for and I appreciate facing the lessons I need to grow but this year has been challenging to say the least. My nine-year relationship ended earlier in the year and I've been working through that on top of supporting someone close to me who is going through something difficult. The boys and I have recently moved home to a new area and I spend most of the time alone as the boys obviously have their own things going on. It's been constant change this year and I'm good with adapting but the combination of things has left me low at times."

"I've honestly never felt loneliness like it. Can we put Christmas back a few months?!"

He said: "I have lots of great friends and I know they're a phone call away but sometimes I find it hard to admit I'm struggling."

"I have to plug myself back in to the friendships that have supported me, surviving 14 years of my focus laying elsewhere."

"I know there are many of us out there that find it easier to support than be supported but here's to a better balance of the two in 2023, we need it and deserve it."



THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING US TO ENTERTAIN YOU: TOM CRUISE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Tom Cruise has once again jumped out of a plane but this time to deliver another thank you to fans of 'Top Gun: Maverick' while hurtling through the troposphere. "Hey everyone, here we are over stunning South Africa, and we're filming 'Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning' parts one and two," Cruise yells to a camera over the blaring ambient sound of an aircraft whirring, reports.

"I didn't want the year to end without thanking you all for coming out to the theaters, and thank you for supporting 'Top Gun: Maverick'." A little over 20 seconds in, the camera pans to reveal Christopher McQuarrie, who returns to the 'Mission: Impossible' series to helm 'Dead Reckoning'. McQuarrie also wrote 'Top Gun: Maverick' and produced the action feature, alongside Cruise and David Ellison. McQuarrie also thanked fans of the 'Top Gun' franchise before turning his focus back to Cruise: "Hey, listen, we really have got to roll. We've got to get this shot." Cruise grins, nonchalantly points a finger gun at McQuarrie before promptly jumping out of the aircraft -- alongside a cameraman, presumably. With his full body extended into a starfish position to brace against the air resistance, Cruise brings his attention back to the camera and resumes his speech. "As always, thank you for allowing us to entertain you. It truly is the honor of a lifetime. I'm running out of altitude, so I've got to get back to work. We've got to get this shot. You have a very safe and happy holiday. We'll see you at the movies," Cruise concludes, before being whisked away in a wind current toward the ocean.



Bryan Adams would opt for a cup of tea over sex, money or fame

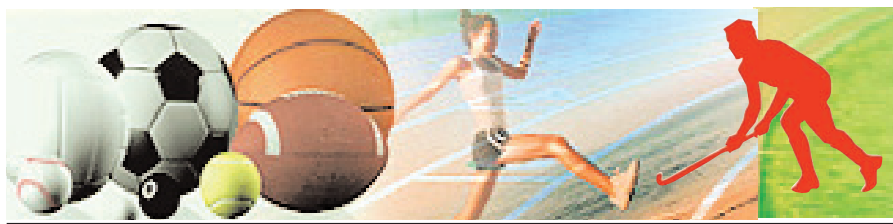
Los Angeles | Agencies

'Summer of '69' singer Bryan Adams says he would opt for a cup of tea despite his doctor telling him he should have daily intercourse. Bryan, who has two daughters with his partner Alicia Grimaldi, said: "My doc says men need sex 27 times a month for a healthy prostate." When also asked if he would rather have "more sex, money or fame", he replied: "Just a cup of tea would be fine," reports. He also revealed in the question and answer session with the publication he nearly died in a skydiving accident. Bryan leaped from a plane and thinks almost went badly wrong when his parachute got tangled up around his body, though he didn't explain when the terrifying incident happened. Asked to describe the closest he has come to death, Bryan responded: "Skydiving: the parachute got tangled around my legs." The 'Run to You' rocker also recalled how embarrassed he felt when he met Eric Clapton and accidentally called the guitarist by the wrong name. He added: "(My most embarrassing moment was) walking with Eric Clapton's tour manager Mick to meet Eric backstage, and when I met Eric I said, 'Hi Mic'... I wanted to die."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Chantel Jeffries



MESSI HAS CHANGE OF HEART OVER RETIREMENT FROM INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL

Doha | Agencies

FIFA World Cup Golden Ball winner Lionel Messi, who had said the tournament in Qatar would be his last World Cup, but has now shown a change of heart over his possible retirement from international football.

Messi guided his country to its third title and his one following a 4-2 shootout win over France. "I want to play a few more games as a world champion. I was lucky to clinch every title in my career; this was the only one missing. I want to take this one there (to Argentina) and enjoy it with everybody else," said Messi.

Messi opened the scoring for Argentina with a 23rd-minute penalty and also found the net in extra-time for the 3-2 in the 108th. Kylian Mbappe completed his hat-trick to take the game to a shootout, where Messi also scored.

But after Emiliano Martinez saved Kingsley Coman's spot-kick, Gonzalo Montiel's decisive penalty ensured he claimed the greatest prize of all in his last World Cup game.

The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner departs World



Cup football after one of the most influential tournament performances of all time on a match-to-match basis, taking his total of Player of the Match wins to 11 across five tournaments. He was named the Player

of the Match in five games, including all of their prior knockout fixtures and the final, besting the record of four he previously jointly shared with the Netherlands' Wesley Sneijder after his performances in 2014.

MESSI WINS GOLDEN BALL, MBAPPE GETS GOLDEN BOOT

Doha | After a thrilling final saw Argentina beat France on penalties, the awards for the 2022 World Cup were also announced with some of the biggest names in football were recognized, with Lionel Messi from Argentina was confirmed as the best player at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The Argentinian forward won the Adidas Golden Ball, which is awarded to the best player by the FIFA Technical Study Group (TSG). Kylian Mbappe from France and Luka Modric from Croatia came second and third respectively.

Golden Ball -- Lionel Messi (Argentina)

This was Messi's World Cup -- and that was rubber-stamped as he was named the player of the tournament.

Messi finally got his hands on football's biggest prize, scoring seven goals enroute to hoisting the trophy high into the Qatar night. He became the first man to score in the last 16, quarter-final, semi-final and final of the same edition and wins the individual accolade for a second time.

Emiliano Martinez from Argentina collected the Adidas Golden Glove while England took the FIFA Fair Play award.

Golden Boot -- Kylian Mbappe (France)

The France forward was level with Messi on five goals heading into the showdown in Lusail. He would go on to become the first man since Sir Geoff Hurst in 1966 to score a hat-trick in a World Cup final, tucking away two penalties and hitting a fine finish which took the game to extra-time.

It was not enough for France to retain the trophy but, with eight goals across the finals, he matched Ronaldo's total from 2002 and, at the age of 23, there could still be plenty more to come from Mbappe.



Test Series

"Rehan Ahmed" the youngest to take a five-wicket haul on debut

Karachi | Agencies

England's leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed on Monday became the youngest men's Test cricketer to take a five-wicket haul on debut during the ongoing third match against Pakistan at the National Bank Cricket Arena.

After making his Test debut at 18 years and 126 days, Rehan claimed three wickets in six overs on his way to 5-48 in the second innings, playing a key role in bowling out Pakistan for 216 in 74.5 overs on day three of the match.

Rehan broke the record of now-Australian captain, right-arm fast-bowler Pat Cummins, who was 18 years and 193 days when he took 6-79 on his Test debut against South Africa in 2011.

After 41 overs of Pakistan's second innings, Rehan was finally introduced into the bowling attack on Monday and had an immediate effect by breaking the partnership between Babar Azam and Saud Shakeel, which had put the hosts in control.



Rehan began his show by removing Babar through a long hop, which the Pakistan captain smashed straight to Ollie Pope at mid-wicket, departing for 54. Rehan then forced Pakistan keeper Mohammad Rizwan to come forward to a delivery that turned just enough to catch the outside edge, with wicketkeeper Ben Foakes taking a sharp

chance behind to remove him for seven. Rehan then removed Saud Shakeel, who was out for 53 after mistiming a sweep shot off a googly to a backward square leg. He then dismissed Pakistan debutant pacer Mohammad Wasim, who was caught at mid-off, before Agha Salman was caught at short fine-leg to give Rehan an unforgettable five-wicket haul.

Khelo India Youth Games

U.P, Odisha, Punjab start favourites in men's U-18 qualifiers

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Teams from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Odisha and Punjab start as favourites in the Men's U-18 qualifiers of the Khelo India Youth Games 2022 set to begin at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium here on Tuesday.

Twelve teams will fight for the top places in the tournament, which will take place from Dec 20 to 30, 2022. The top eight teams, including hosts Madhya Pradesh, from the qualifiers will make it to the 5th Khelo India Youth Games 2022 which will take place from February 4 to 10, 2023 in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. The round-robin



league stage will see six teams in each pool.

In Pool A, Uttar Pradesh Hockey, Hockey Haryana, Hockey Punjab, Hockey Chandigarh, Manipur Hockey and Hockey Andhra Pradesh will vie for places in the quarter-finals.

Pool B comprises Hockey Jharkhand, Hockey Association of Odisha, Dadra

& Nagar Haveli And Daman & Diu Hockey, Hockey Bihar, Hockey Arunachal and Hockey Madhya Pradesh, who will battle it out for places in the quarter-finals.

The top four teams from each group will move on to the quarter-finals, to be held on Dec 27. The semifinals will be played on Dec 29 and the final on Dec 30.

ROHIT SHARMA RULED OUT OF INDIA'S SECOND TEST: REPORT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Injured India captain Rohit Sharma has reportedly been ruled out of the second Test against Bangladesh starting at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur, Dhaka, from December 22.

With Rohit not traveling to Dhaka, Vice-captain KL Rahul will continue to lead India in the second and final Test of the series which India is currently leading by 1-0, after winning the first Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram by 188 runs.

The report says news of Rohit's unavailability emerged on Monday (December 19) after it was found that the skipper's thumb has not fully healed and is suffering from a little bit of stiffness.

"Considering the important assignments ahead for the Indian team, the BCCI, the selection com-



mittee and the team management have decided not to risk him at this stage," added the report.

"It is learnt that Rohit, currently in Mumbai, would have managed to bat through the Test but concerns remained over the risk involved while fielding. The medical team and the team management felt that injury could get serious on the field if he gets hurt again on that thumb," further said the report.

Rohit had injured his left thumb while fielding in the second ODI against Bangladesh and had to fly back home to Mumbai to see a specialist for treating the injury. With him now not available for the Dhaka Test, India have avoided a major selection headache.

"About Rohit, I think we will get to know in the next day or two. Even I am not even aware of it. The focus was completely on the Test match," Rahul had said in the post-match press conference on Sunday.

LPL 2022

Avishka, Gurbaz guide Jaffna Kings to easy win over Colombo Stars

Colombo | Agencies

Jaffna Kings beat Colombo Stars by eight wickets in the first match of the day at the R. Premadasa Stadium here on Monday, in the ongoing Lanka Premier League 2022.

Batting first, Colombo Stars could only manage 128 on the board for the loss of 9 wickets. Chasing down the target, Jaffna Kings' Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Avishka Fernando raised a mammoth 105-run partnership to set the platform for a comfortable win for the Kings. Rahmanullah Gurbaz scored 69 runs from 40 balls.

For Colombo Stars, Dominic Drakes and Jeffrey Vandersay took a wicket each. Earlier, after winning the toss, Jaffna Kings elected to bowl first. Colombo Stars didn't get off to a good start as



openers Dinesh Chandimal and captain Niroshan Dickwella were dismissed quickly. Both the openers were dismissed for a duck each and soon the team was struggling at 4/16 in 3.4 overs. For Jaffna Kings, Shoaib Malik was the pick of the bowlers as he scalped 2-4 from his 2 overs, while Thisara Perera took 2-14 from 3 overs. Meanwhile, Zaman Khan, Asitha Fernando, Suminda Lakshan and Praveen Jayawickrama took one wicket each.

KANDY FALCONS REGISTERS EASY WIN OVER DAMBULLA AURA

Colombo | Kandy Falcons beat Dambulla Aura by 39 runs in the second match at the R Premadasa Stadium in the ongoing Lanka Premier League 2022. Batting first, Kandy Falcons posted a total of 160 for the loss of 7 wickets. Chasing down the target, for Dambulla Aura, Jordan Cox and Shevon Daniels opened the innings. The team didn't get off to the start they were looking as they were struggling 5/41 in 7.2 overs. Sikandar Raza was the highest scorer with 45 runs from 33 balls.

For Kandy Falcons, Oshane Thomas was the pick of the bowlers as he scalped 3/15 from his 4 overs. Fabian Allen and Chamindu Wijesinghe took 2 wickets each. Meanwhile, Zahoor Khan and Wanindu Hasaranga took 1 wicket each. Earlier, after winning the toss, Kandy Falcons elected to bat first. For Kandy Falcons, Kavin Bandara and Minod Bhanuka opened the innings. The duo put up a 31-run partnership in 3.3 overs before Minod was dismissed by Perera. Ashen Bandara was the team's highest scorer with 37 runs from 31 balls.

Shane Warne to be honoured during Boxing Day Test

Sydney | Agencies

Crickets Australia have revealed details of plans to honour Shane Warne during the upcoming Boxing Day Test against South Africa in Melbourne.

Warne tragically passed away in Thailand at the age of 52 earlier this year and the Boxing Day contest will be the first Test match played at the home ground of the champion leg-spinner since his passing.

Crickets Australia have a host of tributes planned for during the Test, with both teams set to don Warne's famous floppy white hat at the national anthem ceremony prior to the start of the match, reports ICC.

There will also be a special highlights package of Warne played on the MCG screen and on broadcast during the day, while his famous Test cap number of 350 will be painted square of the wicket for the entirety of the match.

The Australia great claimed a total of 708 Test wickets during his illustrious career and



many of his greatest moments came at the iconic Melbourne ground.

Warne picked up his 700th Test wicket when he bowled England captain Andrew Strauss in 2006, while local fans used to flock to the venue on every occasion to show their appreciation of the star spinner.

The stand at the southern end of the arena was renamed the Shane Warne Stand earlier this year to pay tribute to the cricketer great.

IND vs AUS Women's T-20

Tahlia McGrath as Australia's captain in the last match

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Australia captain Alyssa Healy has been ruled out of the fifth and final T20I against India, to be held at Brabourne Stadium on Tuesday, after suffering a calf strain in Saturday's series-clinching seven-run win.

Tahlia McGrath, the vice-captain, said in the pre-match press conference that she will lead Australia in the final match of the series. She had taken over as captain of Australia during their defence of 173.

Alyssa, who took over as



Australia captain for the tour of India in the absence of Meg Lanning, strained her calf while batting in the sixth over of the fourth T20I. She limped from the ground after being retired hurt and took no further part in the match. Tahlia had captained the Adelaide Strikers to their maiden Women's Big Bash

League (WBBL) title in November and has also captained her state team South Australia in a domestic one-day cricket tournament. She will now become the eighth player to captain Australia women's T20I side.

In absence of Alyssa, her opening partner Beth Mooney will be on keeping duties for Tuesday's match, having done the same during the second innings of Saturday's game. Beth has kept wickets for Perth Scorchers in WBBL and for Western Australia in domestic cricket.

FIH Nations Cup 2022

INDIAN WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM RECEIVES WARM WELCOME

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Having won the inaugural edition of the FIH Women's Nations Cup 2022 in Valencia in grand style, the Indian hockey team arrived here on Monday morning, and was greeted with rapturous applause.

The title for the Indian team means that they have also secured promotion to the 2023-24 FIH Hockey Women's Pro League.

"As a Captain, I am very proud and delighted with my teammates. Everyone gave their 100 per cent during the FIH Women's Nations Cup 2022, and we maintained our focus right from the start, on and off the field, and it really feels great to be part of such a team," captain Savita said.



Savita also added that the Indian Women's Hockey Team are not taking

their foot off the pedal, and have their eyes on the next year's calendar.

"We have had a good year in 2022 and going forward we will continue to aim for more wins and titles. We have the Asian Games 2022 coming up next year, and we will definitely try to come back with a good result," Savita said.

India defeated Spain in the Final of the FIH Women's Nations Cup 2022, with Gurjit Kaur scoring the only goal in a keenly contested match on Saturday. "Winning the Final at the FIH Women's Nations Cup 2022 has to count as the best moment for me and the team. We had this as our goal from the beginning and to be able to achieve it felt really good," said Gurjit Kaur. The tournament in Valencia also saw the dynamic forward Lalremsiami cross the 100-cap mark for the Indian women's hockey team.

Shweta Tiwari talks about her bond with her on-screen daughters



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Tv actress Shweta Tiwari talks about her bond with her on-screen daughters on the sets of 'Main Hoon Aparajita'. She is playing the role of Aparajita, a mother of three daughters.

The role of three daughters is played by Anushka Merchande, Dhvani Gori and Shruti Choudhary. Talking about her bond with them she said: "The mother-daughter relationship is one of the most beautiful relationships in the world. In the show, I am a mother of three daughters and all of them are adorable."

"I am more like a friend to them now. They all are very smart and curious kids, they want to learn everything about the industry. Recently during an outdoor shoot, we got the opportunity to go out together for a picnic sequence."

The actress, who is a mother of two in real life, added that she has all the fun on the sets with her on-screen daughters. From playing football, making reels to having food together, Shweta makes sure to spend quality time with them.

The TV star best known for her 'Kasauti Zindagi Kay' role, said: "Over and above production's arrangements I tried my best to ensure that they were comfortable and enjoyed the outdoor shoot to the fullest."

"We all spent some quality time playing football, antakshari, making some nice fun videos for our social media, and after the shoot we even went out for dinner. With the girls there is no dull day but this kind of quality time certainly strengthens our bond and improves our on-screen chemistry."

KIARA ADVANI WILL BE SEEN TEAMING UP WITH GANESH ACHARYA



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Kiara Advani will be seen teaming up with choreographer Ganesh Acharya for the second time after 'Bijli' from her latest release 'Govinda Naam Mera', for the upcoming Kartik Aaryan-starrer 'Satyaprem Ki Katha'. While Kiara has time and again expressed her excitement for having collaborated with the legendary choreographer for the first time with Bijli, the actress is now already shooting for yet another song with him for her next film. Kiara shared a video of herself and Ganesh dancing to 'Bijli' celebrating the response to 'Govinda Naam Mera'. The actress said: "With 'The Legend! I was so excited to be choreographed by Masterji for Bijli just us adding some Bijli on the sets of Satya Prem ki katha as we shoot for the next song together." Having recently wrapped the shoot of song for S. Shankar's RC-15, Kiara has now resumed the shoot of her upcoming film 'Satyaprem Ki Katha', a musical romantic drama film directed by Sameer Vidwans. The film is scheduled to be released theatrically in 2023.

Fitness gives me mental peace: Nikki Tamboli

Team Absolute | New Delhi

'Bigg Boss 14' fame Nikki Tamboli is surely a fitness freak. She makes sure to involve everything as part of her lifestyle for better health and well-being, and is particular about regular exercises, yoga, and despite busy schedule, never misses the gym.

She shared: "Fitness for me is like oxygen, a necessity. It gives me mental peace. I believe that for a healthy functioning of the body one needs to take a proper balanced diet of 5 to 6 small meals rather than eating 3 big meals in a day. It's about maintaining a proper balanced nutritious diet. Being fit is not just about how the body looks but how well and healthy it is even from within." Nikki made her acting debut with a Telugu film 'Chikati Gadilo Chithakotudu'. Later she also did a Tamil film 'Kanchana 3'. She made her TV debut with 'Bigg Boss 14' which gave her a lot of fame and made her a place in the entertainment industry. She also took part in 'Khatron Ke Khiladi 11'. She asserted that for a healthy lifestyle, it is important to regulate eating habits. She always travels with her home-made food so as to avoid eating anything out.

"Having green tea right before bed is one habit I swear by. It gives me the detox I need after an entire day. Also I travel with my own set of foods and healthy juice that I prepare at home. That way I don't get tempted by outside junk or ready sugar drinks. It has all the goodness of lime, guava, carrots and a hint of mint," she added.

I have honed my skills with the best of the best actors: Arjun Kapoor



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Arjun Kapoor is excited to share the trailer of 'Kuttey' that is set to be unveiled next week. He says films like these add to the learning curve for any actor as it boasts of a talented cast including names like Naseeruddin Shah and Tabu, among many others.

"For me, 'Kuttey' is a very special film. I got the opportunity to work with a talented film-maker like Luv Ranjan, a remarkable debutant director like Aasman Bhardwaj, getting to know Vishal Bhardwaj as a producer, writer and music composer, Gulzar Saab who has penned the lyrics and some of the best actors of our country like Tabu, Konkona Sen Sharma, Naseer sir, Kumud ji, Shardul Bhardwaj and Radhika Madan."

Arjun feels he has sharpened his acting skills by being surrounded with such incredible performers of Indian cinema.

He says: "For me, shooting for the film was so much fun and it was also a great learning experience. Films like these add to the learning curve for any actor and I think I have honed my skills with the best of the best actors of our country. I'm eagerly waiting to see the response that people have for the trailer of 'Kuttey'."

I CAN'T CONTAIN MY EXCITEMENT FOR THIS YEAR'S BIRTHDAY: ANKITA LOKHANDE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Popular actress Ankita Lokhande, who is known for her role in 'Pavitra Rishta' celebrated her birthday. She gets candid about her celebration plans and how she is going to make her special day more happening and full of fun.

She was born on December 19, 1984 in Marathi family in Indore. Ankita is quite excited for this year as because of Covid, she celebrated her birthday online last year. However, this year is going to be special for her as she is travelling with her husband Vicky Jain. They both tied the knot on December 14, 2021.

She shared: "European winters, sun-kissed mornings with hot chocolate, my beau Vicky and lots of memories is what my birthday is looking like. I am excited for this trip as I have been planning this for a while. Celebrations had taken a back seat for the past two years due to Covid and I can't contain my excitement for this year's birthday." She added that she wants to take a break from busy schedule and the hustle bustle of city life.

"I am also looking forward to taking a break from city life, waking up to nature's beauty, spending some quality time with Vicky and so much more," she said.



I LOVE ACTING AS WELL AS HOSTING: ARJUN BIJLANI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actor Arjun Bijlani, who is currently seen hosting the dating-based reality show 'Splitsvilla X4', got candid about the show garnering a good response and how the wild card entries are going to make the game more exciting.

He said: "The show is getting a very good response. Various contestants are adding to the spice and drama in the reality show. Working with Sunny Leone is fantastic. 'Splitsvilla' is one show which youth connects with and that matters. Aspiration for reality shows is that there and 'Splitsvilla' is in the wish list of newcomers. This was my first time for this youth-based reality show and I am looking forward to doing more seasons."

He added: "I love acting as well as hosting. I love my work. I treat every day as a fresh day and work with the same enthusiasm." One should be very conscious before choosing any project and try never to play similar characters or take the same kind of work, he said. "I do feel sometimes work can get monotonous. One needs to be careful while deciding their opportunities and one should always give their best with a fresh attitude and energy. I do feel I have a work life balance." "When I am on the set, I am actor Arjun Bijlani. And when I am home, I am a husband, son and a father. One should be grounded and humble. One should not take success and fame to one's head," he concluded.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Katrina Kaif