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BOLLYWOOD TWIST MAKES COVID-19 THREAT SCARIER

SEVERAL TOP POLITICIANS GO INTO QUARANTINE AS THE NUMBER OF INFECTED PEOPLE, INCLUDING SINGER KANIKA KAPOOR, CROSSES 250

NEW DELHI: While the number of COVID-19 infections in India has crossed 250, the government on Friday confirmed 63 new patients, the biggest single-day spike so far. Bollywood singer Kanika Kapoor's announcement on Friday that she had tested positive for COVID-19, meanwhile, triggered a scare among several top politicians who had attended a series of events with her in Lucknow recently as well as those who were in contact with them. Many have since announced that they were going into quarantine. Following Kanika's revelation on her Instagram page, BJP leader and former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje stated that she, along with her son and MP Dushyant Singh had attended a dinner where Kanika was present, and as a matter of "abundant self-caution" were immediately adopting self-quarantine. Singh was among many MPs who attended a breakfast meeting hosted by President



Ram Nath Kovind on March 18 as well as a parliamentary panel meeting on transport, tourism and culture, attended by around 20 MPs later in the day. While Rashtrapati Bhavan

TESTING TIMES

- ❑ The Ministry of Health has instructed hospitals to not turn away patients suspected of having coronavirus
- ❑ The patients with pneumonia should also be tested for the disease.
- ❑ On Sunday, the country will observe a "janata curfew", or a self-imposed citizens' curfew for 14 hours

ernment has not revealed the names of politicians, bureaucrats and socialites who allegedly attended the event. Late on Friday, the U.P. government said officials have been instructed to identify the persons present in the three functions attended by Ms. Kapoor, keep them under isolation, and carry out medical tests. Maharashtra remains the worst-hit state, with at least 63 patients so far, one of whom has died. A woman from Pune in her early 40s, who had no

history of travel abroad, has tested positive for COVID-19. The Ministry of Health has instructed hospitals to not turn away patients suspected of having coronavirus, and that patients with pneumonia should also be tested for the disease. On Sunday, the country will observe a "janata curfew", or a self-imposed citizens' curfew for 14 hours. On Thursday, India reported its fourth death due to coronavirus, which has infected 2,75,434 people worldwide and killed 11,399, according to an

Foreigners may stay on till Apr 15

NEW DELHI: The Centre has decided to extend till April 15 the regular visa and e-visa of those foreigners who are currently in India and unable to leave the country due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In view of the rising cases of coronavirus in India, the government banned all international commercial passenger flights from March 22 for a week and Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people to stay indoors and called for a 'Janata Curfew' on Sunday. The Kejriwal government in Delhi also announced shutting down of restaurants. Take-aways and home delivery services will continue, Arvind Kejriwal said. **AGENCIES**

Nirbhaya convicts hanged, finally!



NEW DELHI: The four men convicted of the gang rape and murder of a Delhi woman on December 16, 2012 were hanged in the darkness of pre-dawn on Friday, ending a horrific chapter in India's long history of sexual assault that had seared the nation's soul. Mukesh Singh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Sharma (31) and Akshay Kumar Singh (31) were executed at 5.30 am for the savage assault in an empty moving bus on the 23-year-old physiotherapy intern who came to be known the world over as Nirbhaya, the fearless one. This is the first time that four men have been hanged together in Tihar Jail, South Asia's largest prison complex that houses more than 16,000 inmates. The executions were carried out after the men exhausted every possible legal avenue to escape the gallows. Their desperate attempts only postponed the inevitable by less than two months after the first date of execution was set for January 22. They were hanged at 5.30 am, Director General of Prisons Sandeep Goel said. After raping and brutalising the woman, the men, one of whom was a juvenile at the time, dumped her on the road and left for dead on the cold winter night. Her friend who was with her was also severely beaten and thrown out along with her. She was so severely violated that her insides were spilling out when she was taken to hospital. She died in a Singapore hospital after battling for her life for a fortnight. Six people, including the four convicts and the juvenile, were named as accused. While Ram Singh allegedly committed suicide in the Tihar Jail days after the trial began in the case, the juvenile was released in 2015 after spending three years in a correctional home. **AGENCIES**

Yes Bank resumes operations

- ❑ PEOPLE ARE NOW ABLE TO ACCESS ALL DIGITAL SERVICES & PLATFORMS @RBI @FINMININDIA
- ❑ OUTWARD NEFT/IMPS/RTGS SERVICES RESTORED FROM MARCH 18, 2020, 18:00 HOURS
- ❑ CUSTOMERS MAY WITHDRAW FDS, RDS AFTER THE MORATORIUM IS REVOKED FROM MARCH 18

MUMBAI: Yes Bank on Wednesday said it has resumed operations and all its banking services are available for its customers now. "Our banking services are now operational. You can now experience the full suite of our services. Thank you for your patience and co-operation. #YESforYOU @RBI @FinMinIndia," the lender tweeted. The RBI had on March 5 put a moratorium on Yes Bank restricting withdrawals to Rs 50,000 per depositor till April 3. However, the government in a notification on Saturday said the moratorium will be lifted by 18:00 hrs on March 18. "We will resume full banking services from Wed, Mar 18, 2020, 18:00 hrs. Visit any of our 1,132 branches from Mar 19, 2020, post commencement of banking hrs to experience our suite of services," Yes Bank said



in a tweet. "You will also be able to access all our digital services & platforms @RBI @FinMinIndia," it said. The government on Saturday notified the reconstruction plan for cash-strapped Yes Bank and said the moratorium will be lifted by 18:00 hrs on March 18, much earlier than the earlier date of April 3. "The order of moratorium on the reconstructed bank issued by the government...

your YES BANK cards and accounts across wallets like Paytm, Amazon Pay and Freecharge among others from March 18, 2020, 18:00 hours," the bank said in an FAQ on its website. Besides, the customers have been allowed for inward RTGS/NEFT/IMPS based transaction services to pay for their Yes Bank credit card bills and loan EMIs from any bank accounts including Yes Bank accounts. "Outward NEFT/IMPS/RTGS will resume from March 18, 2020, 18:00 hours. The limits for transactions across digital channels will continue to remain what they were prior to the imposition of the moratorium. However, from March 19, 2020 post commencement of banking hours, transactions at branches will not have any limits," it added. Among others, customers will be able to pay towards

their utility bills and use the UPI platform, Google Pay and PhonePe, Paytm, Amazon Pay, Freecharge. "You can withdraw your Yes Bank FDs (fixed deposits) and RDs (recurring deposits) after the moratorium is revoked from March 18, 2020, 18:00 hours. Standard charges will apply on the same. You will be also able to access all services available through digital channel/platforms (Net Banking/ Mobile Banking etc)," it added. Customers can also initiate "stop a payment" service, Yes Bank said. The other service that remains inactive now is cheque clearing because clearing activities are suspended as per the directive. Customers who use forex card can also not use such services. "Your cheques already issued will not be honoured till the clearing activities are restarted or further directive from regulator," it added.

Kamal Nath quits as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister

BHOPAL: Madhya Pradesh Governor Lalji Tandon on Friday accepted the resignation of Chief Minister Kamal Nath. Kamal Nath had submitted his resignation to the governor at the Raj Bhawan here around 1 pm on Friday. "The governor accepted the resignation of Kamal Nath and asked him to continue as the caretaker chief minister till the new CM takes charge," a Raj Bhawan official told PTI. Kamal Nath's move of stepping down as the CM came a day after the Supreme Court directed that a floor test be conducted in Madhya Pradesh Assembly to prove that the Congress government led by him enjoys majority in the House following the rebellion by 22 MLAs of his party. BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia termed Chief Minister Kamal Nath's resignation as people's victory in Madhya Pradesh. "However, the (Kamal Nath-led) government



had digressed from that path," Scindia tweeted. Truth has prevailed, he added. "I have always professed and practised ethical politics and so I think it's time for me to quit. I'm going to submit my resignation as CM" said Nath at a press conference at CM House in Bhopal. During his address to the press CM Kamal Nath leveled various charges against the BJP led Government at the Centre that they are murdering the democracy by not respecting the will of the people and also that they are engaged in horse trading. He also said that the BJP conspired against the democratically elected Government of Madhya Pradesh by acting in connivance with the 22 MLAs of the Maharaja. The Congress party made last mile efforts to reach to the MLAs held in the Bengaluru resort to try and convince them to join the flock again but all efforts failed eventually. Senior Congress leader Digvijay Singh today conceded defeat by saying that they don't have numbers in their favour to sail through the floor test and continue to be in the government. **AGENCIES**

Panel wants police to act on riots case



NEW DELHI: The Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC) has sent a notice to the DCP North East Delhi seeking details about the case of an alleged attempt to murder during communal violence in the area on February 24. The DMC attached four photos of the alleged attempt on Mohammad Zubair at an underpass near Bhajanpura market,

which it claimed has been published widely, and asked what action has been taken in the case. "Since the faces of a number of attackers are clearly visible and one has been identified from his Facebook page, you are directed to take this accused man into custody and interrogate him to know his role and the role of other attackers seen in the photographs," the DMC said. DCP (North East) Ved Prakash Surya has been asked to submit the details to the commission by March 26. The panel has also sent a notice to the DCP claiming that it has received several reports of haphazard arrests of youth in the age group of 20-30 in the district without any charges or warrants and that they are being pressured to own up or to implicate others in crimes they have apparently not committed. "We are getting information that in some cases such arrested youth are forced to pay huge bribes and if they do, they are let off. We take all this as a serious violation of the human and civil rights of the people arrested. You are directed to issue clear instructions to all SHOs under your jurisdiction to desist from such illegal practices," DMC Chairman Zafarul Islam Khan said in his notice to the DCP. **AGENCIES**

NRIs may own 100% stake in Air India

"Foreign investments in Air India including that of foreign airlines shall not exceed 49 per cent either directly or indirectly except in case of those NRIs, who are Indian Nationals, where foreign investment is permitted up to 100 per cent under automatic route"

NEW DELHI: The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has notified a decision of the union cabinet to allow non-resident Indians (NRIs) to control up to 100% stake in disinvestment-bound Air India. The FDI policy earlier permitted NRIs to take only 49% stake in the airline. In its press note, the DPIIT said: "Foreign investments in Air India including that of foreign airlines shall not exceed 49



per cent either directly or indirectly except in case of those NRIs, who are Indian Nationals, where foreign investment is permitted up to 100 per cent under automatic route". On March 4, the cabinet had taken a decision in this regard. The decision came at a time when the government has sought preliminary bids for 100% stake sale in the national carrier. It also said that the condition that substantial ownership and effective control (SOEC) of Air India shall continue to be vested in Indian nationals. An official statement has earlier stated that in light of the proposed strategic disinvestment of 100% of Air India by the govern-

ment, it has been decided that foreign investment in Air India be brought on a level-playing field with other scheduled airline operators. The national carrier will have no residual government ownership and will be completely privately owned. Under the SOEC framework, which is followed in the airline industry globally, a carrier that flies overseas from a particular country should be substantially owned by that country's government or its nationals.

“Ayalaan will be an interesting film to watch out for because in the film we are using VFX quite interestingly. In fact, that is why the film will take more time than any regular film in post-production”

RGV made cult films: Isha Koppikar

Actress Isha Koppikar reunites with filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma in an upcoming untitled web series. She feels although the filmmaker is going through a bad phase in career right now, no one can downplay his contribution to Indian cinema for the cult films he once made.

“I have finished shooting a major part of the web show. RGV is the showrunner and presenter of the show. The web series has been directed by four directors and after they finish the shooting of all episodes, they submit their work to RGV. He will look after post-production and hopefully create magic,” Isha



told IANS, about her latest collaboration with the filmmaker.

Isha shot to fame for her dance number “Khallas” in Varma’s 2002 film “Company”, which is till date considered one of the most powerful films about the underworld that Bollywood has ever made. Later, she also worked in Varma produc-

tions such as “Darling” and “Shabri”.

Varma’s last few Hindi releases like “Veerappan” and “Sarkar 3” fared below expectation and the filmmaker has also courted controversy for his comments on socio-political issues. Isha hopes with his upcoming show, RGV will get out of his rough patch.

“Ram Gopal Varma is a genius. Look at the kind of films he has made, those are cult films of Indian cinema. The first Hindi horror film that I watched and loved was “Raat”. Then all the other films, whether it is “Bhoot”, “Rangeela”, “Satya” -- you name the film and the genre -- horror, romantic-musical, gangster-action -- and he has made a cult film in that genre,” she said.

Isha continued: “In our lives, at times we go through a low phase but that does not mean that the person

is finished. It is true that in the entertainment industry, every Friday could be a ‘good Friday’ or a ‘bad Friday’, she laughed, adding: “I hope with the upcoming web series, RGV claims his space back again.”

Apart from the web series, Isha is also working on the Tamil science fiction film “Ayalaan”. Directed by R. Ravikumar, the film also features Rakul Preet and Sharad Kelkar.

According to the actress, the film will offer a unique experience to the audience.

“Ayalaan will be an interesting film to watch out for because in the film we are using VFX quite interestingly. In fact, that is why the film will take more time than any regular film in post-production. Most of the time we use prosthetic but in this one, we are focusing on VFX,” Isha said. **AGENCIES**

SAIF refuses to LOOK OLD, at least for a while



When Saif Ali Khan’s son Ibrahim called him and “old man”, the actor had the right retort in place. It all started when Ibrahim shared a snapshot on Instagram in which he is seen posing with his dad.

“Me and my old man,” the young boy captioned the photograph.

Saif was asked about Ibrahim’s assertion in a recent interview, and his reply was precious. “Yeah, it was quite funny. Being older doesn’t bother me and the fact is that I am Ibrahim’s old man. But I’m keen to be fit and look my best. I’m not going to be looking like an old man for a while, but I understand the irony of it,” said the actor, according to the website news18.com.

Now that Saif’s daughter Sara Ali Khan is a star, the talk then shifted to whether Ibrahim is gearing up for his Bollywood debut. Would Saif uphold timetested Bollywood tradition and launch his son into the industry as a lead actor?

“I don’t know if I will launch him. It’s an option and films are certainly a viable career choice for him. He’s sporty and likes the idea of being in the movies rather than pursuing an academic job. No one in the family with the exception of his sister (Sara) have been interested in the latter anyway,” Saif replied. **AGENCIES**

Richa Chadha, Ali Fazal postpone wedding

Actors Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal have postponed their wedding to the later half of the year amid the coronavirus pandemic, the spokesperson for the couple has announced.

Richa and Ali were scheduled to tie the knot in April, with reportedly many of their guests flying in from the US and Europe for the ceremony. “Given the current scenario and the unfortunate turn of events owing to the COVID-19 pandemic globally, Ali Fazal and Richa Chadha have decided to postpone their wedding functions to the later half of 2020 tentatively. They wish for everyone to be healthy and safe and at no cost would want their friends, families and well wishers to be affected,” the spokesperson for the actors said in a statement.

The number of novel coronavirus cases in India rose



to 169 on Thursday.

The pandemic has led to the cancellation of various events, award functions, interviews and shooting schedules in the country.

To contain the spread of the novel coronavirus, film bodies in India decided to put shootings of films, TV shows and web series on hold till March 31. **AGENCIES**

Ananya praises Suhana’s dancing and acting skills

Ananya Panday opened up about her stance on the nepotism debate, her rapport with BFF Suhana Khan and her first ever audition on an episode of Zee Cafe’s talk show Starry Nights GEN Y.

Talking about the one thing she wouldn’t mind swapping with Suhana and things that she would like to learn from her, the Student Of The Year 2 actress said: “I would like to learn her dancing and acting skills, and would love to swap my closet”.

In previous interviews, Ananya is always known to have raved about Suhana’s acting skills. Shah Rukh Khan’s daughter Suhana and Chunky Panday’s daughter Ananya went to Mumbai’s Dhirubhai Ambani International School together. Sanjay Kapoor’s daughter Shanaya completes their BFF trio. Suhana currently studies film at New York’s Columbia Uni-



Aishwarya’s lookalike wows SOCIAL MEDIA

Marathi actress Manasi Naik has been enjoying social media attention for her resemblance to Bollywood superstar Aishwarya Rai Bachchan. Several of Manasi’s pictures are doing the rounds on the Internet and, looking at the snapshots, many netizens feel that they are reminded of Aishwarya in her early days in the film industry.

“Aishwarya’s duplicate,” a user commented.

Another user wrote: “Aishwarya’s carbon copy.”

Earlier in 2005, actress Sneha Ullal, who was paired opposite superstar Salman Khan in “Lucky: No Time For Love”, made similar headlines for her striking resemblance to Aishwarya.

However, “Lucky” fared way below expectations at the box office, and Sneha could not quite make her mark in Bollywood in the years to come. Will the resemblance with Aishwarya work for Manasi? Time will tell. **AGENCIES**



Ranveer’s tryst with the stage

“I REALLY TOOK IT VERY SERIOUSLY AND I GAVE IT EVERYTHING. I USED TO WEAR SOME OF MY OWN CLOTHES AND MOST OF THE PEOPLE WHO CAME TO WATCH THE PLAY WERE JUST FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHOM I HAD INFORMED THAT I AM DOING THIS PERFORMANCE AND TO COME AND SEE IT”

Bollywood’s livewire star Ranveer Singh recently shared a major throwback image that disclosed that he had tried his hands at the theatre before his Bollywood debut role in “Band Baaja Baaraat”.

Before Bollywood, Ranveer had worked in an English play called “Carry On At The Keyhole”. It was a comedy directed by Dinkar Jani.

Sharing a poster of the play on social media, the actor said: “This is a poster for a small play in which I had a small part and the story goes that I used to be a struggler and I used to sit at Prithvi theatre with two or three others like me. We used to just sit there every day, look for odd jobs. One of them got the information that an audition is happening in a college in Andheri for a small role in a small play and nobody wanted to go -- I said I’ll go because I

didn’t have anything at that time!”

Ranveer added: “I thought to myself -- ‘acting acting hoti hai, koi bada chhota kya hota hai’ (acting is acting, nothing big or small about it). I went for the audition, I got the part and they were very impressed by my acting. When we put up the performance - I remember one was at St Andrews and even then I felt proud when I was performing at St Andrews stage as a student when I was in school.”

“So, you know, we had a few performances, I had the role of an interior decorator who was posing to be a homosexual man in order to attract more business and it was an old English double-meaning comedy play that was headlined by Darshan Jariwala and directed by Dinkar Jani,” Ranveer recalled.



Ranveer claimed whoever came to watch the play used to be impressed by his performance.

“I really took it very seriously and I gave it everything. I used to wear some of my own clothes and most of the people who came to watch the play were just friends and family whom I had informed that I am doing this performance and to come and see it, he said, adding: “I remember meeting Yogesh Sanghvi (the producer of the play) at an awards show last year which is when we reconnected and it was a very emotional moment for him

and for me - to meet after all those years - just to see his moist eyes, the pride in his eyes - ‘tu kahan se kahan pahuch gaya mere dost’ and I was also getting a bit emotional when I met him because he used to really like me, he used to be very kind to me.”

Ranveer recalled there wasn’t much money in theatre but whatever the producer made, he would give to him very generously.

“He was always very fair and kind to me. So it’s a very, very fond memory of mine from my struggling days,” he summed up. **AGENCIES**

“There are so many examples of such talented people who have not come from the film background like Ranveer Singh and Anushka Sharma and then there are actors like Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt who have come from film families and done so well. So, it all comes down to the audience”

Year 2 in May 2019 while Janhvi stepped into Bollywood with Dhadak in July 2018.

Did you know Ananya Panday had auditioned for the Indian production of Disney’s Aladdin? “I remember when Aladdin had come to India, there were a bunch of people who auditioned. We had to record a video, which I did on my phone. I had worn this red outfit and had to read the dialogues for Jasmine. The scene went really well, but then they also asked us to sing and I can’t sing to even save my life. So I really got

rejected,” Ananya said.

The 21-year-old actress also opened up about her comments on nepotism on Rajeev Masand’s talk show The Newcomers Roundtable 2019 and said: “I still agree that we have an advantage and we get to meet people. We have easier access to people from the industry as we have grown up around them. But now that I’ve got that chance, it’s unfair for me to waste it. I want to make my father proud.”

“There are so many examples of such talented people who have not come from the film background like Ranveer Singh and Anushka Sharma and then there are actors like Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt who have come from film families and done so well. So, it all comes down to the audience,” she added.

Last year, Ananya featured in headlines for equating “struggle” in Bollywood with getting a Dharma movie or an appearance on Koffee With Karan. Siddhant Chaturvedi’s response to Ananya’s comments was the Internet’s favourite: “Everybody has their own struggle. The difference is where our dreams come true, their struggle begins.” **AGENCIES**