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## Record High: India's WPI inflation zooms to 12.94% in May

# BE 'AATMNIRBHAR' FOR LIVELIHOOD

***On segment wise basis, prices of primary articles, which constitute 22.62 per cent of the WPI's total weightage, rose at a slower rate of 9.61 per cent last month from 10.16 per cent in April 2021. However, WPI food index rose to 8.11 per cent from 7.58 per cent reported for April.***

### HIGHLIGHTS

- The prices of manufactured items - 10.83 % from 9.01 %.
- Fuel and Power - 37.61 % from 20.94 % (13.15 % hike).
- Diesel prices increased by 66.3 % from 33.82 %.
- Petrol prices rose by 62.28 % from 42.37 %.
- Potato prices deflated by (-) 27.9 % in May against (-) 30.44 per cent in April.
- The vegetable prices in May fell (-) 9 per cent against a rise of 9.03 per cent.
- In contrast, prices of pulses became dearer on a YoY basis by 12.09 per cent last month from 10.74 per cent.

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

Base effect, along with high transportation fuel cost, lifted India's annual rate of inflation based on wholesale prices to record high levels in May. Accordingly, WPI rose by 12.94 per cent in May from a rise of 10.49 per cent in April. This is the highest rate of WPI inflation in the current series. The previous high mark was observed in April. The monthly rate of inflation, in May 2020 stood at (-) 3.37 per cent. On sequential basis, the month over month change in WPI index for May 2021 as compared to April, was 0.76 per cent. "The high rate of inflation in May 2021 is primarily due to low base effect and rise in prices of crude petroleum, mineral oils viz petrol, diesel, naphtha, furnace oil etc and manufactured products as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year," the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a statement on WPI. Last year, the Centre had imposed a full nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### PETROL NEARING CENTURY MARK ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Fuel prices were increased again across the country on Monday adding more misery for the common man already grappling with rising food prices amidst shrinking income. With the rise, petrol has reached very close to hitting the century mark all across the country extending the scope of historic high prices that had already made the fuel hit and cross the Rs 100 per litre mark in certain cities and towns of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh. On Monday, the oil marketing companies (OMCs) raised the price of petrol and diesel between 26 and 31 paise per litre across the four metros. Accordingly, the price of petrel increased by 29 paise per litre to Rs 96.41 per litre and diesel by 30 paise per litre to Rs 87.28 per litre in Delhi. In the city of Mumbai, where petrol prices crossed Rs 100 mark for the first time ever on May 29, the fuel price reached new high of Rs 102.58 per litre on Monday. The price of diesel also increased in the city by 31 paise per litre to reach Rs 94.70 a litre, the highest among metros. Across the country as well petrol and diesel prices increased on Monday but its retail prices varied depending on the level of local taxes in different states. Petrol prices in three other metros apart from Mumbai has also reached closer to Rs 100 per litre mark and OMC officials said that if international oil prices continue to firm up, this mark could also be breached in other places by month end.

**Retail inflation zooms to over 6%**

- The CPI Urban rose by 6.04 per cent last month from 4.71 per cent in April.
- The CPI Rural climbed by 6.48 per cent in May from 3.75 per cent in April.

Exponential rise in food prices sequentially rocketed India's retail inflation in May as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by over 6.30 per cent. According to the data furnished by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the CPI rose by 6.30 per cent last month from 4.23 per cent in April. As per the NSO data, Consumer Food Price Index increased to 5.01 per cent last month from a rise of 1.96 per cent in April.

### NO MORE SPACE FOR MONETARY STEPS, TOUGH TASK AHEAD FOR RBI: SBI

As the economy battles yet again to come out of the Covid-induced slowdown, an SBI Ecowrap report has suggested that the space for monetary accommodation is over, and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will face multiple challenges in terms of boosting India's growth rate and stabilising the rupee. The report noted that it is the fiscal policy of the government which will have to pitch in and lift the growth prospects. The report said that the central bank will face a multiplicity of challenges to reinvigorate growth and support a stable rupee and a potential inflation uptick that has all the prospects to turn ugly with a marauding global commodity cycle.

## Chirag Paswan ousted as leader of LJP in Lok Sabha

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

High political drama unfolded on Monday after Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) President Chirag Paswan was unseated as the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha by his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras. The LJP was founded by Chirag Paswan's father Ram VIlas Paswan, who passed away in October last year. Five out of the six LJP MPs in the Lok Sabha went against Chirag Paswan. Chirag Paswan had taken over the reins of the party after the demise of his father ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections last year.

Speaking to reporters in the national capital, Pashupati Kumar Paras said, "There are six MPs in our party. It was the desire of five MPs to save our party. So I have not split the party, I have saved it."

Commenting on the role of Chirag Paswan in the party, Paras, who is the youngest brother of Ram Vilas Paswan, said, "Chirag is my nephew as well as the party's national president. I have no issues with him." Besides Paras, Chirag's cousin Prince Raj, Mahmood Ali Kaiser, Veena Devi and Chandan Singh are among the rebel MPs.

Following the drama, Chirag drove to his uncle's house for talks, but stayed in his car. Even Paras did not come out to greet him either. He came out of the house an hour later. Chirag had decided to contest the Bihar elections without any alliance. After the decision, the ruling Janata Dal-United in Bihar received a massive blow as it lost on several seats due to the triangular contests.

### HC SEEKS RESPONSE FROM CENTRE, FB, INSTA ON OBJECTIONABLE POSTS ON HINDU GODS

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Monday issued a notice to the Centre, Facebook and Instagram, seeking their response on a plea raising concern over the publication of "highly obnoxious and objectionable posts" on Hindu gods on Instagram. Petitioner Aditya Singh Deshwal found the "highly objectionable" posts by an Instagram user going by the name 'Islam Ki Sherni'. According to the petitioner, the content had abusive language on Hindu gods and goddesses along with their vulgar representation in the form of cartoons and graphics. The plea contended that even after regularly complaining to the grievance officer of Instagram under the new IT Rules, no action was taken. Therefore, the petitioner moved the Delhi High Court. Senior advocate Mukul Rohtagi, representing Instagram and Facebook, apprised the court that the user who had uploaded the content has been blocked and the content has been removed, therefore, the petition should be disposed of. After hearing the arguments, a bench of Justice Rekha Palli sought response from the Centre, Instagram and Facebook on the plea.

**Bengal post-poll violence**

## Gang rape survivors move SC for SIT probe

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

A 60-year-old woman and a 17-year-old minor girl from West Bengal have moved the Supreme Court alleging horrific gang-rape by Trinamool Congress workers, for their families supporting the BJP in recently-held Assembly election and sought an SIT probe into all incidents of post-poll violence. The 60-year-old woman alleged that she was raped in front of her 6-year-old grandson by Trinamool workers on the intervening night of May 4-5 and termed it "a glaring living example of the nature of post-poll violence unleashed throughout the state against family members of those who opposed the ruling party". The victim alleged that the police refused to register the case when her son-in-law tried to report the incident, and only after her daughter-in-law persisted, the FIR was filed. The woman was later treated at a hospital, where medical examination confirmed rape. Seeking an SIT probe, the woman said the "perversity"of the investigation being carried out by the local police can be inferred from the fact that while the rape was committed by five accused who were all named by the rape survivor, and when the rape is confirmed by a medical report, the police has deliberately chosen to name only one of the five accused in the FIR. The Supreme Court had issued notice on Sarkar's plea, and it will take up the matter on Tuesday.

### 'MHA NOTIFICATION ON CITIZENSHIP FOR NON- MUSLIMS NOT LINKED TO CAA'

**New Delhi:** The Centre has told the Supreme Court that the Ministry of Home Affairs' May 28 order, which empowered certain districts to grant citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, has no relation with the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA). The MHA, in an affidavit, said: "It is submitted that the notification dated May 28, 2021, has no relation whatsoever with the CAA." The Indian Union Muslim League (IULML), in an application in the top court, said during the pendency of challenge to the CAA, the MHA has gone ahead and issued an order dated May 28, whereby the Centre, relying on Section 16 of the Citizenship Act 1955, the power to grant citizenship under Sections 5 (citizenship by registration) and 6(citizenship by naturalisation), has delegated powers to grant citizenship to Collectors of certain districts. It argued that the provisions of the Citizenship Act do not permit the classification of applicants on the basis of religion. In response to this application, the Centre said notification dated May 28 is "mere delegation of power vested with it".

## *SC should take cognisance of Ram temple land purchase deal: Congress*

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

After the controversy erupted on the issue of land purchase by Ram Mandir trust, the Congress has demanded that the Supreme Court should take cognisance of the issue. The Congress said that this is disrespect to the faith of crores of devotees. Addressing a press conference virtually on Monday, Randeep Surjewala, General Secretary of the party said, "the trust was established on the direction of the Supreme Court and now the court should take cognisance of the issue and investigate the matter." He said the court should audit all the accounts and make public the report including the purchase of the land.

The Congress leader said that the work of construction should not be halted at all, but the allegations should be looked into as it's a matter of faith for crores of Ram Bhakts. The allegation on the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust is that they have purchased a land for the temple of Rs 18.5 crore which was purchased at Rs 2 crore. But the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has strongly denied allegations of corruption levelled by opposition parties, in land purchase. The statement, signed by Trust secretary Champat Rai, said, "After the Supreme Court order, a lot of people started coming to Ayodhya to purchase land, and as the UP government is also purchasing a lot of land for development works, the land price increased suddenly. The land on which discussion has started is very close to the railway station and therefore, is at a very important location. All the land purchased by the Trust is purchased at a price much lower than the market price."

## Retired Mumbai cop shoots 2 sons, one critical

**Mumbai:** In a shocking incident, a retired Mumbai Police officer allegedly shot at his two young sons at their home in Airoli, leaving them injured. The condition of the elder son is said to be 'critical', Navi Mumbai Police said here on Monday. According to the police, the former cop, who has been identified as Bhagwan Patil, opened fire on his two sons, Vijay and Sujay, creating a sensation in Navi Mumbai. The condition of the elder son -- Vijay Patil, who took 3 bullets -- is described as 'critical' at the Indravati Hospital in Airoli suburb, while his younger brother Sujay was injured in the abdomen. The Navi Mumbai Police have detained Patil and have confiscated his weapon though the motive behind the crime is not clear yet. Further investigations are underway, said an official.

### MODI'S MEETS BJP CHIEF, SENIOR LEADERS

**New Delhi:** A crucial BJP meeting involving senior party leaders chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi took place at the latter's residence here on Monday. Soruces said that the meeting was called to discuss cabinet expansion, Covid control measures and the strategy for the Assembly polls scheduled in a few states next year. The Prime Minister held the meeting with Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari and BJP chief J.P. Nadda. According to sources, works of the Council of Ministers were likely to be reviewed in the meeting. This was the fourth meeting between Prime Minister Modi and BJP chief Nadda in the last fortnight.

# BSP MLAS WHO JOINED CONGRESS SEEK THEIR 'REWARD' FOR SAVING GEHLOT GOVT

**Jaipur** | Agencies

After the Sachin Pilot group sought fulfilment of their demands for political and ministerial appointments, the BSP MLAs, who joined the Congress around two years back, on Monday also demanded their "due reward" for saving the Rajasthan government after last year's rebellion, contending that had they not been there, the Ashok Gehlot dispensation would have been observing "its first death anniversary". Three of the former BSP MLAs -- Rajendra Guda, Lakhan Meena and Sandip Yadav -- had called a meeting on Monday to press their demands, as a political rejig and cabinet expansions have been hanging fire since last many months. Guda, in fact, was quite blunt about their demands.

"Had we, the 6 ex-BSP MLAs and 10 independents not been there, the Rajasthan government could have observed its first 'punya tithi' (death anniversary). Last year, 19 Congress MLAs and three independents had supported the rebellion and even CPI-M MLA's stand was not clear," he said. The high command should understand this simple mathematics, he said, stressing that "had we been not there, the CM had no other option than to resign". "We met Rajasthan in charge Ajay Maken thrice... however, each time, we received the same reply that the cabinet expansion shall be held in next two months. All we are getting are assurances," he added.

Guda, who recently staged a dharna at the Chief Engineer's office to complain against its working, said: "We did not save government to see this plight of ours." Yadav said that they saved the Gehlot govt last year and are expecting political appointments. "Today, we spoke to CM, who had promised to talk to us via video conferencing," he added. Gehlot's office had on Monday announced that the Chief Minister would not hold one-to-one meetings in person for the next one or two months on medical advice after his recovery from Covid and would communicate through video links. In fact, in their meeting, MLA Wajib Ali will join from Australia via video conferencing, Joginder Singh Awana, who was in Meerut, had reached Delhi and was about to fly to Jaipur when he spoke to IANS and Deepchand Kheria would also be present.

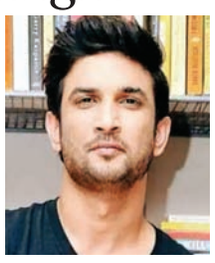
# One nation one ration card makes food security portable: Centre to SC

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

The Centre on Monday informed the Supreme Court that its flagship 'One Nation One Ration Card' (ONORC) scheme makes food security portable, and primarily aims to enable migratory National Food Security Act (NFSA) beneficiaries to access the Public Distribution System (PDS) from any ePoS enabled fair price shop (FPS) in the country through portability. The Centre, in its written submission in suo motu case of problems and miseries of migrant workers, said: "The ONORC plan aims to empower all NFSA migrant beneficiaries to access their PDS/NFSA food grains from any Fair Price Shop (FPS) of their choice anywhere in the country by using their same/existing ration card with biometric authentication. In short ONORC makes food security portable." The Centre submitted that, as part of the ongoing technology driven reforms under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in the country, it had introduced the ONORC plan for the nationwide portability of the ration cards under NFSA. "It is submitted that, portability gives that choice, while at the same time enabling the family back home to draw the remainder of the eligible ration", said the Centre. The Centre claimed it has extended the scheme for food grains for all the beneficiaries, who are not covered under NFSA and to whom ration cards have been issued by the state governments under their own scheme at 5 kg per person per month. The Centre said under phase III of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY-III), allocation of food grains has been made to all the states/UTs for free of cost, distribution to all the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Priority Household (PHH) beneficiaries from central pool at 5 kg/person/month for two months, May and June 2021.

## *CBI still probing Sushant's case from all angles*

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi



The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is still probing the case of the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput from all angles and no closure report has been filed yet, sources said on Monday. The CBI's remark came after several media reports claimed that the agency has filed a closure report in the case. A CBI source related to the development said that the probe is still on. The agency is investigating all the angles connected to the death of Rajput, the source said. Rajput was found dead at his Bandra flat on June 14 last year. The CBI took over the probe on the recommendation of the Bihar government on a complaint filed by the late actor's father. Besides the CBI, the Enforcement Directorate and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) are probing the alleged financial irregularities and the drugs angle related to the case.

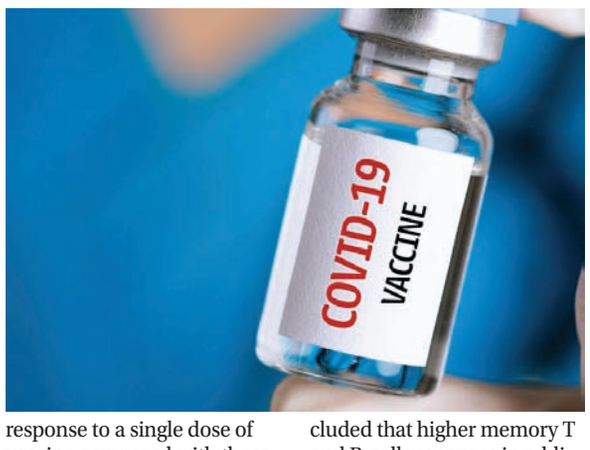
## BJP trying to divide Bengal: Mamata Banerjee

**Kolkata** | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged on Monday that the BJP government at the Centre cannot accept defeat and it is now trying to divide the state. The Chief Minister's criticism came at a time when several BJP MPs and MLAs have decided to request the Central government to declare North Bengal as a Union Territory. "We have never differentiated between North Bengal and South Bengal. West Bengal is West Bengal and there is no difference between these two parts of the state. We have tried to give equal importance to both the parts of Bengal and developed them equally. "I would even like to say that in some cases, development in North Bengal has been more than that of South Bengal. We will not allow the Centre to divide the state in any way," Banerjee said in a press conference on Monday. The Chief Minister's allegation came after BJP MLAs and MPs held a meeting on Sunday evening and decided to appeal to the Centre to declare five districts -- Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri and Kalimpong -- as UT. "There has been a lot of infiltration from China and Bangladesh in this region and nobody is safe. Even the people's representatives have to take security cover because of this situation. In this condition, we would appeal to the Centre to declare these districts of North Bengal as a Union Territory," a BJP MP present in the meeting told reporteron condition of anonymity. Alleging that the central BJP leaders are behind this 'conspiracy', the Chief Minister said, "BJP cannot accept defeat and so it is trying to sell Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri and Kalimpong. We will never allow this to happen. BJP should stop this divide and rule policy and concentrate on its job." Referring to BJP's policy in Kashmir, Banerjee said, "What they did in Kashmir they are trying to do here. What is happening in Kashmir? Is it democracy? You don't allow anyone to speak. You keep the leaders under house arrest and throttle the voice of the people. Are they trying to do the same thing here? We will never allow this."

## Single dose sufficient for those already infected by Covid: Study

**Hyderabad** | Agencies




A single dose of vaccine is sufficient for those already infected by Covid-19, revealed a study by Hyderabad's AIG Hospitals. The hospital announced on Monday that it conducted a study on 260 healthcare workers who got vaccinated between January 16 and February 5 to assess the immunological memory response in all those patients. All patients were given the Covishield vaccine. Two significant observations came out of the study, which has been published in the International Journal of Infectious Diseases, a peer-reviewed journal. The previously infected group (people who got infected with Covid-19) showed a greater antibody response to a single dose of vaccine compared with those who had no prior infection. It also revealed that Memory T-cell responses elicited by a single dose of vaccine were significantly higher in the previously infected group compared with those who had no prior infection. It was concluded that higher memory T and B-cell responses in addition to higher antibody response with a single dose of vaccine given at 3-6 months after recovery from Covid-19 may be considered at par with two doses of vaccine for individuals already infected with Covid-19.

## *Journalist found dead in UP, cops say accident*

**Pratapgarh** | Agencies

A TV journalist based in Uttar Pradesh has been found dead under mysterious circumstances in Pratapgarh district. Just a day before his death, Sulabh Srivastava, who worked for ABP News and ABP Ganga, wrote to the Uttar Pradesh Police on Saturday saying he felt threatened following his recent reportage of liquor mafias in the district. Seeking protection, Srivastava had said he had been informed by sources that the liquor mafia was angry with him after the publication of his report and wanted to harm him or his family. The Pratapgarh police has said that the journalist died in a 'motorcycle accident.' "Srivastava was returning on his motorcycle after media coverage, at around 11 p.m. on Sunday. He fell from his motorcycle near a brick kiln. Some labourers lifted him from the road and then used his phone to call his friends. "He was taken to the district hospital where the doctors declared him dead," the Pratapgarh police said in a statement. The police also added that the initial probe revealed that Srivastava fell after his "bike collided with a handpump along the road". The police also added that they are probing other angles in the matter.

## 6 HELD UNDER ANTI-CONVERSION LAW IN UP

**Rampur :** A cleric and a barber are among six, who have been booked under the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 for surreptitiously conducting the circumcision ceremony of two minor boys, below 12 years old. The incident took place on Saturday in Shahbad area of Rampur. Members of the Hindu Jagran Manch (HJM) came to know of the ceremony and accompanied police to the house of one Mahfooz, a truck driver. His parents and the barber were arrested. A hunt is on for the others. According to additional SP (ASP) Sansar Singh, the boys' mother, a non-Muslim resident of Uttarakhand, had lost her husband, a truck driver, in a road accident last month. She recently moved in with Mahfooz, a bachelor, and his family at Bairua village in Shahbad area. She changed her name to Gulistaan.

## Warrant out against rape accused DSP in Bihar

**Patna:** An arrest warrant has been issued against Bihar Police DSP Kamal Kant Prasad in connection with a four-year-old rape of a minor Dalit girl, an official said. Prasad allegedly raped the minor girl, who was a domestic help, in his official residence in Gaya in 2017. An FIR was registered against Prasad on the direction of a trial court on June 2 this year. Earlier, IGP, Gaya, wrote a letter to Home Secretary Jitendra Kumar Shrivastava to allow a warrant against the DSP as he did not appear before the investigation team annd is at large. The FIR had been registered under the POCSO act in Women police station. As the crime was committed, the DSP's wife had made a video of the incident, and complained to authorities including the district police. A CID investigation had been underway since then. As prosecution lawyer Kaiser Sarfuddin presented vital proof including the video evidence and statement of the victim under Section 164, special POCSO court judge Neeraj Kumar on May 27 directed district police to file an FIR against Prasad.

## Heavy rains lash Karnataka as monsoon intensifies

**Bengaluru:** Heavy rains lashed many parts of coastal and south Karnataka, as the southwest monsoon intensified and advanced across the state, said the weather office on Monday. "Heavy and widespread rains were reported in coastal and southern districts, while rainfall occurred at a few places in the northern districts of the state," said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in a statement here. With the monsoon being active due to favourable conditions, including strong surface winds and dark clouds, 9 cm rainfall was recorded during the day at Panambur and Kota in Udupi district, Bhagamandala in Kodagu district and Agumbe in Shivammoga district. As much as 8 cm of rainfall was measured at Mangaluru and 7 cm at Subramanya in Dakshina Kannda district, Gokarana, and Mani in Uttara Kannada district, Karkala in Udupi district and at Aurad in Bidar district. The met office has issued red alert in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada districts along the coast, forecasting heavy to very heavy rains over the next 24 hours, with thunderstorms and lightning. "Orange alert has been sounded in Kodagu, Hassan, Chikkamagaluru, Shivammoga, Belagavi, Dharwad and Haveri districts where widespread and heavy rains are likely to occur on Tuesday," said the IMD. Fishermen in the state's coastal area have been advised not to venture into the Arabian Sea due to strong surface winds up to 55 kmph on Tuesday.

## NE states fare worst in Covid-19 recovery rate

**Guwahati/Agartala:** In terms of recovery of Covid patients, the eight northeastern states fare the worst even as the country's recovery rate is rising regularly and touched 95.43 per cent on Monday. According to the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry's Covid-19 data on Monday, the recovery rate in Mizoram is the lowest in the country, at 76.46 per cent, while Sikkim has 79.18 per cent, Nagaland 83.27 per cent, Manipur 84.14 per cent, Meghalaya 87.22 per cent, Assam 90.14 per cent, Tripura 90.24 per cent, and Arunachal Pradesh 90.31 per cent. However, in the fatality ratio, four northeastern states -- Mizoram at 0.44 per cent, Arunachal Pradesh at 0.46 per cent, Assam at 0.86 per cent, and Tripura at 1.05 per cent -- are better than the national average of 1.27 per cent. The death ratio in the remaining four -- Sikkim (1.53 per cent), Manipur (1.63 per cent), Meghalaya (1.75 per cent) and Nagaland (1.92 per cent) -- is worse. With no let up in the Covid surge, most of the northeastern states have extended the corona curfew and imposed various other restrictions including closure of markets, most shops, educational institutions, banning gatherings and only allowing functioning of offices with reduced employees.

## *Forest cover in India enhanced up to one-fourth of country's area: Modi at UN*

**Team Absolute** | Bhopal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday told the United Nations that in the last 10 years, around 3 million hectares of forest cover has been added in India. In his keynote virtual address on 'High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought' at the UN, the Prime Minister said the total combined forest cover of India has been raised to almost one-fourth of the country's total area. Modi spoke at the opening segment in his capacity as the President of the 14th Session of the Conference of Parties of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Terming land as the fundamental building block for supporting all lives and livelihoods, Modi called for reduction of the tremendous pressure on land and its resources. "Clearly, a lot of work lies ahead of us. But we can do it. We can do it together," he said. The Prime Minister also listed the steps taken by India to deal with the land degradation issue. He said that India has taken the lead to highlight land degradation issues at international fora. The Delhi Declaration of 2019 called for better access and stewardship over land, and emphasised gender-sensitive transformative projects. In India, over the last 10 years, around 3 million hectares of forest cover has been added. This has enhanced the combined forest cover to almost one-fourth of the country's total area, the Prime Minister informed. Modi conveyed to the UN that India is on track to achieve its national commitment of land degradation neutrality. "We are also working towards restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. This would contribute to India's commitment to achieve an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent," he said. The Prime Minister gave the example of the Banni region in Rann of Kutch in Gujarat to illustrate how restoration of land can start a virtuous cycle of good soil health, increased land productivity, food security and improved livelihoods.

CM HOLDS IN-DEPTH BRAINSTORMING WITH CABINET MEMBERS IN SEHORE

# THIRD WAVE HAS TO BE STOPPED AND THE WORLD HAS TO MOVE ALSO: CM

- Health, employment, education and welfare of all sections are the priorities
- Not me or you, we will create the history of the state together

**Team Absolute** | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that at present we are facing a double challenge. You all have worked continuously to prevent Covid infection in the districts under your charge. As a result, Madhya Pradesh has got almost complete control over Corona infection with the active cooperation of the people. Now we have to put in all our efforts to ensure that the third wave of Corona does not enter Madhya Pradesh and even if it does, its effect should be negligible.

Chouhan said that in the coming times, our priority will be employment, education and welfare of all sections along with health.

In an informal meeting with the members of the Cabinet at Ichhawar, Sehore on Monday, Chouhan held an in-depth brainstorming on various issues including Corona control along with all the members of the Council of Ministers.

Chouhan said that to prevent the third wave of Corona infection, we must work on a solid strategy to minimize its impact. Looking at the global scenario, it is estimated that there is a possibility of a third wave in the next three or four months. The possibility of a third wave will increase due to rise in activities as a result of unlock and non-compliance with Covid guidelines. Chouhan said that we will have to remain constantly alert and aware.

Chouhan said that necessary infrastructure is being prepared and arrangements are being made to face the third wave in the state. Activities are underway to strengthen the health infrastructure. Special attention should be given to the availability of oxygen in hospitals, increasing beds, construction of ICU wards and training of para medical staff. Chouhan said that if there is infection in even one or two houses, the infection should be confined and ended there by creating a micro-containment area.

The possibility of children being affected more in the third wave is being expressed. Therefore, arrangements are being made to increase the availability of paediatricians, training of para medical staff for treatment of children, vaccination and other procedures. Work is in progress to increase ICU wards, oxygen beds etc., to provide adequate equipment, medicines and treatment material for children.

Chouhan said that it is necessary to adopt Corona appropriate behavior to stop the third wave. For this, an environment will have to be created at the village and ward level. Slogans, catchy sentences should be used in the local language. Banners, hoardings, wall-paintings must be used to motivate people to wear masks, maintain safe distance, etc. Medium like voice message, video message etc must also be used to inspire people. Vaccination is also very effective in preventing the third wave.

Chouhan said that how the education system will be at school and college level under the circumstances created by Covid must also be considered. Other issues to be considered are as to what extent and how technology can be used in this and what other innovations or initiatives can be taken.

Chouhan said that new sub, primary and community health centers and CM Rise School have to be established in the state. These centers will expand better health facilities and provide quality education to the students. Chouhan said that humanitarian approach should be taken in setting up health centers and schools. In areas where there is a shortage of health facilities and schools, centers should be established on priority basis. All provisions of the new education policy will be implemented in the CM Rise Schools.

Chouhan said that an action plan would be prepared to provide employment opportunities to one lakh youth in a month in the state. Under this, efforts will be made to provide them not only government jobs but also private sector jobs. Under this, training will be given in money-oriented courses, animal husbandry, dairy development, blacksmithing, gardening etc. Training will be given in relation to various small and cottage industries.

# BJP Youth Wing leader fined Rs 10,000 for flouting COVID-19 norms

- According to Katni's Tehsildar, the action was taken after a video went viral of Dwivedi celebrating his birthday flouting COVID-19 norms and many people were seen in the viral video.

**Team Absolute** | Katni

The Katni administration on Sunday imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Yuva Morcha district president Mridul Dwivedi for flouting COVID-19 norms during his birthday celebration here.

According to Katni's Tehsildar, the action was taken after a video went viral of Dwivedi celebrating his birthday flouting COVID-19 norms and many people were seen in the viral video.

"A video went viral on social media where a public representative was seen celebrating his birthday flouting COVID-19 norms. We took cognizance of the matter and a team was set up. The public representative was sent notice. He also submitted the fine of Rs 10,000 over the matter," Katni's Tehsildar Sandeep Srivastava said.

Srivastava also said that the people present at the event have been instructed to stay in home isolation for 7 days.

In the viral video, BJP Yuva Morcha district president Mridul Dwivedi along with his guests were seen without masks in public and was not following the social distancing norms.

According to the official data, there are 4251 active cases of COVID-19 in Madhya Pradesh, while the death toll due to COVID has reached 8552.

# MAN ARRESTED FOR RAPING 2 WOMEN

- According to the police, the accused allegedly raped a 22-year-old woman after helping her to get a flat on rent in Gwalior.

**Team Absolute** | Gwalior

A 57-year-old man, who runs a bread-making unit, was arrested by Gwalior Police for allegedly raping two women on separate occasions, an officer said on Monday.

The accused had allegedly raped a 22-year-old woman, who claimed to be preparing for UPSC exams and hailing from Uttar Pradesh, after helping her to get a flat on rent in Gwalior, he said.

In her FIR, another victim, an 18-year-old, stated that she was raped by the accused when she was a minor.

"Police arrested the 57-year-old accused on the charge of raping two women who lodged FIRs at two different police stations last week," Superintendent of Police Amit Sanghi said.

Police also invoked sections under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act against the accused, who was remanded in judicial custody. Police said the accused allegedly raped the 22-year-old woman at her flat after spiking her drink with some sedatives and shot the video, which he used to blackmail her. He used a similar modus operandi against another victim.

# Wall in Gwalior collapses while Minister was inspecting it

- Tomar was passing through this area on Sunday, he stopped his car. As soon as he put pressure on the wall of the chamber with his feet to check the quality of construction the wall fell down.

**Team Absolute** | Gwalior

Madhya Pradesh Energy Minister Pradhuman Singh Tomar was inspecting a chamber in Gwalior being built under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) scheme when the wall on which the Minister stepped on collapsed. Following this, he immediately ordered an inquiry into the construction work.

According to official information, a chamber was being built under the AMRUT scheme on Sunday near the Gwalior mental health centre.

When Tomar was passing through this area on Sunday, he stopped his car. As soon as he put pressure on the wall of the chamber with his feet to check the quality of construction the wall fell down. The minister expressed strong displeasure over the incident and reprimanded the construction company along with its officials.

Allegations have been levelled several times about the quality of the ongoing construction work under the AMRUT scheme.

Gwalior Municipal Corporation Commissioner Shivam Verma has pulled up the officials of the construction firm. A fine of Rs 1 lakh has also been imposed on the firm.

# *State govt has no plan to deal with 3rd wave of Covid: Kamal Nath*

- Highlighting the importance of oxygen in treatment of Covid patients and referring to the announcements of chief minister to set up 101 oxygen plants and make the state self-sufficient in oxygen generation, Nath said that work on several such plants has not been even started so far.

**Team Absolute** | Bhopal

Former chief minister Kamal said on Sunday that despite all the hype about preparations to deal with the third wave of Coronavirus in the state, there is no clear strategy in this regard.

Referring to shortage of hospital beds, injections and oxygen in the second wave of Covid-19, that claimed hundreds of lives in the state, Kamal Nath said that Shivraj Singh Chouhan government has still not learnt lessons from the second wave.

Highlighting the importance of oxygen in treatment of Covid patients and referring to the announcements of chief minister to set up 101 oxygen plants and make the state self-sufficient in oxygen generation, Nath said that work on several such plants has not been even started so far. Pointing to the proposed 200-tonne oxygen plant at Babai in Hoshangabad district for that the foundation stone was laid on September 11, 2020 and was planned to be completed in six months, Nath said that so far only a boundary wall has been constructed at the site. He said that despite the chief minister's announcement, many district hospitals are yet to get oxygen plants. He said that at some places, only a shed has been put up while temporary structure has been erected at others, but there are places where work has not been started so far. Lack of funds or unavailability of machines is said to be the reason for work being halted. "In such a situation, how does the state government propose to deal with the third wave of Coronavirus being predicted by the experts?" Nath asked.

## RIGHTS PANEL SEEKS REPORT FROM POLICE OVER BRUTALITY WITH FRUIT TRADER

**Indore:** The Madhya Pradesh Human Rights Commission (MPHRC) has sought a report from police in Indore over alleged brutality committed by two constables on an 18-year fruit seller caught on suspicion of theft, an official said on Monday. According to the official, the fruit trader was allegedly treated inhumanly a few days back at the Chandan Nagar police station here after being caught on suspicion of theft. "In connection with this incident, the commission has summoned a report from Indore's Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG). It has also sought the medical examination report of the victim within 10 days," said the MPHRC official. The two police constables allegedly beat up the fruit trader with sticks, made him drink dirty water and stomped on him wearing shoes, he said, adding the victim was later released. Meanwhile, a police official said both the constables have been suspended and an FIR has been registered against them under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

# Bhopal women group's unique initiative to protect environment

- This women's group comprises of wives of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers in Bhopal under the name 'Crazy Innovative Women's group'. This group of women has planted saplings in the residential areas and also taken a pledge to protect them by setting up tree guards.

**Team Absolute** | Bhopal

A women's group in Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal has started a unique initiative to promote environmental protection by planting saplings and growing plants. This women's group comprises of wives of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers in Bhopal under the name 'Crazy Innovative Women's group'. This group of women has planted saplings in the residential areas and also taken a pledge to protect them by setting up tree guards.

The purpose of planting these saplings is to reduce pollution. This is the reason that this group of women are planting saplings in populated and market areas.

The women's group has also got the support of Bhopal's Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), Irshad Wali in their endeavour.

He is himself monitoring and inspecting the trees in the market and crowded places. The members of the women's group are also spreading awareness among general public about tree plantation and environmental protection in different populated areas of Bhopal such as Chuna Bhatti, Kolar Road, New Market, 10 Number Market etc.

# Carcasses of two leopards found in Balaghat district; electrocution suspected

**Team Absolute** | Bhopal

The carcasses of two leopards were found in a village in Madhya Pradesh's Balaghat district with electrocution suspected to be the cause behind their death, a senior forest officer said on Monday.

"The carcasses of a male leopard and a female leopard were spotted at Harrabhat Khurmundi village by villagers who in turn informed forest officials on Sunday," Narendra Sanodia, Chief Conservator of Forests, told media persons.

It is suspected that these leopards died of electrocution after stepping on a live electric wire laid in the area, he said, adding the post-mortem and lab test reports are awaited.

Two persons are being questioned in connection with the incident, Sanodia said. According to a forest department official, the carcasses were lying about six metres apart from each other at the spot. As per the 'Status of Leopards in India 2018' report released by the Union government in December last year, the maximum number of leopards (3,421) were found in Madhya Pradesh, followed by 1,783 in Karnataka and 1,690 in Maharashtra.

## CHANGE IN DATE OF BIRTH

I, **Tinku Mishra** is wife of Army No. 14634230N, Rank hav Name Sunil Kumar Mishra s/o Shri P.N. Mishra, residing at : Village and Post office Pokher Bhinda, Teh. Tadi, Distt. Darbhanga, State Bihar, PIN 847407. I have changed my date of birth 03.07.1982 to 03.01.1985 as per affidavit no. AY - 936886 date 14.06.2021 before Bhopal Court.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, Tinku Mishra is wife of Army No. 14634230N, Rank hav Name Sunil Kumar Mishra s/o Shri P.N. Mishra, residing at : Village and Post office Pokher Bhinda, Teh. Tadi, Distt. Darbhanga, State Bihar, PIN 847407. I have changed my name Tinku to **Tinku** Mishra as per affidavit no. AY - 936886 date 14.06.2021 before Bhopal Court.

# Tribal dominated village Jamui created golden history by getting 100 percent covid vaccination

**Team Absolute** | Bhopal

The Baiga and Gond tribal-dominated Gram Panchayat Jamui has set such an example to avoid corona infection, making the Gram Panchayat Jamui the first such Gram Panchayat in the state, where all persons above the age of 18 years are given the vaccine of Kovid-19. The first dose is 100% done. Village Panchayat Jamui, located on Budhar Road, about 8 km from Shahdol district headquarter, has a population of 3180, with 1855 persons above the age of 18.

Initially many vaccination-sessions were organized by the district administration in village Jamui but the people there were in a state of confusion. They were unable to get vaccinated. The village Jamui's Sarpanch Bhaiya Lal Baiga, Deputy Sarpanch Meenu Singh and social workers took the initiative to clear this confusion of the villagers. All of them introspectively with the district administration came to know about the reasons due to which the people of Jamui were not getting vaccination. Understanding their state of mind, knocking from door to door, telling the benefits of vaccination, acted like a mission and persuaded everyone to get the vaccine.

The basic mantra of Collector Dr. Satendra Singh was to instill confidence in the minds of the villagers by respecting their sentiments. So that they get self-confidence. Imbibing this spirit, everyone, while playing their part with full devotion, took a pledge that not a single person in village Jamui who is above 18 years of age should be deprived of the vaccine of Kovid-19.

To implement this sacred work, Kovid-19 vaccination sessions were organized continuously from 6th June to 12th June 2021 at the Sub Health Center Jamui. Everyone's efforts started getting success from the very first day itself. On the very first day 297 persons who were above 18 years enthusiastically got vaccinated.

So far 1900 people of village Jamui who are above 18 years have been given the first dose of Kovid vaccine.

In village Jamui, Divyangjan also participated enthusiastically in it and 9 Divyangjans of Village Jamui got the vaccine to prevent corona epidemic and also gave message to all to get vaccinated. Last day, when the district level team reached village Jamui to inspect and verify the vaccination, they got information that 6 people suffering from serious diseases were showing their inability to get vaccinated, so immediately the district level team went from house to house and counseled them. Also got vaccinated. Pregnant mothers and some people who are corona positive in village Jamui have not yet been vaccinated as per the protocol of the government, but due to the efforts of the vigilant social workers of the village, information is coming out that after the completion of the prescribed time period, they too. Ready to get vaccinated.

If there is determination and there is a desire to do something, there is active participation of all, then paths come out even in the most difficult path. The resolution taken by the team of district administration in village Jamui as well as the social workers there, the goal of getting 100 percent vaccination of the people of village Jamui and implemented it in reality is commendable and exemplary.

# DELHI AIIMS TO BEGIN COVAXIN TRIAL ON CHILDREN FROM TODAY

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is learnt to have started screening of children aged 6-12 years for the clinical trials of India's first indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. Sources said that the recruitment and clinical trials of the children aged 6-12 years will start from Tuesday. The trial on children aged 6-12 has already started at AIIMS Patna.

Participants would be given the vaccine after their screening report comes. The trial would ensure if the Bharat Biotech jab is suitable for children.

Delhi AIIMS has decided to start the trial drive after the recruitment and clinical trial for single-dose Covaxin for 12-18 age group is over.

After the recruitment of 6-12 year-old children, AIIMS Delhi will be conducting trials for the age group 2-6 years of children. The trials are taking place at 525 centres. The screening of children for the trial of single-dose Covaxin among those aged between 2 and 18 years started at the AIIMS in New Delhi on June 7 after India's drug regulator had granted permission for conducting the Phase 2 and 3 clinical trials of Covaxin in the age group 2 to 18 years on May 12. AIIMS Patna, Mysore Medical College and Research Institute in Karnataka have also been selected to conduct clinical trials on children.

Covaxin is being used on adults in India's ongoing Covid-19 vaccination drive since January 16 this year. The government last week cautioned that even though Covid-19 has not taken a serious shape among children till now, its impact can increase among them if there is a change in virus behaviour or epidemiology dynamics, and said preparations are being strengthened to deal with any such situation.

A national expert group has been formed to review Covid-19 infections in children and approach the pandemic in a renewed way to strengthen the nation's preparedness, NITI Aayog Member (Health) V.K. Paul had said at a press conference."The group has examined signs which were not available four-five months before."

## ALL ASI PROTECTED MONUMENTS, MUSEUMS TO OPEN FROM JUNE 16

**New Delhi:** All Archaeological Survey Of India (ASI) protected central monuments and museums which had been closed down owing to the coronavirus pandemic will reopen from June 16 as per the latest order by the Union Ministry of Tourism. All these historic sites were closed since April 16.

After the surge in cases of Covid-19, the tourism ministry had decided to close down all the central monuments and museums. During April-May 2021, the number of deaths due to Covid-19 in the country saw a sudden spike.

Union Minister Prahlad Singh Patel tweeted, "Today the Union Tourism Ministry has given approval to duly open all the ASI monuments from June 16, 2021. Tourists can visit the monuments following necessary Covid-19 protocols. Best wishes to everyone."The ASI had earlier ordered closure of all centrally protected monuments from April 16 to May 15. The ASI had again issued an order on May 12 to keep all such historical sites closed till June 15.Covid-19 cases have been continuously declining in the country. During the last 24 hours, 70,421 new cases were reported, which is the lowest since March 31. There were 3,921 deaths due to the infection in the same time period.

# AAP to contest all seats in 2022 Gujarat Assembly polls: Kejriwal

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister and national convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Arvind Kejriwal, said on Monday that AAP will contest on all the 182 seats in the Assembly elections in Gujarat scheduled next year.

Addressing a press conference in Ahmedabad, Kejriwal said, "Our candidates will contest all the Assembly seats in Gujarat."This is the second time that Kejriwal has visited Gujarat this year, presumably to expand the party on the home turf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. AAP leaders, both in Gujarat and at the national level, have been claiming that the people of the state are looking at AAP as the main alternative to BJP.

Kejriwal said Gujarat is suffering because of the friendship between the BJP and the Congress."The BJP has ruled Gujarat for the last 27 years. I have heard people say that the Congress is in the pocket of the BJP. Both the BJP and the Congress are the same. This must stop," he said.

The AAP is looking to present itself as a formidable alternative to the Congress in Gujarat and challenge the BJP. The party is trying to fill in the gaps left by the Congress, which has seen setbacks in the recent past with several of its MLAs resigning. The Congress also put up a poor show in the local body polls held in February this year. The Delhi Chief Minister claimed that the people of Gujarat are ready for an alternative, which the AAP can provide.Kejriwal, who came to Ahmedabad to inaugurate AAP's Gujarat state headquarters, also welcomed the induction of popular TV news anchor Isudan Gadhvi into the party on Monday. "With the entry of AAP, Gujarat is bracing for a change and this process would speed up with Isudan Gadhvi joining the party," he said. When asked who will be the face to AAP in Gujarat, Kejriwal said, "The six crore people of Gujarat are the face of AAP. Even in Delhi, its 2 crore people are the face of the party, not Kejriwal. Kejriwal is a small fry, it is the people who are important." Kejriwal also brushed aside the notion of projecting the Delhi model in AAP's campaign in Gujarat.

"Every state has its own different set of problems and aspirations. So Gujarat will have a model of its own, which is not based on the Delhi model," he said.

## DELHI REPORTS 131 NEW COVID CASES, 16 DEATHS

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

Delhi reported 131 new Covid cases in the last 24 hours with a test positivity rate of 0.22 per cent, according to the daily health bulletin issued by the Delhi government on Monday.

In the same time period, 16 persons succumbed to the virus in the national capital, taking Delhi's overall Covid death toll to 24,839.

On a positive note, 355 people recovered from the disease in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries in Delhi to 14,03,205 till date.

The national capital presently has 3,226 active cases, of which 960 are under home isolation.

According to the health bulletin, 59,556 Covid samples were tested in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of tests conducted in the national capital so far to 2,03,23,110, of which 14,31,270 returned positive.

With the Covid situation in Delhi improving over the past few weeks, the administration has started the unlock process phase-wise. The first phase of unlocking was announced on May 29, when only construction work and factories were allowed.

In the second phase, markets and malls were allowed to open under the odd-even rule. In the third phase, which kicked in from Monday, all markets, shops, malls and public activities have been allowed with some restrictions.

## Gurugram first district in Haryana to administer over 8.56l jabs

**Team Absolute** | Gurugram

Gurugram became the first district in Haryana to administer the anti-Covid vaccine doses to over 8.56 lakh people, health officials said on Monday.

However, in recovery rate, Gurugram ranks second with 99.31 per cent, while Sonipat is in the first spot with 99.43 per cent, among other districts of the state.

Gurugram's Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg said: "It is the result of the tireless efforts of the citizens and the district administration that more than half of its population has been vaccinated today and reached the first position in the entire state in vaccination process."

The health officials said that the vaccination drive is being done in government and private health facilities across the district.

District Immunisation Officer M.P. Singh told IANS that the work of vaccination is going on in 37 government health centres as well as more than 50 private institutions in the district.

"Around 50 health facilities have been allowed to run the vaccination drives around the clock and get the citizens vaccinated as per their convenience.

We appealed to the people not to step outside unnecessarily. They should be careful to overcome the Covid and try to stay inside their house until it is not necessarily very important and use a face mask and follow covid norms," he said.

## 54 COVID PATIENTS DIED IN JUST 14 DAYS OF JUNE

***According to the district health officials, a total of 54 patients have succumbed to the coronavirus so far, while 200 new cases were reported even as 636 patients have recovered since the beginning of June.***

**Team Absolute** | Gurugram

As many as 54 Covid patients have lost their lives here in just 14 days, since June 1, which proves that the second Covid wave is far more deadlier than the first one.

According to the district health officials, a total of 54 patients have succumbed to the coronavirus so far, while 200 new cases were reported even as 636 patients have recovered since the beginning of June.Gurugram on Monday recorded 21 fresh Covid cases and one more death, pushing the toll to 873. Apart from this, the number of total active cases in Gurugram district is 354 out of which 329 patients are in home isolation, while 25 patients are being treated in different Covid hospitals.The officials said that so far, 15,80,782 Covid tests have been conducted in Gurugram, of which 13,96,676 have returned negative.In the last 24, hours around 3,594 tests were conducted in the district.Besides, a total of 8,56,080 people have been administered with Covid jabs in Gurugram.

# NCPCR seeks report over posts seeking adoption of children

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

The National Commission For Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has sought a report from WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Telegram regarding posts on these social networking sites offering illegal adoption of children orphaned amid ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.The apex child rights body has directed these four social media entities to submit their report within 10 days, and also warned them to take strict action against them if they fail to report about such posts.

In a letter written to these social networking sites, the NCPCR suggested if any person posts any kind of such posts, an immediate report should be sent to the commission or law enforcement authorities or state commission with detailed IP address of the user.

NCPCR chairperson Priyank Kanoongo wrote the letter on Sunday, saying "it is requested that in cases where such posts are posted on your online social media platforms, information about the same must be reported to the law enforcement authorities and/or National Commission or State Commission of the State/UT concerned and provide the details of the IP address, origin of the post and other such relevant details".

The Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, 2015, provides for a jail term of up to three years, or a fine of Rs 1 lakh for illegal adoptions of children as it violates the procedure laid down under the Act. It also punishes sale or purchase with jail of up to five years or fine of Rs 1 lakh or both.

The Supreme Court also ordered states and Union Territories (UTs) last week to take stringent action against private individuals and NGOs who invited people to illegally adopt children orphaned during the pandemic.The apex court also stated that no adoption of affected children should be permitted contrary to the provisions of the JJ Act, 2015.

## *People going abroad will get Covid jab in special category*

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

Residents in the national capital who are planning to go abroad for jobs or study will get Covid jabs on urgent basis, said Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia.

He said that students who are planning to go abroad for their further studies, or citizens who have secured a job outside, or international sports players will now find some respite in the new vaccination initiative.

The Delhi government has started a separate vaccination centre at the Navyug School at Mandir Marg, ITO.

"These days, our children are going abroad for further studies, or have attained jobs outside the country or are participating in international sports events. We have opened this special vaccination centre for all these citizens who are leaving for abroad and need to be vaccinated at the earliest, without any hassle," Sisodia said.

He further stated that citizens would be able to administer Covishield vaccine under special provision. People would be able to get their second inoculation after 28-84 days of their first inoculation.

This provision will be available to all those citizens who need to undertake an international travel in the period up to August 31. People have to carry all mandatory documents for vaccination.

## *Delhi eyes fresh vaccine stock, 20% of 18-44 get jabs: Atishi*

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

Around 20 per cent people in the 18-44 age group have been vaccinated against Covid so far, Delhi's ruling AAP said on Monday. Vaccination for this segment was started on May 1, but stopped earlier at government-run centres due to the vaccine stock getting exhausted. "Vaccination for youth was open for a limited time, but despite all that, Delhi has vaccinated around 20 per cent of youth," party MLA Atishi said, presenting the Delhi government's vaccine bulletin.

She also announced that vaccination drives for this group at government-run centres will be halted from Tuesday due to shortage of vaccines again.

"From tomorrow, more than half of the centres where Covishield was being given as the first dose, will be closed down... two days stock is available for a second dose of Covaxin.

"It is our appeal to the Central government, that the youth of Delhi want to get vaccinated and for this, the pending vaccines should be made available to Delhi," Atishi added.

For the 45 and above age groups, Delhi has 11 days stock of Covaxin and 24 days of Covishield, she added.

So far, 60.88 lakh people have been vaccinated in Delhi, out of which 46.45 lakh people have got the first and 14.42 lakh people have got both the doses.

# MCG TO CRACK WHIP ON PROPERTY TAX DEFAULTERS

***The Commissioner has instructed the Zonal Taxation Officers to issue notices against such property owners whose outstanding property tax amount of Rs 5 lakh or above and seal their properties by running a special drive in August in case of non-payment of property tax.***

**Team Absolute** | Gurugram

The Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) will conduct a special drive against the property tax defaulters in August.On Monday, MCG Commissioners Mukesh Kumar Ahuja directed the officials of the taxation wing to expedite the recovery of property tax from such property owners.

The Commissioner has instructed the Zonal Taxation Officers to issue notices against such property owners whose outstanding property tax amount of Rs 5 lakh or above and seal their properties by running a special drive in August in case of non-payment of property tax.

The officials said that for the recovery of property tax, the cooperation of the Resident Welfare Association (RWAs) will also be taken.

Three citizen facilitation centres have been set up by the MCG for the payment of property tax, in which the amount up to Rs 5,000 in the form of cash and above the amount through demand draft, credit card and debit card can be paid from, MCG officials said.

Apart from this, there is a provision to pay property tax through online mode via MCG's website.

"It is mandatory to submit property tax for all types of buildings and vacant plots located in the limits of the MCG under the Haryana Municipal Corporation Act-1994. In the event of non-payment of property tax, the property will be sealed," MCG commissioner Mukesh Kumar Ahuja, said.

"Those paying property tax on time are getting the benefit of interest waiver and exemption given by the government. This golden opportunity has been given by the government, so pay the property tax on time and take advantage of this scheme and avoid other penal provisions," he added.

# MAHARASHTRA STILL NOT OUT OF COVID-19 DANGER: EXPERTS

***There is still potential for a surge in Covid-19 cases despite the steady drop over the past few weeks, health experts warned, amid the unlocking of activities in the state since June 1.***

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

There is still potential for a surge in Covid-19 cases despite the steady drop over the past few weeks, health experts warned, amid the unlocking of activities in the state since June 1. They feel that although the devastating second wave has subsided, various factors like the large number of cases in some districts, lack of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour, and slow pace of vaccination, still remain a matter of concern.

On Sunday, the state recorded 10,422 cases, taking the tally to 5,908,992, and 483 deaths, pushing the toll to 111,104. Mumbai reported 695 cases and 19 deaths, taking the tally to 715,660 and toll to 15,183.

Dr Subhash Salunkhe, advisor to the state on Covid-19 management, points out that the danger of another disastrous Covid-19 wave still persists. "We need to continuously monitor the incidence and recoveries daily, along with tests. It is imperative to speed up the pace of vaccination. If we see the cases graph as constant when on its downward journey, then it's a warning sign. Then if we see an upward trend, it is definitely a danger sign, where again restrictions need to be imposed," said Salunkhe.

Salunkhe voiced his concerns to deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar during a meeting last week.

In the past week, the number of new Covid-19 cases has averaged 11,030 per day. There were 77,211 cases in the period between June 7 and June 13. A week before it, between May 30 and June 6, there were 103,489 new Covid-19 cases - a daily average of 14,784.

State surveillance officer Dr Pradeep Awate said steps are being taken to reduce cases in those districts where cases are still high. "We are now focused on reducing the cases in six districts like Kolhapur, Raigad, Satara, Kolhapur, Ratnagiri and Pune, where the positivity rate is more than 10%," said Awate.

He said that the unlocking was being done in a scientific manner on basis of the positivity rates and oxygen-bed occupancy to facilitate the opening up of the lockdown.

Mumbai, which has been reporting a declining trend in terms of positivity rate, moved to level two from level three of the unlocking classifications this week. Level two of unlock requires positivity rate to be below 5% and oxygen bed occupancy to be between 25% and 40%, which were fulfilled by Mumbai. However, the Brihamumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to stick to the relaxations applicable to level-three areas to ensure that the virus spread does not see a rise in cases. Mumbai clocked 695 new cases on Sunday with 19 deaths.

Dr Awate said BMC is right in its decision. "Although the city may meet the criteria which means curbs needs to be relaxed, the fact remains that BMC, which works on the ground level is the best judge of the situation. Hence, its justified in taking this decision," said Dr Awate.

Awate said the "carrot and stick approach" is being adopted for those not adhering to Covid-19 appropriate behaviour. "We are making the people aware on the consequences of not wearing masks or not maintaining social distance and also fining them," said Awate.

Maharashtra's mortality rate has gone up significantly over the past two weeks as the state authorities have reconciled 15,996 deaths during this period. There were 212,536 tests conducted on Sunday, while the total number of cases from the time of outbreak has now reached 5,908,992. The toll has now reached 111,104 with Pune leading with 15,187 deaths, followed closely by Mumbai with 15,183 deaths. The number of active cases recorded were 155,588 with Pune again leading with 18,571, followed by Mumbai with 18,166.

**ATROCITIES CASE:**

## Maharashtra govt extends protection from arrest to PBS till June 22

***Senior counsel Darius Khambata, who appeared for the Maharashtra government, told Bombay high court that his previous statement on protecting the senior IPS officer from any "coercive action" in the case will be extended till June 22.***

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government will not arrest former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh till June 22 in a case registered against him under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the Bombay High Court was told on Monday.

Senior counsel Darius Khambata, who appeared for the Maharashtra government, told the high court that his previous statement on protecting the senior IPS officer from any "coercive action" in the case will be extended till June 22.

Following Khambata's statement, a bench of Justices PB Varale and SP Tavade adjourned the hearing till June 22 on the pleas filed by Singh seeking quashing of an FIR registered against him by the Thane Police under the Atrocities Act and challenging preliminary inquiries initiated against him by the state government. The FIR was registered against Singh under the Prevention of Atrocities Act in April this year on a complaint lodged by Akola police inspector BR Ghadge.

Ghadge, who belongs to the Scheduled Caste community, had alleged that Singh had conspired with others to implicate him in some cases of extortion after he refused to follow Singh's illegal orders to benefit some accused persons in a criminal case.

In his other plea in the HC, Singh had challenged two inquiries initiated against him by the state government on charges of misconduct and corruption.

The first inquiry order was passed on April 1 this year by then state home minister Anil Deshmukh for alleged violation of some All India Services (Conduct) Rules. The second order was passed on April 20 by Deshmukh's successor Dilip Walse Patil over allegations of corruption levelled against Singh.

## Pune firm develops 3D face mask coated with virucides

**Team Absolute** | Pune

A Pune-based startup has developed a three dimensional face mask, coated with anti-viral agents that attack the Covid-19 virus when it comes in contact with them, an official said here on Monday.

Developed by Thincr Technologies India Pvt Ltd, the virucidal mask project was among the earliest projects selected for commercialisation by the Technology Development Board of the Department of Science & Technology, as part of the government's fight against the virus.

The founder-director of Thincr Technologies, Shitalkumar Zambad, claimed that these cost-effective masks coated with virucides are more effective than N-95, 3-Ply or cloth masks currently available in the market.

However, he said that the coated layer can be incorporated as an additional layer in the existing masks of all kinds which can help provide extra protection beyond that achieved by the filtration mechanisms.

Zambad said the mask coating - comprising a Sodium Olefin Sulfonate-based mixture - has been tested and shown to inactivate the Covid-19 virus.

"It is a soap-forming agent with hydrophilic and hydrophobic properties. When it comes in contact with the virus, it disrupts its outer membrane. The ingredients, used widely in cosmetics, remain stable at room temperature," Zambad explained.

These virucidal masks are found to have bacterial filtration efficiency higher than 95 per cent, and for the first time, the company has used 3D printers to make multilayer cloth filters for plastic-moulded or 3D-printed mask covers, he added.

Encouraged by the results, Thincr Technologies has now applied for a patent for the product to launch commercial production, Zambad said.

Through an NGO, it has distributed 6,000 virucidal masks to four government hospitals in Nandurbar, Nashik, for use by healthcare workers, besides giving them to a girls' school and college in Bengaluru.

## NCB arrests 3 for selling cakes laced with marijuana and pot

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

***An official said that when the agency raided the bakery, the officials seized a total of 10 brownies and marijuana at Orlem in Malad East. The agency initially arrested the couple who were running the bakery.***

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Saturday night raided a bakery that was allegedly making cakes laced with marijuana and pot, and seized 830 grams of edible weed pot brownie and 60 grams of marijuana. Three persons, including one woman, were arrested during the raid.

An official said that when the agency raided the bakery, the officials seized a total of 10 brownies and marijuana at Orlem in Malad East. The agency initially arrested the couple who were running the bakery.

Based on information obtained after questioning them, NCB Mumbai intercepted the main supplier in the case, identified as Jagat Chaurasia, at Bandra and found 125 gram of marijuana on him. He was placed under arrest on Sunday.An NCB official said that the agency has found a new trend among youngsters, in which they consume substances through brownie weed pot cakes, which have been mixed with narcotics and baked accordingly. The official claimed that this was the first case in India in which edible weed was used for baking cakes.Edible weed pot brownie is a food product (either homemade or produced commercially) that contains cannabis extract as an active ingredient. Edible weed pots are a way to consume cannabis, the official said.Cannabis edibles may affect people for a longer period of time than smoked cannabis. All these food edibles have fat content that has been infused with THC, the main psychoactive compound in cannabis.The NCB official said that any food that contains butter, oil, milk, or any fatty substance can be used to infuse marijuana. He added, "One may not be able to distinguish between regular baked goods and those containing cannabinoids, which tend to have a slightly green tinge and often emit a faint cannabis smell."

## MAN ARRESTED FOR 'DEFAMATORY' POST AGAINST SHIV SENA MINISTER

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

A Thane resident was arrested in connection with a "defamatory" post on social media against Shiv Sena leader and Maharashtra cabinet minister Eknath Shinde, police said on Monday. The social media post also had the potential to spread enmity between two communities, a police official said, adding the man was arrested on Sunday and a case was registered at Srinagar police station under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for defamation and other charges. The accused had posted the alleged defamatory matter on the Facebook page of the minister, he said.

Last year, a 40-year-old civil engineer, also from Thane, had allegedly posted a morphed photo of Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Jitendra Awhad, triggering a row. The engineer had claimed that he was taken to the bungalow of the minister instead of the police station, where he was thrashed by the minister's men.

***A Mumbai businessman has allegedly received extortion calls from the top lieutenant of Chota Shakeel from the Dawood Ibrahim gang.***

## MUMBAI BUSINESSMAN RECEIVES EXTORTION CALLS FROM D-GANG, PROBE ON

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Businessman from Mumbai has allegedly received threatening extortion calls from Fahim Machmach -- a top lieutenant of Chota Shakeel from the Dawood Ibrahim gang.

This could be the first such call after a long time when an offence has been registered by the Mumbai crime branch where names of D-gang members like Fahim Machmach and Chota Shakeel have been mentioned.

The businessman from Ghatkopar received the calls last week when the caller allegedly identified himself as Fahim Machmach and threatened the businessman with dire consequences if he failed to pay the demanded amount.

Initially, the businessman did not pay heed to the call but later when he received multiple calls, he approached the police.

A case is being investigated by the Anti-Extortion Cell of the Mumbai crime branch. Sources said AEC officials are trying to find out details of the caller, but the call couldn't be traced as it was made using VOIP (Voice over internet protocol).

The voice of the caller allegedly did not match with the samples of Fahim Machmach initially, but it is being rechecked by officials again for a re-verification with the help of experts.

Sources said the call made to the businessman could be due to some business or personal dispute, which is also under probe by the AEC officials.

## NCB arrests 3 for selling cakes laced with marijuana and pot

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

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## Citizens Face Commuting Difficulties

**Mumbai:** The citizens of Mumbai seem to be in a quandary with the rising fuel prices, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the onset of Mumbai monsoons that has made commuting across the city extremely difficult.Due to the sharp rise in fuel prices, the financial budgets of ordinary households have been crippled. Moreover, due to the restrictions imposed by the outbreak of the coronavirus and the surge in cases, ordinary citizens have to wait a little longer in order to commute on the Mumbai locals. In addition, torrential rains have flooded roads as well as railway stations, creating a difficult situation for the people living in the island city.Currently, local travel is permitted only for the people engaged in essential services. According to the statistics shared by railway authorities, at the moment, more than 30 lakh essential service personnel are travelling by train every day. Meanwhile, the Maharashtra government is reportedly planning to allow the general public to travel in Mumbai local trains in the fourth and the final phase. Currently,only government, BMC and essential services staff are allowed to travel in suburban trains. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the local trains, that has been hailed as the lifeline of Mumbai had opened their doors, after almost 10 months, for the general public on February 1, however, it closed soon after the second wave hit the state. Though, railway authorities have classified three-time slots for the general public - from the first service of the day to 7 am, 12 pm to 4 pm and 9 pm to the end of the day.

## SHIV SENA WILL NOT SHARE CM POST FOR 5 YEARS: RAUT

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

The Shiv Sena on Sunday left no room for speculation about the occupant of the chief minister's chair.

Sanjay Raut, executive editor of party mouthpiece, made it clear in his weekly column Rokh-Thok that the CM's post would be with the Shiv Sena for the full five-year term and would not be shared with NCP or Congress.

Coming at a time when neither the NCP nor the Congress was questioning the standing of the Shiv Sena in the state government, the assertion sent many looking for the trigger for Raut's comments. The best anyone could come up with was Congress state unit president Nana Patole's announcement later in the day that his party would contest all elections to local bodies and the state assembly on its own, but even there he only spoke about future polls and not the current arrangement.

The NCP and Congress spokespersons also said there was no dispute in the MVA.

As the day progressed, Raut finally decided to end the suspicion. Speaking to the media in Nashik, he said his assertion was aimed at the BJP and was made to scotch baseless speculation about the future of the MVA after chief minister Uddhav Thackrey had a one-to-one meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi early last week. "I am clarifying this because there should not be any speculation or confusion over the CM's post among people as we all [Sena, NCP and Congress] knew this. I was one of the witnesses and a part of the MVA government-formation process, so I am saying that there is no such issue regarding sharing of CM's post," the Rajya Sabha member said.

Raut said his column was meant to clarify that there was clarity in the MVA about the CM's chair.

"A commitment had been made by the MVA partners that the CM's post would not be shared, unlike the decision at the time of the erstwhile government with estranged ally BJP about 50:50 power sharing. And I think NCP chief Sharad Pawar has also made the same statement while addressing a party function in the recent past," he said.

Raut wrote in his column that the state BJP wanted to come to power at any cost in the state he and asked whether it really had the support from its top leadership. "Rumours are being spread that the NCP will claim the CM's post after two and a half years, which will spark controversy and new political equations will emerge. But it will not happen," he said in the column.

Reiterating that the government will complete its term of five years, Raut said that it was not helplessness but the need of all three parties in the MVA to remain in power.

"The Congress is in power in one or two states. But being a part of the power structure in Maharashtra is an important factor. The NCP too could not spread outside Maharashtra, while the Sena, being the biggest brand of Hindutva, could not expand outside Maharashtra. In this situation, to keep the government running is the necessity of all three parties. If all goes well, why would one think of disturbing the settled government?" he said.

The state Congress, while avoiding comment on Raut's column, said it would remain with the Shiv Sena for five years.

"Maha Vikas Aghadi will remain intact to keep the BJP away from power and the MVA government will complete its five years term," party spokesperson Sachin Sawant said.

He declined to comment on the Shiv Sena holding the CM's post for five years.

NCP spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said all was well in the alliance. "The Shiv Sena is the largest partner in the MVA and is leading the government. It will go on for five years. The government is stable and will complete its term," Tapase said.

Two days after Thackeray-Modi meeting, NCP chief Sharad Pawar had, speaking at the foundation day speech of his party on Thursday, praised the Shiv Sena and said that no one had thought the NCP would form a government with it. "The Shiv Sena is a trustworthy party. Balasaheb Thackeray had always kept his word. When the Congress lost and the Janata Party government came to power, at that time also the Sena extended its support to the Congress in the state assembly polls by not putting up a single candidate in that election. Balasaheb had given a word to Indira Gandhi, which he kept," Pawar said.

# FILM FRATERNITY ORGANIZES VACCINATION CAMP

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Actor, director, and president of new Yari road trust is holding a vaccine camp on 11th June Friday. This is the largest cooperative vaccination drive comprising 55 societies of yari rd. Emphasis is given to vaccinating all maids, drivers, security, and other such people working in these societies.

Vaani Kapoor, Anushka Ranjan, Gulshan Grover, Akansha Ranjan, Varun Sharma, Anu Ranjan, Randeep Hooda, and director-actor Satish Kaushik who are all residents of this area will be there to address vaccine hesitancy.

We spoke to Shashi and here is what he has to say, "Firstly, my heart goes out to the people who lost their lives during the pandemic and their families. A huge salute to the health workers who have tirelessly been fighting for us. It's been a very difficult time. I will be there to support vaccination. Let's get vaccinated and not listen to any rumors and not take the opportunity. It's going to keep us in good stead to fight against the virus and it's going to also ease out the pressure on the medical infrastructure of our country. Dr. Lavekar has been working day and night during these times. A huge shoutout to him and everyone who came out and supported the cause."

Shashi rightly mentioned getting vaccinated whenever the opportunity arises. We have to stay motivated and fight the pandemic.

# Chitrangda Singh: Ready for the show

## The actress shows how she gears up for Monday morn zoom calls

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Chitrangda Singh looks regal in her latest post on social media, decked up in jewellery. The actress says that she is all ready for her Monday morning zoom calls.

Chitrangda posted a picture on Instagram, where she is seen sporting an embellished lehenga paired with a heavy neck-piece and a big round 'nath' (nose ring). The actress looks straight into the camera and strikes a pose. She calls it her Monday state of mind.

"Ready for my Monday morning zoom call ! #mondaystateofmind," she wrote as the caption. Speaking about her work, Chitrangda, who was last seen in "Baazaar", will next be seen in "Bob Biswas".

"Bob Biswas" is a spin-off of "Kahaani", and based on the fictional character of that name who became popular in the 2012 Vidya Balan hit, "Kahaani". Bengali actor Saswata Chatterjee had menorably played the role in the Sujoy Ghosh crime thriller. However, in the upcoming film by Diya Annapurna Ghosh, Abhishek Bachchan essays the role.

# *People need to be aware of intersex movement: Ayushmann Khurrana*

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana, who played a gay man on screen in "Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhaan", wants to draw focus to the all-new Pride flag that has been unveiled aiming to make the movement more gender inclusive. "I read about the intent with which the new design of the Pride flag has been unveiled and I wanted to bring attention to this important conversation. The new design by Intersex Equality Rights, UK, incorporates intersex people into the movement," Ayushmann said.

He added: "I try and bring focus towards inclusivity as much as possible with my films and social media, and I do feel that people need to be aware of the intersex movement. As actors, we are fortunate that we can raise awareness to important issues and I'm trying to do my bit by speaking about Pride month."

Pride Month is observed in June to celebrate and raise awareness about the LGBTQ+ community. On the occasion, the symbolic rainbow flag has been redesigned to become more inclusive. The new flag incorporates intersex people into the LGBTQ+ movement, and was led by Valentino Vecchietti.

# Vidya Balan: Want to do work that's an extension of my beliefs

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Actress Vidya Balan, who is gearing up for the release of her new film "Sherni", says she wants to do work that is an extension of her belief.

"Honestly, it's not like I plan to do it but I always wanted to do work that meant something to me, I want to do work that is an extension of my beliefs, work that would excite me and fulfil me. Therefore, I went ahead and made the choices that I made," Vidya said. She added: "I was at the right place at the right time and not only did it work for me but it began to change something for Hindi cinema, but I cannot take the credit for any of that. But yes, it's been an exciting and fulfilling journey so far and I hope it only gets better from here."

Vidya will be essaying the role of an upright forest officer on the lookout for a man-eating tigress.

Sharat Saxena, Mukul Chadha, Vijay Raaz, Ila Arun, Brijendra Kala and Neeraj Kabi essay pivotal roles in "Sherni", directed by the award-winning filmmaker Amit Masurkar.

# RHEA REMEMBERS SUSHANT

## *Promise to give you Malpua and read quantum physics books, please come back*

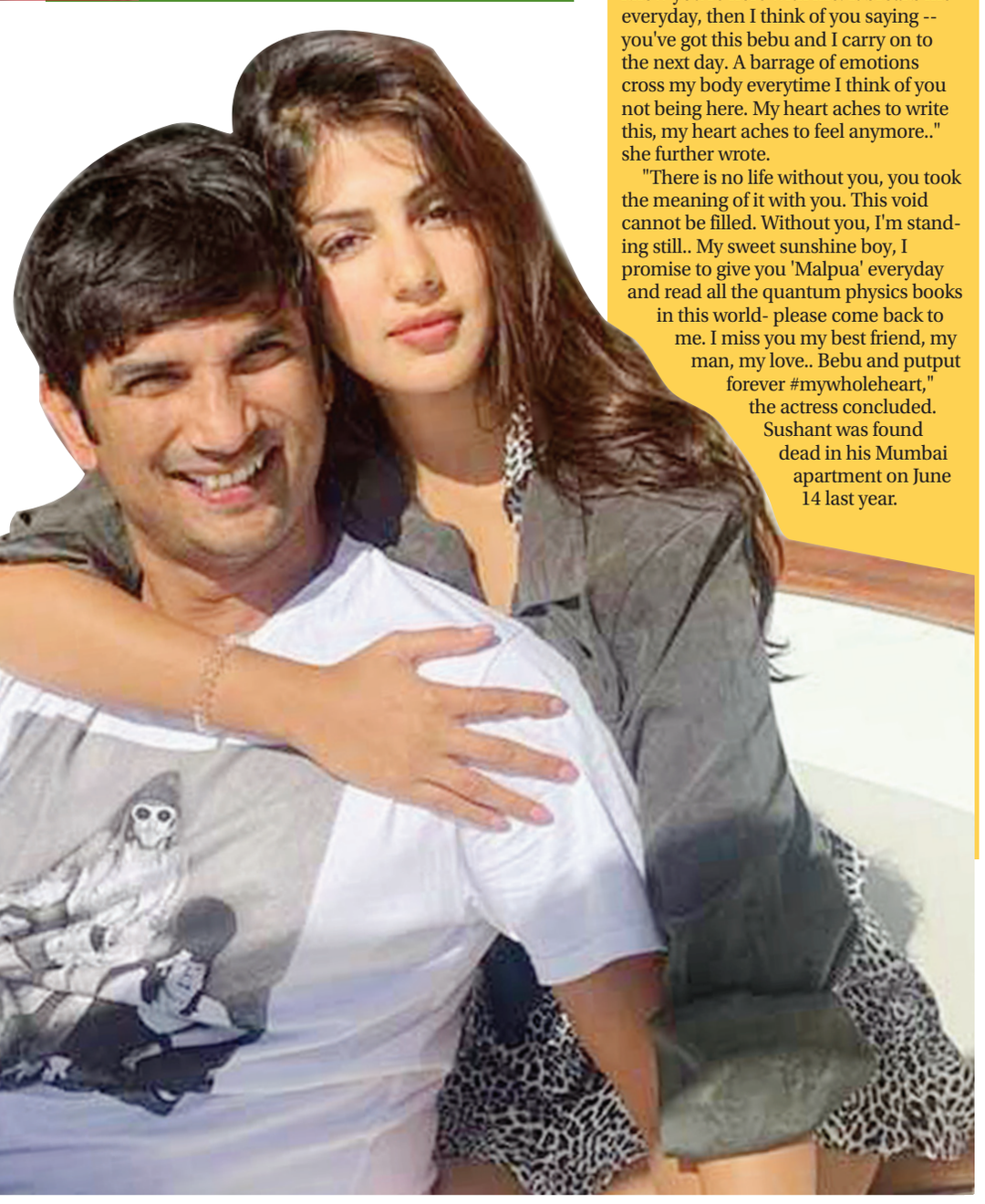
**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Sushant Singh Rajput's girlfriend, actress Rhea Chakraborty, posted a note in remembrance of the late actor on Monday, on the occasion of his first death anniversary.

"There isn't a moment where I believe that you aren't here anymore. They said that time heals everything but you were my time and my everything. I know that you are my guardian angel now-watching me with your telescope from the moon and protecting me," Rhea wrote on Instagram.

"I wait for you everyday to come pick me up, I look for you everywhere -- I know you're here with me. It breaks me everyday, then I think of you saying -- you've got this bebu and I carry on to the next day. A barrage of emotions cross my body everytime I think of you not being here. My heart aches to write this, my heart aches to feel anymore.." she further wrote.

"There is no life without you, you took the meaning of it with you. This void cannot be filled. Without you, I'm standing still.. My sweet sunshine boy, I promise to give you 'Malpua' everyday and read all the quantum physics books in this world- please come back to me. I miss you my best friend, my man, my love.. Bebu and putput forever #mywholeheart," the actress concluded. Sushant was found dead in his Mumbai apartment on June 14 last year.



# Bringing grandma's remedies to daily life

**Siddhi Jain** | New Delhi

The pandemic has left a lasting impact on lifestyles across the country, including a reconnection with the Ayurvedic way of life. According to Swati Sutaria Vakharia, an entrepreneur who aims to bring back age-old ayurvedic remedies using Grandma's 'nuskha' (tips and tricks) in people's lifestyles, Indian grandparents had plenty of such recipes which worked well for our well-being and healthy upbringing.

With this pandemic, people recollected our roots and the power of ayurveda. It is a 5,000-year-old asset and gift to India that our ancestors have given us, by using herbs and plants in recipes to live healthy with purity. With time we shifted to other chemical based products due to comfortable packaging, accessibility and time. I think the ease of the usage and convenience had a major role in shifting us to low quality products, Swati told correspondent explaining the power of natural recipes.

"When we talked to our grandmothers, we heard about this and followed many such "Nuskhe" in our lives to get rid of the issues. Child, spread this 'hing ka lep' around your navel if you have stomach ache, it will get cured in minutes. Apply turmeric with cream on your skin and it will glow. But in the current age, we are unable to get the right quality ingredients," she adds.

In India, there are multiple cultures and religions, and every group has their own home remedies, she notes. The Ayurveda enthusiast says: Many healing remedies and herbs are present in our kitchen, but we are not aware of the real usage for the same.

# NUMBER 1 IN MY BOOK

## CHRIS HEMSWORTH TO CHRIS EVANS ON 40TH BIRTHDAY

**Los Angeles** | Agencies

Hollywood's "Thor" Chris Hemsworth wished Chris Evans on his 40th birthday, saying the "Captain America" star would always be "number one" in his book.

Evans turned 40 on Sunday according to India time and Hemsworth pranked Evans by giving him a shout-out on Instagram.

Hemsworth posted a note along with a photograph where he features with Chris Pratt, or Star-Lord of "Guardians of the Galaxy", which seemed to be a behind-the-scenes selfie from the set of the upcoming "Thor: Love and Thunder" that was clicked by Pratt. "Happy 40th birthday Chris Evans, you'll always be number 1 in my book @chrisevans," Hemsworth wrote. In the posted picture, Hemsworth flashes a big smile, sporting Thor's long blonde hair. A smiling Pratt, dressed as Star-Lord, gives a thumbs-up sign to the camera.

# *Kate Moss training to be a tattoo artist*

**Los Angeles** | Agencies

Model Kate Moss has revealed that she has been taking lessons from her tattoo artist friend Daniel Casone, as she wants to go to Glastonbury to ink people.

"She said she wanted to learn tattooing from me so we can go to Glastonbury to tattoo people. She called me to go up and tattoo her and she ended up tattooing me as well. She gave me a 'Kate' and a love heart on my arm," Casone told The Sunday Mirror newspaper, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Asked if Moss knew what she was doing at first, Casone, 38, replied: "Not really, but it's Kate Moss, so I was like yeah, let her."He has also given lessons to singer Rita Ora and talking about his celebrity friends, he said: "It was quite painful because they didn't know what to do and they went quite deep but I thought you know what, I don't mind."

He added of Ora: "I think there was a little bit of competition between her and Kate."These people have a lot of life experience but one thing they haven't done is tattoo people. I give them the machine and they start shaking like a leaf. They are out of their comfort zone, but it is an unforgettable experience," Carsone said.

# MADONNA REPLACED HER BIOPIC WRITER

**Los Angeles** | Agencies

Several weeks after Diablo Cody dropped out of penning Madonna's upcoming biopic, the singer appears to have confirmed she has replaced her. Taking to Twitter over the weekend, Madonna, 62, shared snaps with Erin Wilson - known for writing films such as Secretary and The Girl On The Train, reports dailymail.co.uk.

She cosied up to Erin, 57, captioning the snaps: 'Sitting with my favorite b***h... I mean writer ?? Erin Wilson. Nothing Touches but our Souls. #traceyemin #screenplay!'

Madonna also shared snaps from the room she was writing with Erin in. She had bedecked it with flowers and candles and had laid out snacks, with dried petals and herbs strewn about the table. She teased the writing process, with ledgers set out featuring notes about her life, dating back to the 1970s. In April it was reported that screenwriter Diablo quit working on the upcoming Madonna biopic after encountering challenges working alongside the singer.

# *Alesha Dixon 'landed a six-figure deal to join the AGT*

**London** | Agencies

Alesha Dixon has reportedly scored a six-figure deal to become a judge on Australia's Got Talent after plans to sign Amanda Holden fell through. Sources claimed the Heart Radio presenter, 50, turned the opportunity down in order to continue with projects in the UK - so producers then turned to Alesha, 42, instead. An inside source told The Sun: 'Amanda was the first choice for Australia's Got Talent and she had a series of meetings but logistically she just could not make it work, reports dailymail.co.uk. They continued: 'Her -daughters are in school here so even if she didn't have work -commitments, it would have been difficult to be away from them. 'Although Alesha wasn't who they wanted originally, she has secured a lucrative contract and it's a good deal which will really heighten her career Down Under.' Amanda and Alesha have been judges on Britain's Got Talent together for the past nine years after Alesha joined the panel in 2012.

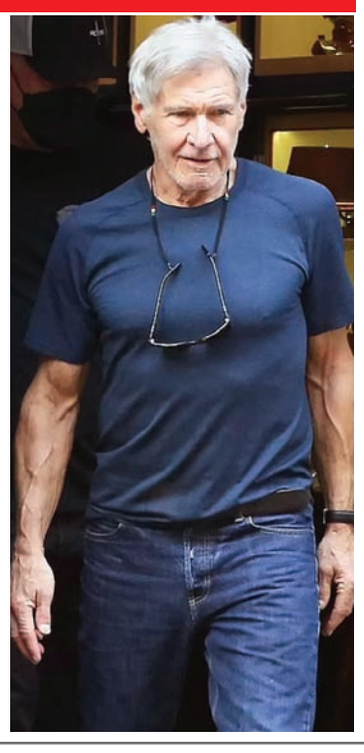
# Costly break

**Harrison Ford, 78, splashes out on a £4,500 watch after taking a break from filming Indiana Jones 5 for a shopping trip in Mayfair**

**London** | Agencies

He has been filming Indiana Jones 5 in Northumberland this week. And Harrison Ford took a much-needed break from the set to purchase a £4,500 watch in a luxury Mayfair store on Saturday.

The 78-year-old actor looked in incredible shape as he showed off his muscular physique in a navy blue T-shirt at the shop in London.The star, who was seen browsing the selection in the store, is reported to have bought a Bremont ALT1-P watch. While he was making his purchase, he was also spotted giving the shop owner a copy of the Indiana Jones complete movie DVD set and a signed autograph.He donned a pair of blue jeans for the outing as he eyed up various watches on display and his glasses hung around his neck. Leaving the store he appeared to have already put the watch on his wrist, eager to test out his new purchase, and also wore a pair of Rayban sunglasses to shield his eyes from the sun.



**Los Angeles** | Agencies

A man attempting to profess his love for Kylie Jenner was arrested at the makeup mogul's $36.5M Holmby Hills mansion this week.

The 35-year-old man was 'familiar' to her security detailing but was cooperative in the past when asked to leave the property, TMZ reports.

This time around it was said that he refused to leave until he got a chance to see Kylie face to face which led to his arrest.

Though Kylie was not home at the time of the incident, the man put up a fight in order to see Jenner, 23.

Her security team detained him until police arrived, and subsequently he was booked for misdemeanor trespassing - before being released.

The reality star has had other close calls in the past, as both she and sister Kendall Jenner have restraining orders against another man who tried to hit both of their homes in the same day.

# THE FAN

**Trespasser at Kylie Jenner's Holmby Hills mansion is arrested after he demanded to see makeup mogul and 'profess his love'**



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Elizabeth Hurley

EDITOR'S SPECS

# Germany to clean Ganga

***A German chemical has been arranged with the help of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and a drive has been launched to clean the Ganga water from algae. The drive aims to clean the algal bloom in the river water, especially at the Ghats, where people throng for bathing on auspicious occasions. According to the District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma, "We had forwarded a request to the NMCG New Delhi on Saturday to find a solution against the algal bloom in river Ganga in Varanasi. Taking a serious note of it, the NMCG sent a consignment of 15 litre of German chemical, which can be mixed in 1,000 litre of water for treatment of algae in several square kilometre area." With the arrival of this chemical, he said, experimental treatment of algae was done at Assi and Dashaswamedh ghats on Sunday. "After the confirmation of its effectiveness and also that it was harmless for aquatic lives, we decided to use it," he said. The drive aims to ensure removing algae from river water at the prominent ghats by Ganga Dussehra which falls on June 20. The algae first appeared in the river around 20 days ago, which made the river waters turn green. It was initially examined by the officials of the pollution control board. Later, the District Magistrate constituted a team of officials and asked them to submit their report on the origin of the algae. This team submitted its report after conducting a survey from Varanasi to Mirzapur for three days. In the survey, it was found that the algae flowed into the Ganga with the STP's treated effluent through Basvariya drain and later grew further in the Ganga. According to the investigation report, the 4-MLD capacity STP is based on conventional system. It seems that the algal bloom originated from the STP at Vindhyachal. The flow of water is minimum and the temperature is also conducive for the growth of algae in the river. Besides, the nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, urea and DAP coming from farming fields through drains significantly helped the algae to grow. The untreated waste waters from Mirzapur and Chunar also contribute to the algal bloom. The report recommended the modernization of Vindhyachal STP and suggested proper maintenance of all the STPs. The construction of a new STP in Mirzapur, and maintaining flow in the river was also recommended, Besides, a study on the impact of algae on aquatic life by the experts of Banaras Hindu University was also recommended in the report.***

# G-7 SUMMIT DISAPPOINTS

**Asad Mirza**

The 3Cs: Covid, China and Climate Change dominated the G-7 Summit. But overall the leaders were not able to present a united stand on any major issue.

The 47th annual G-7 Summit, ended on Sunday last at the Carbis Bay in Cornwall, UK. Though the British Prime Minister wanted the summit to showcase his brand of 'Global Britain', after the Brexit. But there were terse exchanges between the French, EU and British leaders and officials on the issue. In effect the summit turned out to be more Biden focussed and expectations were raised high on some real agreement taking place on the 3C's before the summit, though that was not the result ultimately.

Broadly, Biden sought to set a new tone after the unrestrained Trump years. Most G-7 leaders seemed relieved to have a return to a more predictable and traditional US administration. France's Emmanuel Macron welcomed Biden back to the "club." But the final Communique showed that even Biden's expectations to ensure a consensus on many of his promises fell short.

Covid-19

On the issue of Covid-19, the leaders of the seven most affluent western nations seemed united, but there was difference of opinion on the way forward. Earlier, they had showed commitment to donate 1 billion Covid-19 vaccine doses over the next year to poorer countries. But in reality the bloc fell short of its own goal -- 613 million new doses pledged, instead of a billion.

Even so, the vaccine effort gave Biden some help with his China push. Biden has criticised China for a transactional brand of vaccine diplomacy, where the shots are being doled out for geopolitical advantage. Biden called on democracies to counter China and Russia by donating vaccines equally and based on need, without seeking favours in return.

The COVAX facility, backed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), aims to secure 2 billion vaccine doses for lower-income countries by the end of 2021. "We will work together with the private sector, the G20 and other countries to increase this contribution over the months to come," the communique said.

China On the second day of the summit, US unveiled plans to counter China through infrastructure funding for poorer nations. Promising to "collectively catalyse" hundreds of billions of infrastructure investment for low- and middle-income countries, the G7 leaders said they would offer a "values-driven, high-standard and transparent" partnership.

G-7s "Build Back Better World" (B3W) project was aimed directly at competing with China's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Infrastructure (BRI) initiative, which has been widely criticised for saddling small countries with unmanageable debt, including even G-7 member Italy since its launch in 2013.

However, several leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, pushed back over worries about turning the G-7 into an anti-China group, suggesting any infrastructure programme should be framed as a more positive, pro-environment effort.

French President Emmanuel Macron also pushed back publicly, saying that the "G-7 is not a group that is hostile to China." Macron was one leader who sought the middle ground.

China hit back at these statements dismissively saying that the days when "global decisions" were dictated by a "small group of countries are long gone". Chinese embassy in London issued a statement saying that world affairs should be handled through "consultation by all countries", and added that the valid global system was the "international order based on the principles" of the United Nations.

The final version of the communique skirted B3W, instead creating a task force to study how to spur infrastructure development abroad. It made no mention of BRI, though Biden renewed his call at a press conference, and said that, "I proposed that we have a democratic alternative to the Belt and Road initiative, to build back better."

Climate Change

The claim by environmental activists before and after the summit was that the world's rich nations, which caused the climate crisis, know what's expected of them - but they consistently fail to deliver in full. They asserted that for the umpteenth time the rich club has failed to deliver on its promise to channel $100bn a year to poor nations coping with climate change's negative affects.

Environment campaigners further warned there could be no over-arching deal to protect the climate unless $100 billion sum is reached and guaranteed at the vital COP-26 climate conference in Glasgow in coming December.

Teresa Anderson, from Action Aid said that the G7 must announce real finance through grants and stop turning a blind eye while the world's poorest and most marginalised are hit hardest. The summit made some progress, especially on heralding the demise of coal - the fuel that drove the industrial revolution and sent emissions soaring. President Biden talked about the end of coal for power generation in America (with no details of a date, or of how he would get legislation passed through the Congress). The president also trumpeted the end of coal finance for poor nations, with the hope that this may heap pressure on China to follow suit.

India

As PM Modi had announced last month that due to surging Covid cases in India, he'd not travel to the UK, he addressed the summit virtually. He conveyed India's commitment to "collective" solution to global health challenges, and called for "one earth, one health" approach, which aims for unity and solidarity among the states of the world to deal with the pandemic. He also emphasised the need to keep raw materials for vaccines easily accessible.

Mr. Modi further sought G7's support for a proposal moved by India and South Africa at the WTO for a TRIPS waiver. This waiver will help India scale up production of anti-COVID-19 vaccines. The argument found strong support from Australia and other countries. French President Emmanuel Macron too argued for strengthening the abilities of countries like India that can play a vital role to contain the pandemic.

Summit's Attainment

The UK summit was the first G-7 summit to be held in last two years, and will serve as a blueprint for international gatherings in the post-pandemic age. The western leaders met after four turbulent years of Donald Trump in the White House, and though Biden was welcomed into the Club, yet he seemed unable to make a significant mark at the summit, as most of pre-summit promises were not included in the final communique and this shows that he'll have to work hard to convince his European allies.

It was also the final summit for German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has served as a bulwark for Europe for 16 years, a position which is being eyed by Macron to become "Dean" of the club. Also there was no mention of a new US-UK Atlantic Charter modelled on the historic statement made by Churchill and Roosevelt on the post-war world order, a dream cherished by both Biden and Johnson to be remembered as the one who led the world's economic recovery post-pandemic.

The summit's Communique which was issued several hours after the end of the summit, promises many things but falls short of what was expected to be achieved before the summit.

***(Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi. He writes on Muslims, educational, international affairs, inter-faith and current affairs.)***

# 135-YEAR-OLD WARANGAL JAIL SLIDES INTO HISTORY

The 135-year-old Nizam era Warangal Central Jail in Telangana became history with the authorities demolishing the prison structures to build a multi super-specialty hospital. The demolition work, which was taken up on Sunday on a massive scale, was almost completed within 24 hours.Spread over 59.5 acres the jail was built in 1885 by the government of Nizam Mir Mahbub Ali Khan VI, the ruler of then Hyderabad State.Many prominent personalities including those who took part in the Indian freedom struggle, Telangana Peasants' Movement, and Telangana Statehood movement were imprisoned in this jail in Warangal town.Amid reports that some individuals are planning to move the High Court seeking directions to stop demolition of the jail, the authorities deployed heavy machinery to complete the work at a brisk pace. The operation was completed with secrecy as all approach roads were sealed and even media persons were not given access to the area.

It was the second-largest jail in Telangana. Earlier this month, all 957 prisoners imprisoned there were shifted to jails in Mahabubabad, Chanchalguda, Cherlapally open-air jail, Nizamabad, Adilabad, and Khammam.The state government has allocated Rs 250 crore for a new central prison for Warangal. Director General of TS Prisons Rajiv Trivedi said the new jail will be built near Mamnoor fourth battalion police camp premises on the outskirts of Warangal. Officials carried out a survey of the 100-acre land for building the new jail.Meanwhile, the state government has decided to build a 24-storied building for the super multi-specialty hospital coming in place of the old prison.

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao said this hospital will have better medical facilities than any other such hospital in the country.He directed officials to provide all modern facilities including a helipad facility on the terrace for landing of helicopters bringing patients for emergency care.KCR, as Rao is popularly known, asked officials to build the hospital as a Green Building with the Canadian style of cross ventilation. He directed officials concerned to visit Canada to have the firsthand experience.The chief minister will be laying foundation stone for the hospital on June 21. The facility is likely to be built on the lines of the multi-storied Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre in Canada.The foundation stone for the hospital will be laid exactly a month after KCR visited Warangal jail and decided to demolish it to a build a multi super-specialty hospital with the latest technology, equipment and medical services.He announced that a jail would be built on the lines of Cherlapally Open Air Jail in a sprawling campus on Warangal outskirts. The new prison would also have a correctional centre.The proposed hospital in Warangal, the second biggest city in the state after Hyderabad, is part of the state government's plans to strengthen healthcare infrastructure in the state.The State Cabinet decided last week that the government will spend Rs.10,000 crore over next two years to provide world-class healthcare facilities to the people.

The government wants to focus on the public health sector the way it strengthened irrigation sector and brought qualitative changes.A Cabinet Sub-Committee headed by finance minister Harish Rao was constituted to prepare a report with all details in this regard.The Sub-Committee will review the situation in government hospitals, staff and other infrastructure facilities. The panel will tour Kerala, Tamil Nadu where better medical treatment is given as well as Sri Lanka, to study the situation and submit a report.

# *All is not well among 4 coalition partners in Bihar*

The four party coalition government of NDA in Bihar may look to be running smoothly, but their policies and ideologies differ, as they look for every opportunity to score political points either on policy front or incidents having a larger impact on society.The recent bomb explosion in a Madrasa in Banka district was an example of ideological differences between the BJP and the JDU. A crude bomb explosion in Madrasa claimed one life -- Maulana Abdul Monmin on Tuesday (June 8).After the incident, BJP leader Hari Bhusan Thakur jumped on it and issued statement that may divide society."Madrasas are the hub of terrorist activities in Bihar. I strongly demand from the state government to shut all Madrasas in Bihar," Thakur said.

Moreover, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) also asked Bihar police to hand over an FIR copy of the blast for investigation.Jitan Ram Manjhi, the former CM of Bihar and president of HAM, quickly retaliated and said that when Muslims study in Madrasa, they are declared as terrorists and when poor dalits raise their voice against wrong doings, they are termed naxals."Leaders who are declaring people as terrorists and naxals should come out of such a mindset. It is not good for the unity and sovereignty of the country," Manjhi said."We have a clear stand about thorough investigation in the Banka blast. Now, Banka police clarified that there was no terror link in the Madrasa incident. The bomb which exploded there was crude and there is no evidence of a terror activity or no objectionable documents were recovered from there to prove that it has a terror link," said Danish Rizwan, the national spokesperson of HAM.

Rajiv Ranjan, the JDU spokesperson also said that the statements given by some leaders before the investigation was completed are extremely unfortunate."Such statements may disturb the peace and harmony of the society. Leaders should avoid making politically motivated statements," Ranjan said without taking the name of a BJP leader. A BJP leader named Tunna Ji Pandey recently gave a controversial statement against Nitish Kumar and said that he is the circumstantial chief minister of Bihar. "Nitish Kumar is a circumstantial CM of Bihar. The people of Bihar had given mandate to Tejashwi Yadav. He had stolen the mandate during the assembly election and became chief minister of Bihar," Pandey said.Following his statement, Sanjay Singh, the JDU's chief spokesperson openly warned BJP to avoid crossing the limit."We will not listen to anything against our leader Nitish Kumar. We are silent but it does not mean we are weak. We can also speak and speak louder than them. If anyone points finger at our leaders we will strongly respond against them," Singh said.

"Tunna Ji Pandey was a liquor trader in Bihar. He is angry with Nitish Kumar and making statements against him," Singh said. Upendra Kushwaha, the president of JDU parliamentary board and Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) chief Jitan Ram Manjhi also slammed BJP for statements against Nitish Kumar. "If any JDU leader would have given such a statement against top leadership of the BJP in state or at centre, they would make an issue out of it," Kushwaha said while addressing BJP state president Sanjay Jaiswal.Kushwaha further said that such a statement was deliberately given by the leaders on the direction of BJP top leadership sitting in Delhi.Amid the Corona crisis, Nitish Kumar imposed a night curfew in Bihar in the first week of April this year.Sanjay Jaiswal, the BJP state president raised questions on night curfew soon after it was announced. He said that it will not help fight the pandemic in the state. "In current circumstances, the Coronavirus is spreading rapidly in Bihar and night curfew cannot help bring the situation under control. We have to make efforts in a positive direction to break the chain of the virus," Jaiswal said. "The Bihar government has taken several good decisions which are required to deal with the crisis. I am not a specialist but I cannot understand how night curfew will help reduce the spread of the virus in Bihar," Jaiswal said. Samrat Chaudhary, the Panchayati Raj minister and BJP MLC also slammed Nitish Kumar government after the death of former education minister Mewalal Chaudhary."The health infrastructure of Bihar has completely collapsed. If this government would not save the lives of MLA or MPs in the state then imagine what would happen to common man," Chaudhary said.

# 'US to keep pressure on IS, Al Qaeda in Afghanistan'

**Kabul/Washington** | Agencies

Kenneth McKenzie, Commander of the US Central Command, has said that Washington will seek to "keep pressure" on the Islamic State (IS) and Al Qaeda terror groups in Afghanistan, a media report said on Monday.

"We will still do everything we can to keep pressure on the IS and Al Qaeda, from our over-the-horizon locations," TOLO News quoted quoted McKenzie as saying in an interview with Military Times.

"That is a task I've been given. Those are plans I'm in discussion with now with the Secretary of Defense. How we will do that, I've said before, that will be a very difficult thing to do," he added. Regarding a recent UN report warning that the Taliban appeared poised to take back control of Afghanistan, McKenzie said: "We still intend to support the Afghan military from just over the horizon. We're still going to support them with funding.

"We're going to try very hard to support the Afghan air force over the horizon; some things will come out of the country to be worked on."I don't want to minimise this, because I think they're going to be tested, but we will continue to support them, just not in the way we are supporting them now."Asked if the US would provide any combat support to Afghan forces if major cities such as Kabul were at risk of being overrun, McKenzie said: "Those are actually policy decisions, not military decisions. Right now what we're planning to do after we withdraw is keep pressure on Al Qaeda and IS, and that would be what we'd be doing, going back into Afghanistan."

The top US official's remarks come as the Taliban have intensified attacks on provincial capitals, districts, bases and checkpoints since the official withdrawal of the US and other NATO troops in Afghanistan on May 1.

At least 15 districts have fallen to the Taliban since May 1, leading to the displacement of tens of thousands of Afghans.

According to a UN report, the Taliban were able to capture five districts in the past year, four of which were recaptured by the government within several days.

The withdrawal of international troops is due to be completed by September 11 at the latest.

# *Pak FM slams former govt for spoiling Kulbhushan Jadhav case*

**Islamabad:** Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has slammed the former Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government for spoiling the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav."The PML-N are the ones who mishandled the Kulbhushan Jadhav case," he said.

Qureshi said that the incumbent Imran Khan government was implementing the recommendations of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), adding that India wanted to delay the matter and drag Pakistan back to The Hague-based court."We are implementing the recommendations of the ICJ and we took measures on their advice. India didn't want consular access to Jadhav, rather wanted to drag Pakistan to the ICJ once again," he added.Qureshi's statement comes after a bill, aimed at complying with the orders of the ICJ in the Jadhav case, was passed by the lower house of Parliament last week.

Pakistan has been calling on India to appoint a counsel for Jadhav in a review case, being heard in the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

However, the Indian High Commission, raising question over the high court's decision to appoint a defence counsel in the case, has challenged the case.Pakistan maintains that India is deliberately trying to linger the matter and accuse Pakistan for not complying with the orders of the ICJ. Qureshi stated that the opposition political parties should refrain from putting hurdles in the adoption of the bill.

# Pak, India agree to share ownership of Basmati rice

***"There has to be a joint ownership, which is a logical solution to the dispute," said Faizan Ali Ghouri, a Pakistani rice exporter.The fight between India and Pakistan over the claim of the origin of Basmati rice has a long history, as this variety is produced largely on both sides of the border.***

**Islamabad** | Agencies

In a rare agreement between two arch-rivals India and Pakistan, which have a history of long-time rivalry with disputes on every front from sea to land, exporters from both sides of the border have mutually agreed to share the ownership of the regions prized Basmati rice, a solution considered the most workable to reach the European markets.

India has filed a claim in the European Union (EU) seeking a geographical indication (GI) tag for Basmati rice. Pakistan, on the other hand, has opposed India's claim and has filed a request for a protected GI tag.

"There is no logic in both countries' claim for the sole exclusivity of Basmati rice. Although its origin is Pakistani Punjab, it is grown in both sides of the border. Therefore, a joint ownership is the only viable solution to the long-standing dispute," said Ghouri.

"The EU buyers also prefer joint ownership of the rice variety as they want to keep both New Delhi and Islamabad on board in terms of commodity exports," he added.

Ghouri's views were seconded by Ashok Sethi, the director of Punjab Rice Millers Export Association in India, who also suggested that both the countries should jointly protect the Basmati heritage.

"India and Pakistan are the only two countries which produce Basmati in the world. Both should jointly work together to save the heritage and protect the GI regime of the rice," said Sethi.It is pertinent to mention that EU had recognised Basmati as a joint product of India and Pakistan in 2006. Both Pakistan and India make good money from their respective exports of Basmati rice. Pakistan annually earns $2.2 billion, while India makes about $6.8 billion from Basmati exports."Both countries export Basmati rice. India, in its application to the EU, has never stated that it is the only Basmati producer in the world," insisted Vijay Sethi, a New Delhi-based exporter.While both sides still have their own historical details on the origin of Basmati, it is rare to see two arch-rivals, who are not ready to come to the table for talks until their demands are met, come down to a mutual agreement.

Pakistan demands India to reverse its August 5, 2019 decision that changed the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated it into two Union Territories by abrogating Articles 370 and 35A, as a benchmark to make way for dialogue and address other issues between the two countries.India, on the other hand, demands Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism and take decisive action against terror elements, which it claims, enjoy the support of the establishment.

# AstraZeneca jab authorised for all age-groups, says EMA

**Brussels** | Agencies

AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine remains authorised for all populations, European Medicines Agency (EMA) has said.

The clarification camme after Italian newspaper La Stampa earlier quoted Marco Cavaleri, head of the EMA's vaccine strategy, recommending a stop to administration of AstraZeneca's Covid shots in Europe to people aged over 60 and younger age groups, amid fears over very rare blood clotting.

"Misinformation is making the rounds today. This is the situation: Benefit/risk balance of AstraZeneca #Covid19 vaccine is positive and it remains authorised for all populations," the EMA said in a tweet on Sunday.Cavaleri was also quoted by the newspaper advising the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine preferentially for the over-60s.

The European Union has approved AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson vaccines for all populations aged 18 and above. However, both viral vector-based jabs have been marred by various reports of rare blood clots.

The EU has also authorised Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna's mRNA based Covid-19 vaccines.

Asked by the newspaper whether it would be better to stop using AstraZeneca for all age groups, Cavaleri had said: "Yes, and it is an option that many countries, such as France and Germany, are considering in the light of the increased availability of mRNA vaccines."

"However, incidents were very rare after the first dose. It is true that there is less data on the second dose, but in the United Kingdom it (the vaccination programme) is going well," he added.

On June 11, Italy restricted the use of AstraZeneca doses to those aged 60 years and above, after a teenager who had received the shot died from a rare form of blood clotting.

In March, the two-dose vaccine was briefly halted by many European countries, including Italy, over concerns about the rare blood clotting problems.But, its usage was resumed in April, after the EMA said its benefits outweighed any risks.

## FINAL EASING OF ENGLAND'S COVID CURBS TO BE DELAYED BY A MONTH

**London:** Lifting of the remaining restrictions in England will be delayed by a month, a media report said on Monday, adding that UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson will give the details of the postponement at a press briefing later in the day.According to the BBC report, Johnson will be joined by Chief Medical Officer for England Chris Whitty and the UK government's chief scientific adviser Patrick Vallance at the briefing scheduled to take place at 6 p.m. (local time).The final easing of the restrictions was initially planned for June 21.This final easing would lift the limit on how many people a person can invite to his/her home;

pubs, clubs, theatres and cinemas allowed to operate without capacity limits; sports events to able to take place in full stadiums; reopening of nightclubs; and an end to curbs on guests for weddings and other life events, the BBC said.In other parts of the UK however, differ on their reopening schedules.In Northern Ireland, June 21 is the "indicative date" for a number of changes subject to a review on June 17.While lockdown measures in Wales will be reviewed on June 21, the entire Scotland is slated to move to level zero, the lowest level of restrictions, on June 28.Monday's development comes as the government has been under increasing pressure to delay the final step of unlocking the restrictions in England due to concerns over the spread of the Delta variant, which has become the "dominant" strain in the UK.

As part of the roadmap, pubs, bars and restaurants in England were permitted to open indoors, while indoor entertainment resumed, including cinemas, museums and children's play areas, from May 17 onwards.

# London travel agency booked Antigua villa from where Choksi was abducted, claims lawyer

**London** | Agencies

Ahead of the hearing of Indian fugitive businessman Mehul Choksi's bail plea in Dominica, his lawyer contended on Monday that two new evidences have come to light to show that his "abduction" was pre-planned - alleged "decoy" Barbara Jarabik had asked an AirbnB agent whether the property she was inquiring was booked by a UK travel agency, and video evidence shows the arrival and departure in Jolly Harbour of the boat upon which the bound and gagged diamantaire was taken out to sea to be transferred to the larger ship for the "unlawful journey" to Dominica.

Michael Polak, part of the legal team representing Choksi and an expert in providing legal assistance to foreign nationals around the world, said that while "terrible ordeal" for the diamantaire, and "this attack on the rule of law", took place on May 23, the "planning for what was to happen to Choksi occurred much earlier".

"In April 2021 what may have been a reconnaissance trip or failed kidnap attempt took place,"" Polak said, adding that four individuals travelled to the Caribbean from London in April and one of these was Jarabik, the person who Choksi accuses of luring him to the spot where he was attacked and kidnapped in May.

He alleged that in April, Jarabik flew with one of the men, from London to Antigua and then on to Dominica.

"During this period,and coinciding with the exact point when Jarabik and the man she travelled with were in Dominica, two men attempted to enter Dominica by boat but were barred as being suspected of people trafficking. These men were the same men, who Choksi says kidnapped him on the day after he had been offloaded to the Dominican Police," he claimed.

"The April trip may have been adress rehearsal for the May kidnapping because exactly what happened on that occasion, including Jarabik and her handler leaving Dominica by private jet, took place on May 23 when Choksi was kidnapped."

# Pak SC stops demolition of Hindu dharamshala

**Islamabad:** The Pakistan Supreme Court has barred the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) from demolishing a Hindu dharamshala in Karachi and leasing it out to an individual.

A three-judge bench issued the order in the case related to the implementation of a 2014 judgment on minorities rights.

Ramesh Kumar, the co-opt member of the one-man commission on minorities, upraised the court that the property, located in the heart of Saddar town in Karachi city and measuring about 716 square yards, was a dharamshala.

Kumar also submitted photographs of the building and told the Supreme Court that the ETPB had leased the property to the individual for the demolition and allowed construction of a commercial plaza.

The Supreme Court's order in the case, maintained: "The very photograph apparently shows that the building is of a dharamshala constructed in the year 1932, which can be read from the marble slab affixed on the building and must be protected heritage building."

The court issued a notice to the Sindh provincial secretary heritage, asking for a report on the building and barred authorities from demolishing it.

"In the meantime, no demolition activity of the said building shall be conducted by anyone and possession of the building and the land shall be taken over by the Commissioner Karachi, who shall manage the same and not allow any person to enter upon it," the order added.

The court noted that the one-man commission has also requested for allocation of more funds for clearance of outstanding liabilities and also for allocation of budget for the year.

"In the meantime, the amount of 14.994 million PKR be disbursed to the commission. For allocation of a new budget, let a proper response be filed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony."

# *Putin calls Trump 'colourful individual'*

**Moscow** | Agencies

Russian President Vladimir Putin called his former US counterpart Donald Trump a "colourful individual" during an exclusive NBC News interview which will air on Monday

"Well even now, I believe that former US President Trump is an extraordinary individual, talented individual, otherwise he would not have become US President," TASS News Agency quoted Putin as saying in the interview. "He is a colourful individual. You may like him or not. And, but he didn't come from the US establishment, he had not been part of big time politics before, and some like it some don't like it but that is a fact," Putin noted. The remarks came ahead of the much-awaited summit between Putin and US President Joe Biden on Wednesday in Geneva.

In the interview, Putin also said that although relations between Russia and US have "deteriorated to its lowest point in recent years", Biden is a career politician and there was hope that there will not be any impulse-based movements.

He "is radically different from Trump because President Biden is a career man. He has spent virtually his entire adulthood in politics".

"That's a different kind of person, and it is my great hope that yes, there are some advantages, some disadvantages, but there will not be any impulse-based movements, on behalf of the sitting US President," the Russian leader told NBC News.

Relations between Washington and Moscow have been adversarial in recent years.

The two sides have obvious differences on issues related to Ukraine, cybersecurity, human rights, and US election interference.

In his remarks to US troops and their families at Royal Air Force Mildenhall base in the UK on June 9, Biden said that Washington wants a stable and predictable relationship with Russia."But I've been clear: The US will respond in a robust and meaningful way if the Russian government engages in harmful activities," he warned.

# ISRAEL'S ARAB PARTY LEADER VOWS TO 'BRIDGE GAPS'

**Tel Aviv** | Agencies

Mansour Abbas, leader of the Ra'am party in Israel, has vowed on to advance the interests of the country's Arab citizens from within the new coalition government.

Addressing the Knesset ahead of the swearing-in of the new government on Sunday, Abbas, leader of the Ra'am party, said his faction will work to achieve civil rights and "unprecedented achievements" for Israel's Palestinian citizens, reports Xinhua news agency.

He said the party will struggle to return lands that have been confiscated by Israel to their original owners, residents of Bedouin villages in the Negev Desert.

Unrecognised by the state of Israel, these villages do not appear on any official map and Israel does not provide them any services such as electricity or water.

"I hope that the civil partnership will bridge gaps in the national and religious levels so that we could benefit and not stand as enemies," Abbas said.

Ra'am, which won four seats in the 120-seat Knesset, is the first Arab party to sit in a governing coalition in Israel.

Israeli Arabs comprise about 20 per cent of the population in Israel.

They are Palestinians who stayed put during Israel's "War of Independence" in 1948 which led to the statehood of Israel.

On Sunday, the era of Israel's longest-serving Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to an end after former Defence Minister and leader of the right-wing Yamina (United Right) party, Naftali Bennett, was sworn in as the new premier.

This came after the new coalition government, headed by Bennett and Yair Lapid, leader of the centrist Yesh Atid (Future) party, was approved by the Knesset in a vote of confidence, during which 60 lawmakers of the 120-member chamber voted in favour while 59 voted against it.

Thousands of Israelis gathered on Rabin Square in central Tel Aviv on Sunday night to celebrate the end of Netanyahu's rule.

The forming of the new coalition government has ended a political crisis in Israeli, that has seen four elections in two years.

# INDIAN WOMEN SEEK RAHANE'S GUIDANCE AHEAD OF TEST VS ENGLAND

**Bristol** | Agencies

The Indian women's cricket team is banking on lessons imparted by men's Test team vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane as it prepares to take on England in a one-off Test here from June 16.

"[We spoke to Rahane] because this is a long format and you should know how to break your innings into parts. I think we didn't get much practice but mentally we discussed a lot of things so that we can prepare ourselves for the match. Even in the nets, we try to stay in a great frame of mind because when you feel great, you play better cricket instead of thinking too much about your batting. We try to play according to our strengths," she said.

The women's team reached Bristol on Monday from Southampton where it spent 10 days in quarantine along with the men's team, which plays the World Test Championship final against New Zealand from Friday.

Harmanpreet, who has played two Tests, 104 ODIs and 114 T20 Internationals, called the chat with Rahane a friendly talk meant to gain from his experience.

"It was easy, friendly talk because he has played a lot of Test cricket. He has a lot of experience to share and we got a chance to speak to him," she said.

Harmanpreet lamented that though Indian women don't much practice with red ball as they have not played multi-days format games in recent past, they tried to create match-like scenarios during practice.

> "We have also not played too much of red-ball cricket [like youngsters in our squad]. We have played only two matches. This time we got a chance to speak to Rahane also because he has a lot of experience. He shared his experience with us, like how we should bat and what kind of approach we should have,"
>
> **Harmanpreet Kaur,** vice-captain

# Indian team winds up its match simulation, out of quarantine

**Southampton** | Agencies

The Indian cricket team ended its three-day match simulation on Sunday ahead of the World Test Championship (WTC) final against New Zealand with the likes of Rohit Sharma, Ajinkya Rahane, Mayank Agarwal among others getting a chance to bat.

"The third day of intra-squad match simulation was about settling down & finding that rhythm. [emoticon: thumbs-up twice] #TeamIndia," tweeted the Board of Control for Cricket in India along with a brief video recapping the day's play.

The third day saw Hanuma Vihari and Shubman Gill opening the innings with the former, who had a terrible outing with Warwickshire county this season, shown glancing the ball.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is shown playing a cover-drive, Rohit a cut off the back-foot and Rahane flicking the ball. Coach Ravi Shastri is seen watching the proceedings from the dressing room balcony.

The Indian team came out of its mandatory 10-day quarantine on Monday and will gear up for the WTC final which begins on June 18. The players had reached Southampton on June 3.

The New Zealand squad, after its 1-0 series win over host England, will reach Southampton from Birmingham on Monday afternoon. The WTC final will be the first Test match India will play at a neutral venue.

# Rahim, Kathryn voted ICC players of the month

**Dubai** | Agencies

Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim and Scotland all-rounder Kathryn Bryce have been voted as players of the month for May, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Monday.

Rahim, who won the ICC men's player of the month award, played one Test and three ODIs against Sri Lanka in the month of May where he helped Bangladesh win their first ODI series against Sri Lanka by scoring 125 in the second game.

"Even after 15 years at the highest level, Mushfiqur has not lost his appetite for run-making. He was at his imperious best in the one-day series at home against Sri Lanka, a picture of consistency with the highlight being 125 in the second match which helped his side secure a winning 2-0 lead in the three-match series," said VVS Laxman as an ICC Voting Academy representative.

"What made his feat even more notable was that it was Bangladesh's first-ever ODI series triumph against the 1996 World Cup champions. To shore up the middle-order and don the wicket-keeping gloves speaks volumes of his fitness and skills," added Laxman.

Woman cricketer Kathryn is the first player from Scotland -- male or female -- to make it to top 10 of batting or bowling lists in the ICC player rankings released recently. The right-handed Kathryn played four T20 Internationals against Ireland in which she scored 96 runs and took five wickets with an economy rate of 4.76 in May.

# *Netherlands, Austria, England start with wins in Euro 2020*

**Amsterdam** | Agencies

Gritty Ukraine bounced back from two goals down but Denzel Dumfries's late winner helped the Netherlands snatch a 3-2 win on home soil in Euro 2020 on Sunday. The third match-day also saw Austria overpower North Macedonia 3-1 and England down Croatia 1-0.

The Dutch, also known as 'Elftal' assumed control from the starting whistle, and they should have got the opener early in the game but Memphis Depay, Dumfries and Georginio Wijnaldum lacked in accuracy, Xinhua reports. The 16,000 spectators at the Amsterdam Johan Cruijff Arena saw a powerful performance from the Dutch, yet they remained wasteful.

It was a slow burner in Bucharest between Austria and North Macedonia as Stefan Lainer opened the scoring with the first chance in 18th minute. The Austrian defender capitalised on Marcel Sabitzer's pinpoint cross to the far post to beat Stole Dimitrievski from close range.

After the interval, Igor Angelovski's men took control and pressed Austria on the back-foot in the early stages as Austrian goalkeeper Daniel Backmann denied Boban Nikolov a chance an hour into the game.

Foda's substitutions paid off as Gregoritsch made the most of David Alaba's cross into the box, putting Austria 2-1 ahead in the 78th minute.

Elsewhere, England broke their opening Euro match jinx after beating Croatia 1-0 courtesy Raheem Sterling's goal in London's Wembley Stadium. England eventually snatched the winner at the hour mark when Sterling benefitted from Phillip's defense-splitting through-ball to beat Croatia's goalkeeper Dominik Livkovic.

# DJOKOVIC GIFTS HIS RACQUET TO A YOUNG BOY AFTER FRENCH OPEN WIN

**Paris** | Agencies

After winning the French Open title here on Sunday, world No.1 Novak Djokovic chose a young, vociferous fan to gift his racquet with which he had defeated Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece. After Djokovic defeated Tsitsipas in a five-set humdinger 6-7(6), 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4, the world No. 1 handed his racquet to a young boy in the stands, who was ecstatic after receiving the 'trophy'.

Djokovic said during the post-match press conference that there was a reason for choosing the boy. "He was in my ear the entire match basically, especially when I was two-sets-to-love down. He was encouraging me. He was actually giving me tactics, as well. He was like, 'Hold your serve, get an easy first ball, then dictate, go to his backhand.' He was coaching me, literally," said Djokovic. "I found that very cute, very nice. So, I felt like to give the racquet to the best person was him after the match (sic). That was kind of my gratitude for him [for] sticking with me and supporting me."

# *Paine backs Labuschagne as Australia captain*

**Brisbane:** Australian Test captain Tim Paine has backed Marnus Labuschagne as one fit to take over from him, even as former captains Ian Chappell and Michael Clarke have backed Pat Cummins for the top leadership position. "I think he would be a good [leader]. Marnus is a great thinker of the game. He is a good team man, he has got so much enthusiasm for his team and the game," Paine was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au

# Williamson likely to be fit for WTC final vs all-round India: Latham

**Southampton** | Agencies

New Zealand opener Tom Latham has said that captain Kane Williamson and wicketkeeper-batsman BJ Watling are recovering well and is confident the duo will be available for the World Test Championship (WTC) final against India from June 18 at the Hampshire Bowl.

"They are recovering reasonably well. It was important for them to get a bit of rest and be fully fit heading into the next week, so I am sure they will go through the fitness testing protocol over the next day or two in order for them to be ready to go for the next week. Fingers crossed. We will have a fully fit squad," said Latham, who stood in place of Williamson in the second Test against England at Birmingham which the Kiwis won.

New Zealand defeated England in the second Test by eight wickets on Sunday to clinch their first Test series win in England since 1999. They managed to do it with a side that missed many front-line players.

Apart from Williamson and Watling, the Kiwis missed pace bowlers Tim Southee and Kyle Jamieson who were both rested.

However, Matt Henry stepped up to the plate and took the Kiwis to victory. Batsman Will Young, who replaced Williamson, too scored runs.

# IF THE BALL IS MOVING, ROHIT WILL STRUGGLE: STYRIS

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

India opener Rohit Sharma will struggle if New Zealand bowlers are able to move the ball around during the World Test Championship final that commences on Friday in Southampton, said former New Zealand all-rounder Scott Styris. "It is pitch-dependent. I can't stress that enough. I think if the ball is moving around then Rohit will have his struggles. We have done demonstrations after demonstrations (in the studio) about how Rohit doesn't really move his feet a lot early in his innings. If that is the case, then the swinging ball could be a problem for him," said Styris on Star Sports.

# NZ's multi-dimensional attack can trouble Kohli: Parthiv

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

India skipper Virat Kohli needs to revisit 2018 to get back into the habit of scoring hundreds though it won't be easy against New Zealand's bowling attack which possesses variety, said former India wicket-keeper-batsman Parthiv Patel. India play New Zealand in the World Test Championship final that begins on Friday.

"I think probably he will have to give himself a bit of time and try to think what he did in 2018 -- where he got number of hundreds. Probably he is better equipped than what he was in 2014 [when he scored 134 across 10 innings in England]. But there will be challenges and there will be challenges of variety of fast bowlers. Reason being -- it (New Zealand's) is not a one-dimensional fast bowling attack," said Patel on Star Sports.

# Lahiri finishes tied 25th

**Congaree Maintenance (US) :** India's Anirban Lahiri carded an impressive 4-under 67 in the final round to leap 20 places and end at tied 25th in the Palmetto Championship.

South African 22-year-old Garrick Higgo returned 3-under 68 to win the title with 11-under 273.

Lahiri's last-day score took his four-day score to 5-under 279.

The 33-year-old from Pune fired six birdies -- on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 7th and 12th holes --, as against just two bogeys -- on the eighth and 14th holes -- to cap a good day.

World No. 1 Dustin Johnson slipped and ended at tied 10th after a one-under 70 in the final round couldn't undo the damage of third round in which he carded two-over 73.

# PUNIA GETS INTO OLYMPIC MOOD AS HE SPARS, SWEATS

**Vladikavkaz (Russia):** Freestyle wrestler Bajrang Punia has entered the final phase of preparation for the Tokyo Olympic Games, sparring and sweating with the top Russian athletes here.

"I have started my training in Russia with David Baev, the 2019 world champion in 70kg. There are good sparring partners in Vladikavkaz," the 27-year-old wrestler said on his twitter handle.

Punia who has qualified in the men's 65kg freestyle event reached here this month and will continue to train here for nearly five weeks before directly flying out to Japan. His personal coach Shako Bentinidis from Georgia is also with him.

**ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS**

# India aim for full points vs Afghanistan

**Doha** | Agencies

Fresh from their 2-0 win against Bangladesh, the Sunil Chhetri-led India will look to garner full points when they face Afghanistan in their last Group E match of the World Cup 2022 and Asian Cup China 2023 Qualifiers at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium here on Tuesday. While the 105th-ranked India are out of the race for the World Cup qualification, they only need to avoid defeat against the 149th-ranked Afghanistan to confirm the third spot behind leaders Qatar (22 points) and second-placed Oman (15 points) in Group E. India are currently on six points -- one more than Afghanistan -- and a win on Tuesday will help them enter the final round of the Qualifiers for the Asian Cup China 2023 on a high.

India's head coach, Igor Stimac, will count on the momentum generated by the 2-0 win against 'tricky customers' Bangladesh on June 7, when Chhetri scored a brace. India had also given a good account of themselves in the opening match against Asian champions Qatar on June 3, when despite being reduced to 10 men they conceded only one goal. Stimac is likely to field his best team to end India's campaign on a high. Afghanistan, placed fourth with five points , have had meagre picking here so far. With just one point from two matches, they would target finishing ahead of India on the points table, though finishing fourth too would also likely be enough for them to advance to the final round of Qualifiers for the Asian Cup China 2023.

# EQUITY INDICES RECOVER TO END AT RECORD CLOSING HIGHS

## ON DOMESTIC FRONT, BENCHMARK INDICES RECOVERED SMARTLY FROM THE INTRADAY LOWS AND ENDED MARGINALLY HIGHER IN THE VOLATILE SESSION AFTER BUYING EMERGED IN HEAVYWEIGHTS

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Key Indian equity indices recovered by the end of the day's trade on Monday to settle at record closing levels, after a largely subdued trade for most part of the session. The BSE Sensex closed at 52,551.53, higher by 76.77 points, or 0.15 per cent, from its previous close of 52,474.76. It had opened at 52,492.34 and touched an intra-day high 52,590.92 and a low of 51,936.31 points. The Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange was closed at 15,811.85, higher by 12.50 points, or 0.08 per cent, from its previous close. Motilal Oswal Financial Services's Head, Retail Research, Siddhartha Khemka, said: "Globally, markets remained positive in the prospect of a broadening economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and in anticipation of continuity in dovish monetary policy from the US Federal Reserve, due later this week. Oil stood at multi-year highs. European shares hit a record high."

On domestic front, benchmark indices recovered smartly from the intraday lows and ended marginally higher in the volatile session after buying emerged in heavyweights such as Reliance Industries, Infosys and Bajaj Finance, he said. He added that the further direction of the domestic markets would depend on the monsoon, the opening up of the economy in a phased manner, and the pace of vaccination going forward.

## SHYAM STEEL INDIA BECOMES OFFICIAL PARTNER OF ICC WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL

**New Delhi:** Shyam Steel India announced its association for ICC World Test Championship Final as the official partner for the event. The inaugural championship match will be played between India and New Zealand and is slated to take place from 18th to 22nd June 2021 plus a reserve day at Southampton, England. Based on the association, Shyam Steel India will have its logo presence in the outfield and perimeter board. The brand's logo will also be displayed in the backdrop for flash interviews and post-match presentation and in the ICC website and mobile app. "We are pleased to have Shyam Steel on board as our official partner for the inaugural ICC World Test Championship Final. We look forward to working with them for this prestigious event" said Mr Anurag Dahiya, Chief Commercial Officer, ICC. "We are very proud to associate ourselves with this prestigious event. India is a cricket frenzy nation, and this partnership will help us build high brand recall amongst the cricket lovers of the country. On behalf of Shyam Steel Family, we wish our Indian cricket team all the very best for the championship match", said Mr Lalit Beriwala, Director, Shyam Steel India. Shyam Steel India has also planned a series of activations across digital platforms to grow stakeholder engagement and brand recall.

# PE exits record second best month ever at $12 billion

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

Private equity exits have picked up momentum in 2021 with May 2021 recording the second-best month ever with exits worth $12 billion. According to the IVCA-EY monthly PE/VC roundup, May 2021 recorded investments worth $3.6 billion across 60 deals, on the back of nine large deals worth $2.7 billion. Exits recorded $12 billion across 18 deals, with three strategic exits worth US$10.4 billion. Vivek Soni, Partner and National Leader Private Equity Services, EY said, 2021 has emerged as the second-best year for PE/VC exits after 2018 with exits worth $19.3 billion in the first five months. This is more than three times the total exit value recorded last year. Strategic exits have been the biggest driver of this rise, recording $12.7 billion so far as large well-funded corporates are taking advantage of the current environment to consolidate businesses/and or acquire online capabilities to enhance the value proposition of their existing brick and mortar businesses. "We expect capital markets driven exits to increase meaningfully as a number of Indian 'unicorns' follow up on their IPO plans. Equity markets reaction to these maiden listings will be a bell weather event for the Indian start-up eco-system and could potentially fire up more investments as well as exit activity in 2021 and 2022", Soni said. May 2021 recorded 18 exits worth $12 billion, almost 42 times the value of exits in May 2020 (US$286 million) and almost 4 times the value recorded in April 2021 ($2.7 billion). This is the second highest monthly value of exits after the $16 billion recorded in September 2018 due to the Flipkart-Walmart deal. Strategic exits in May 2021 were highest at $10.4 billion across seven deals which include the sale by CPPIB and Partners Group of their 90 per cent stake in Global Logic for $8.6 billion to Hitachi and the sale by Softbank of its 80 per cent stake in SB Energy for $1.8 billion (EV of $3.5 billion) to Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL), which were also the largest exits in 2021. Another major exit in May 2021 saw Carlyle sell a partial stake in SBI Life Insurance for $531 million.

# New pooled power mechanism to reduce cost for debt ridden Discoms

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

A new pooled power pricing mechanism is proposed to be established by the power ministry that would ensure near uniform energy charges transitioning the country towards 'One Nation, One Grid, One Price." The power ministry has issued a discussion paper on market-based economic dispatch (MBED) of power and has asked stakeholders for their comments on the subject by June 30, 2021.

The idea is to establish a central pool from where demand for power for each state would be met. This would ensure that Discoms get their source of power at optimal price helping them to bring down the cost of power. The Ministry believes that the proposed MBED mechanism would be a key step in transitioning towards 'One Nation, One Grid, One Price". According to a report by clean energy consultancy and communications firm Mercom, the proposed MBED mechanism is also expected to enhance greater renewable energy integration with the balancing area increased from state to national level leading to a huge drop in renewable energy curtailment. The total power generation in the country is about 1,400 billion units with a weighted average price of Rs 2.36 per kWh. It is estimated that through the proposed pooling mechanism there would be a saving of about 4 per cent amounting to over Rs 12,000 crore. The power ministry in its discussion paper has proposed phased introduction of the MBED mechanism giving everyone time to adjust to reality of the new power procurement mechanism. As a first step, it is proposed to bring NTPC's generation capacities into the fold of proposed procurement mechanism. This would mean that NTPC as well as Discoms will participate in day ahead market of power exchanges for discovery of prices and scheduling based on the demand-supply factors. For state discoms, this would mean reduced dependency on state level proper projects for need based energy required outside the power purchase agreements. Supplies under this arrangement is often much expensive.

# Bottomline back in black, IOB wants to be out of PCA

**Chennai** | Agencies

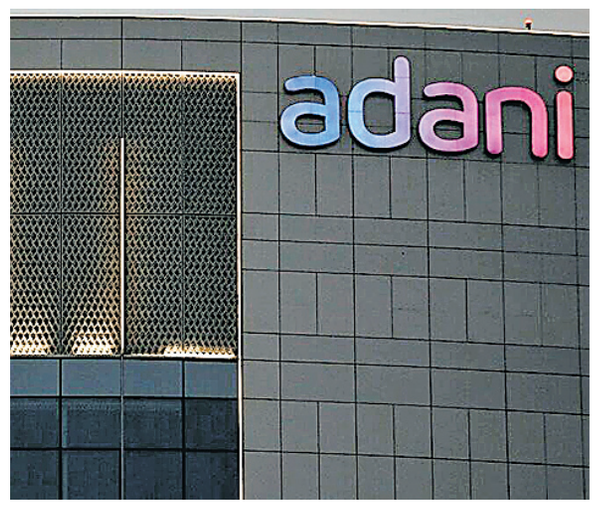
With its bottomline back in black after a long time, the Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has approached the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) seeking it be taken out of the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) fold, a top official said. Managing Director & CEO Partha Pratim Sengupta also said that the IOB plans to raise additional funds of about Rs 2,000 crore from a follow-on equity issue and Rs 1,000 crore by issue of bonds. Addressing reporters, Sengupta said the bank has approached the RBI to be taken out of PCA as its financial metrics have turned good. The bank also said it plans to come out of PCA by focusing on loan recovery, low cost deposits and less capital consuming advances. The bank closed last fiscal with a net profit of Rs 831 crore as against a net loss of about Rs 8,527 crore. The total income for the year ended March 31, 2021 stood at about Rs 22,525 crore as against about Rs 20,712 crore for FY20. According to Sengupta, the income from treasury operations had beefed up the bank's other income and the reduction in cost of funds contributed to the profitability. In a regulatory filing, the IOB said its Board has approved the issue of 125 crore equity shares at an appropriate premium to the public by way of follow-on public offer/rights issue with or without participation of the government at an issue price of Rs.16.63 per equity share of Rs.10 each.

During the year under review, IOB's total business stood at Rs 3,79,885 crore (deposits Rs 2,40,288 crore, advances Rs 1,39,597 crore) up from Rs 3,57,723 crore (deposits Rs 2,22,952 crore, advances Rs 1,34,771 crore). The bank said it had recovered about Rs 6,831 crore from non-performing assets (NPA) accounts last fiscal. The bank's gross NPA (GNPA) reduced from 14.78 per cent as at March 31, 2020 to 11.69 per cent as at March 31, 2021. The net NPA (NNPA) went down from 5.44 per cent, as at March 31, 2020, to 3.58 per cent as at March 31, 2021. Sengupta said IOB is targeting GNPA of less than 10 per cent this fiscal. According to him, the bank has identified about Rs 8,000 crore loan for restructuring and a cash recovery target of about Rs 4,600 crore. Sengupta also said that the IOB had merged 53 branches last fiscal and one or two branches may be merged this year.

## *GO FIRST inks partnership with DreamFolks, introduces Departure Lounge service*

**Mumbai:** GO FIRST (formerly known as GoAir) has partnered with DreamFolks, the tech-driven global airport service provider, to offer Departure Lounge service across select airports in India. With this, GO FIRST aims at making flygofirst.com a one-stop shop for value-added services for its customers. Lounge services are available across 30 domestic terminals and 12 international terminals. The amenities available in Departure Lounge services include food & beverages, entertainment, free Wi-Fi, business centre facilities etc. Speaking on the development, Kaushik Khona, CEO, GO FIRST, said, "Customer delight has always been of paramount importance to us. With the introduction of Departure Lounge, we intend to create a service that provides optimum comfort while facilitating productivity for business travellers. We are confident that our well-differentiated product and exceptional focus on service, together with greater comfort, convenience and seamless connectivity will find strong resonance with passengers." 'DreamFolks is delighted to partner with Go First, one of the largest airlines in India with customer centric approach akin to its own. We have been a pioneer of airport services in India and endeavor to provide a seamless travel experience prioritizing Excellence Above All to all traveller's through our alliances across industries. Our customized solutions integrated with GoFirst will provide an exemplary end to end airport experience to GO FIRST flyers' says Liberatha Kallat, Founder and MD of DreamFolks.

# NSDL says accounts of foreign funds holding Adani stocks not frozen: Report




**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

The accounts of three foreign funds that are among the top stakeholders in India's Adani group of companies are not frozen, a source at the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) told a global news wire.

Reports of a freeze on the accounts sent several Adani stocks plummeting earlier on Monday.

The freeze is on accounts of the funds that hold certain other securities and it is not new, the source said.

"NSDL hasn't taken any action now," the source told the global news wire.

Earlier, Adani Ports had clarified that the media reports on freezing of accounts of foreign funds were published to deliberately mislead the investing community.

In a stock exchange filing, Adani Ports has clarified its stand on the reports that NSDL has frozen the accounts of three foreign funds - Albula Investment Fund, Cresta Fund and APMS Investment Fund -- holding shares in the Adani Group companies.

"We regret to mention that these reports are blatantly erroneous and are done to deliberately mislead the investing community. This is causing irreparable loss of economic value to the investors at large and the reputation of the group," Adani Ports said.

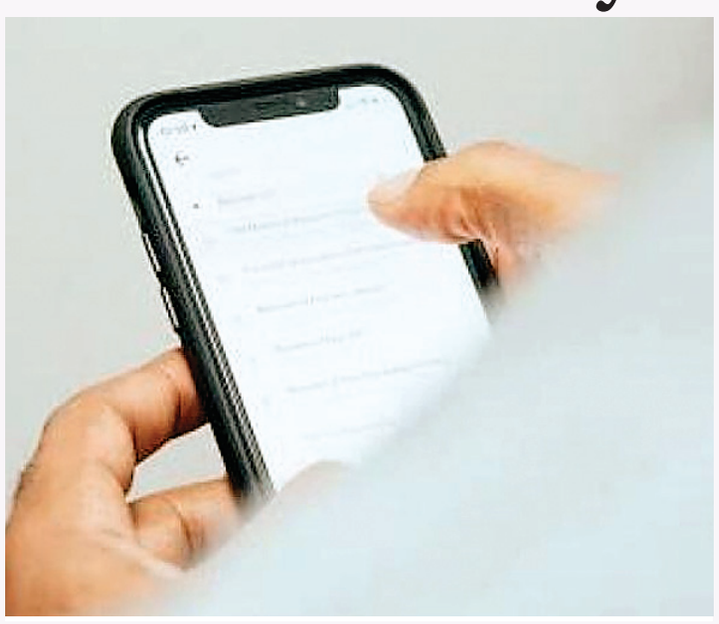
"Given the seriousness of the article and its consequential adverse impact on minority investors, we requested the Registrar and Transfer Agent, with respect to the status of the Demat accounts of the aforesaid funds, and have their written confirmation vide e-mail dated June 14, 2021, clarifying that the Demat accounts in which the aforesaid funds hold the shares of the Company are not frozen," the company said.

## PAYBACK INDIA SUPPORTS YOUWECAN' #MISSION1000BEDS DRIVE IN INDIA'S FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

**New Delhi:** PAYBACK India, has joined hands with 'YouWeCan' Foundation in their drive to strengthen the critical healthcare infrastructure to fight the ongoing Covid-19 battle. YouWeCan's #Mission1000Beds drive has started with the delivery of the first set of medical equipment & ICU beds to the towns in Himachal Pradesh. Talking about the collaboration with 'YouWeCan' Foundation, Mr. Pramod Mahanta, MD, PAYBACK India, said, "We, as a company, are committed to contributing to the society. Like in the past, we have partnered with Yuvraj Singh & YouWeCan Foundation; this time to augment the healthcare infrastructure to fight Covid-19. We will continue to do the best we can towards the society." On having PAYBACK India as partner supporting this initiative, Yuvraj Singh, Cricketer & Founder, YouWeCan Foundation, said, "I am very happy that PAYBACK India has extended their ongoing partnership with us towards supporting our initiative #Mission1000Beds, which is a hospital capacity expansion solution, to rapidly scale up the Covid-19 critical care facilities across India.

# India's live commerce industry to reach $4-5B by 2025

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi



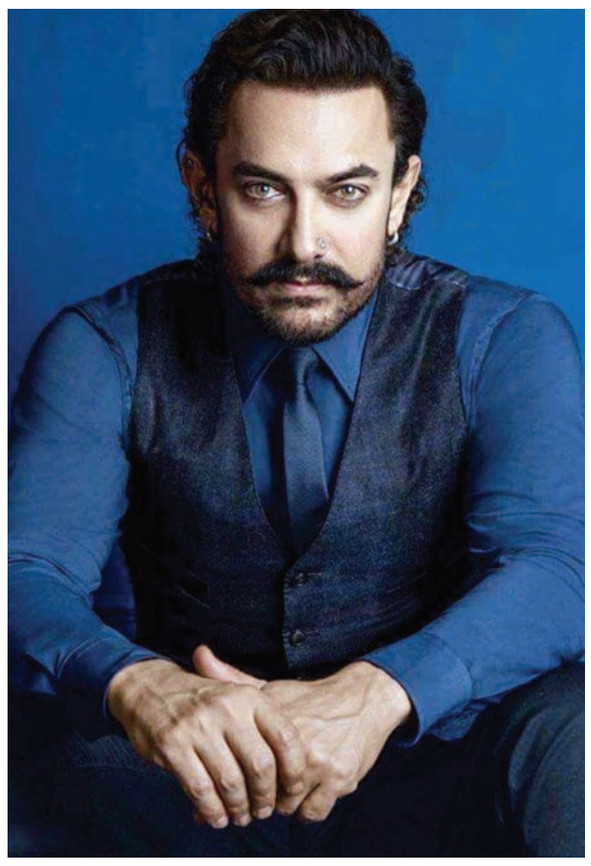
Driven by beauty and personal care (BPC), India's live commerce market is expected to clock a gross merchandise value (GMV) of $4-$5 billion by 2025, a new report showed on Monday.

Of all the categories, beauty and personal care (BPC) is expected to grow the highest with more than $1 billion GMV through live commerce. Fashion is expected to contribute 60-70 per cent of the GMV while BPC will contribute the other 30-40 per cent, according to report by market research firm RedSeer. Live commerce is a form of online shopping where customers make purchases during live streaming video events. Over the years, we have seen different formats of content with shortform taking over by the storm. It changed how content was captured, perceived and shared. "Soon, brands followed the route and garnered billions of views in a span of 1-2 days through campaigns, celebrity endorsements on TikTok and later Instagram Reels and more," the report noted.

Starting from brands like Flipkart, Myntra, BYJU's, brands targeting youngsters, small towns have campaigned on these platforms while celebrities like Alia Bhatt, Amitabh Bachan, Shipa Shetty among others have endorsed these campaigns. "However, things changed soon after Chinese app TikTok was banned. But the space immediately saw a number of domestic apps filling the space which kept the shortform momentum going," the findings showed. However, after a year of these domestic apps filling the void, brands have now started exploring live commerce on their platforms and on shortform platforms as an alternative strategy to onboard new customers. It is touted to be the next big segment in the dynamic content space, especially for brands. "Shortform content is expected to majorly drive live commerce upto $2.5-3 billion by 2025," the report said. Specialised platforms have more than 100 million DAUs which means it can scale faster and China's learnings show that shortform can largely drive live commerce. "So far large marketplaces have not started live commerce but integrating it can definitely be a success. Vertical players, on the other hand, are soon expected to start live commerce," the report added. Shortform content is the fastest growing content in India as well as globally. The market is expected to see a three times growth in users in the next five years in India. "We expect India to follow the footsteps of China and offer a large live-commerce opportunity," the report said.

# AAMIR KHAN: 'LAGAAN' HAS SHAPED ME IN SO MANY WAYS

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai



The Aamir Khan-starrer "Lagaan" was released two decades ago on June 15. The actor-filmmaker says the film shaped him in many ways.

"Lagaan was, is, and continues to be an amazing journey for me. It has been a journey in which I have met exciting new people, made new friends, started relationships that have lasted over two decades, shared so much with these wonderful people, learnt so much, experienced so many emotions, experienced so much. This journey has shaped me in so many ways," he said.

Directed by Ashutosh Gowariker, the film is set in 1893, during the late Victorian period of India's colonial British Raj. The story revolves around a small village in Central India, whose inhabitants, burdened by high taxes, accept a challenge to play a cricket match against a team of British officers. It they win the match, their taxes would be excused, but failing to win would mean having to pay triple taxes.

"In this journey, I want to thank, Ashu, the entire team of Lagaan, all the different teams that took it to the various audiences across the world, and all of you who have seen the film. We have all come together in this journey, some early, some later as we went along, but all of us are fellow travellers," he added.

# Gadar : Ek Prem Katha completes 20 years

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

The acclaimed director, Anil Sharma had created history with his legendary film, Gadar : Ek Prem Katha back in the year 2001. The Sunny Deol starrer, produced by Zee Studios continues to rule hearts and bears the title of one of the best and finest films of the the millennium.

Gadar has now completed 20 years since it's release. Anil Sharma's movie had released with Lagaan back in the day and both the films held their own and went on to become the blockbusters of the year with the Sunny Deol and Ameesha Patel starrer going on to become a cult film.

The film completes 20 years today and on the occasion Anil Sharma quotes "I can make the film without any changes today, and it will be a bigger success. It's a realistic film and the youth will connect with it. If you ask me, Gadar has elements of the Ramayana. [In the epic] Lord Ram went to Lanka to get Sita; we have followed a similar plot in our film, which is why we identify with the story even after all these years."

Celebrate 20 years of Anil Sharma's Gadar : Ek Prem Katha starring Sunny Deol and Ameesha Patel with Zee Bollywood on 15th June at 7:30pm.

## *Taapsee Pannu: Let's feel close to 'Normal' again*

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Taapsee Pannu, who is currently touring Moscow, on Monday shared that she wants to feel close to normal again. Taapsee made her contention with a new picture she posted on Instagram. "Time to surround myself with colours, sit on street side, looking at the sky, take a deep breath and say "all is well"! Also…..... hellooooo Moscow! Let's feel close to 'Normal' again!" she wrote, with the image that captures her posing in a picturesque locale. #TapcTravels #Moscow #Russia," she wrote as the caption.

The actress currently awaits the release of her upcoming mystery thriller "Haseen Dilruba".

The film, which also features Vikrant Massey and Harshvardhan Rane, is about a woman whose heart longs to live like in a novel, but who finds herself entangled in the murder of her husband.

"Haseen Dilruba", directed by "Hasee Toh Phasee", helmer Vinil Mathew, will be released on OTT.

# URVASHI RAUTELA TAKES MUD BATH

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Urvashi Rautela is taking beauty cue from Queen Cleopatra, going by her Instagram post on Monday. The actress posted a picture having mud bath, and wrote: "MY FAV MUD BATH SPA / MUD THERAPY. Cleopatra was an early lover of a mud bath, while modern fans includes me. Enjoying the red mud of a Balearic beach. Its said to have been used as a mirror by Venus, the Roman goddess of love. Its mineral-rich mud is considered therapeutic and good for skin." Sharing the benefits of mud bath on one's body and skin, the actress added: "Mud really can be a muddy marvel. Covered in healing mud therapeutic Mud Baths are still heralded today for their ability to detoxify and draw out impurities, soften skin, improve circulation, and ease aches and pains."

# Akshay Kumar denies taking 30-cr cut for 'Bell Bottom'

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar took to social media on Monday to deny reports claiming he has reduced his fees by Rs 30 crore for the upcoming spy thriller "Bell Bottom".

"What waking up to FAKE Scoops feels like!" Akshay tweeted on Monday.

His tweet comes in reaction to a news piece which claims that the actor has reduced his fees by Rs 30 crore for "Bell Bottom".

Vashu Bhagnani, one of the producers of the film, also denied all such reports. Reacting to the news piece, Bhagnani tweeted: "No Truth to this news at all."

Directed by Ranjit M. Tewari, "Bell Bottom" also stars Vaani Kapoor, Lara Dutta and Huma Qureshi. The period espionage thriller is set in the eighties.

Rumours seem to be hounding Akshay lately. Recently, the actor had taken to social media to refute speculations over the release date of his forthcoming films "Sooryavanshi" and Bell Bottom". Akshay issued a statement reacting to unconfirmed reports claiming that both films would arrive on Independence Day in August.

# RAVI KISHAN SEEKS BAN ON VULGAR CONTENT IN BHOJPURI FILMS

**Team Absolute** | Lucknow

Bollywood actor and Gorakhpur BJP MP, Ravi Kishan, has written letters to union ministers and the chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, demanding a ban on vulgar content in Bhojpuri films and songs.

He has demanded a strict law to ensure that such content in films and songs be discontinued. In his letters, Ravi Kishan has pointed out that the Bhojpuri-speaking population in the country is around 25 crores. "These people deserve a better deal and vulgarity that is being dished out by Bhojpuri cinema and in its songs, must be stopped," he said. He said that the Bhojpuri films and songs already released, must also be brought under the purview of the proposed law. Ravi Kishan has been associated with Bhojpuri cinema for almost three decades now and has played a crucial role in popularizing this regional cinema.

## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Sunny Leone

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