

# absolute india

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## COVID BATCH

### Notify assessment scheme for Class 12 in 10 days: SC to state boards

**Team Absolute | New Delhi**  
The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the state boards to notify their respective assessment schemes for Class 12 students within 10 days, after the cancellation of physical examination, and also declare results before July 31. A bench comprising Justices A.M.

Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari said: "In addition, the Scheme must provide for a proper mechanism for redressal of dispute or grievances of the students after declaration of results, as has been done in the case of CBSE and ICSE Boards." The bench also emphasized that as per its previous observation there is no possibility of having a uniform

assessment scheme for all boards across the country. The bench said: "We are not going to direct uniform scheme, as each board is autonomous and different." On June 22, the Centre told the Supreme Court that there cannot be any uniform assessment policy for all board examinations, which include those of the CBSE, the ICSE and the state boards.



"We direct all the State Boards to ensure that the Schemes are formulated and notified at the earliest and not later than 10 days from today and also declare the results of internal assessment by July 31, which is the time-line specified for CBSE and ICSE. However, we further make it clear that we are not endorsing the correctness and validity of the proposed Schemes, to be so formulated by the concerned Boards. That will be considered on its own merits, if and when occasion arises."

### Covid vax supply based on state's population, caseload, says Government

## VACCINATE ACCORDINGLY

"It is clarified that government of India continues to allocate Covid-19 vaccines to states and the UTs in a transparent manner. Information about the vaccine supply by government of India, consumption by the states and UTs, balance and unutilised vaccine doses available with them, along with vaccine supply in the pipeline is regularly shared through press releases made by the Press Information Bureau, and also through other forums."



### 2-YEAR-OLD GIRL GETS COVAXIN TRIAL JAB

**Kanpur:** In a major development, a two-year-and-8-month-old girl has been administered the Covid vaccine in Kanpur Dehat during the ongoing trial of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin on children. The girl is the daughter of a doctor in Kanpur Dehat. The spokesperson of the Prakhar hospital, where the girl was vaccinated, said on Thursday that around five children, including three girls and two boys, in the age group of 2-6 years were given the vaccine at the hospital in Kanpur. The children were kept under observation for two hours before they were allowed to go home, said the spokesperson. Several hospitals, including AIIMS Delhi and Patna have also commenced Covaxin trial on kids.

Covid-19 vaccines to states, it said that the allegations were completely without any basis, and not fully informed. The distribution of Covid-19 vaccine is done on the parameters population of a state, caseload or disease burden, and state's utilisation efficiency, it said, adding that the allocation is negatively affected by vaccine wastage. The clarification came at a time when India's cumulative vaccination coverage has exceeded 30 crore on Wednesday.

**Team Absolute | New Delhi**

Among many states repeatedly raising the issue of Covid vaccine shortages, the Centre on Thursday refuted the claims, saying the national Covid vaccination programme is built on scientific and epidemiological evidence, WHO guidelines and global best practices. Anchored in systematic end-to-end planning, it is implemented through effective and efficient participation of states and Union Territories and the people at large, a Health and Family Welfare Ministry statement said. Brushing aside some media reports on non-transparent allocation of

### 9-YEAR-OLD GIRL BEATS POST COVID MIS-C COMPLICATION IN 12 DAYS

**New Delhi:** Having unknowingly contracted coronavirus, nine-year-old Divyanshi defeated the deadly disease within 12 days despite her critical fight with the serious life threatening post-Covid Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) complication. The girl was admitted on June 6 and discharged from hospital on June 18. She was admitted to the hospital with a history of high fever, abdominal pain, loose motions, dehydration and falling SpO2 (also known as oxygen saturation), Fortis said in a statement, adding that she was in a very critical condition and was diagnosed to have MIS-C. MIS-C is a condition where different body parts can become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs.



### Ensure consumers benefit on Covid-related items

**New Delhi:** The National Anti-Profitteering Authority (NAA) has directed GST officials to ensure that the reduced tax rates on Covid-related items are passed on to the consumers. In an office memorandum, NAA said that the supplies are required to commensurately reduce the prices of each of the supplies of goods and services are made by them to that the benefit of the reduction in tax rates and input tax credits is passed on to the consumers. It further asked GST officials "to all possible steps envisage the GST laws".

## Committed to democratic process in J&K: PM

Restoration of statehood in Jammu and Kashmir, Assembly elections, domicile rules, bringing back Kashmir Pandits and release of political prisoners were among the five key demands raised by the Congress, senior party leader Ghulam Nabi Azad said after the marathon meeting.

**Team Absolute | New Delhi**

In the first all-party meeting involving leaders from Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that the Centre is fully committed to the democratic process in J&K, and holding Assembly elections in the region just like the successful conduct of the District Development Council (DDC) polls is a priority. Delimitation, roadmap for Assembly polls, restoration of statehood and bringing back Kashmiri Pandits were the key issues discussed in the crucial all-party meeting on Jammu and Kashmir that was chaired by Prime Minister Modi and involved leaders from different political parties in J&K. The meeting lasted for more than three-and-a-half hours with nobody raising cross-border issues, sources said. In the first such meeting held nearly two years after the erstwhile state of J&K lost its special status and was



bifurcated into two Union Territories -- Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh -- the Prime Minister heard all the suggestions and inputs put forward by the participants and expressed happiness over everyone sharing their frank and honest views.

### MEHBOOBA DEMANDS RESTORATION OF ARTICLE 370

**New Delhi:** Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti on Thursday demanded restoration of statehood and Article 370 in the Valley, constitutionally and legally. Coming out of the all-party meeting called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she said that she had told the Prime Minister that Article 370 was abrogated unconstitutionally and without taking the local government into confidence.

### S&P LOWERS INDIA'S FY22 GROWTH TO 9.5%

**New Delhi:** Ratings agency S&P Global Ratings on Thursday lowered India's economic growth forecast to 9.5 per cent for this fiscal from an earlier prediction of 11 per cent. According to the ratings agency, India's growth in fiscal 2023 (ending March 31, 2023) will likely come in at 7.8 per cent. "The lockdowns were more targeted compared with 2020, but services were acutely disrupted." "The economy has turned a corner now. New Covid-19 cases have been falling consistently and mobility is recovering. We expect this recovery to be less steep compared with the bounce in late 2020 and early 2021." Besides, the agency pointed out that households are running down saving buffers to support consumption and a desire to rebuild saving could hold back spending even as the economy reopens. Furthermore, it said that monetary and fiscal policies will remain accommodative but new stimulus "will not be forthcoming".

### Amid Navi Mumbai airport protest, Hardeep Puri cites Sardar joke

**Team Absolute | Mumbai**

As massive protests erupted on Thursday over the naming of the upcoming greenfield Navi Mumbai International Airport, Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri attempted to lighten the mood with some "Sardar" humour. Puri dug out a two-year-old tweet by Bollywood singer-actress Suchitra Krishnamoorthi with a Santa-Banta joke: "Banta sent a letter to Civil Aviation Minister: Sir, it is my humble request that the new airport in Navi Mumbai should be named 'Bantacruz', since my brother has already one airport named after him 'Santacruz'." The existing

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) here was previously known as 'Santacruz Airport' because of its proximity to the Santacruz railway station and also the suburb bearing the same name.

Reposting the celeb's tweet, diplomat-turned-politician Puri gave an amusing repartee: "The Ministry of Civil Aviation receives many requests for naming and renaming of existing and under construction airports. To lighten the mood a bit, I want to inform my friend Banta that his formal proposal has not yet been received by us!" Navi Mumbai saw massive protests on Thursday afternoon with thousands demanding that the upcoming

### TWITTER MD GETS INTERIM RELIEF IN UP CASE

**BENGALURU | Agencies**

The Karnataka High Court on Thursday granted interim relief to Twitter India Managing Director Manish Maheshwari, directing the Uttar Pradesh Police not to take any coercive action against him. Maheshwari had approached the High Court for transit anticipatory bail in connection with the FIR filed by the police over tweets on the assault of an elderly Muslim man in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad. The

UP Police had filed an FIR last week against Twitter India, several journalists, and Congress leaders after Abdul Samad alleged he was thrashed by some youth and forced to chant "Jai Sri Ram" and "Vande Mataram". In the tweet, Abdul Samad claimed he was forced to chant "Jai Shri Ram" and "Vande Mataram" though police ruled out a communal angle, saying the accused - both Hindus and Muslims - attacked the man after a dispute over amulets.

## 'JioPhone Next' smartphone to be available from Sept 10

**Team Absolute | New Delhi**

Reliance Jio and Google on Thursday shared more details about their jointly developed Made for India smartphone -- JioPhone Next -- which will be available in the country from September 10. Announcing the launch at the annual general meeting of Reliance Industries Limited on Thursday, RIL CMD Mukesh Ambani said that JioPhone Next will be available in the market from the auspicious date of Ganesh Chaturthi on September 10 this year. The smartphone features premium capabilities, including language and translation features, and support for the latest Android and security updates. "Our vision is to bring affordable access to



information for Indians in their own language, to build new products and services for India's unique needs and empower businesses with technology," Sundar Pichai, CEO, Google and Alphabet, said in a statement.

Based on an optimised OS that is leveraged from Android and Play Store with features that are built specially for JioPhone Next, the two technology organisations have worked closely to create a smartphone experience aimed at addressing the unique needs of millions of smartphone users across India. With Google Play Protect built-in, it has Google's world-class security and malware protection. And with the Google Play Store, users will have access to millions of apps that people across the world use and enjoy.

## COVID-INDUCED LOCKDOWNS HAD MODEST EFFECT ON PM 2.5

- PM 2.5 is the leading environmental risk factor for premature mortality globally.
- By combining NASA spacecraft data with ground-based monitoring and an innovative computer modeling system, the scientists mapped PM 2.5 levels across China, Europe and North America from January to April in 2018, 2019, and 2020.
- The meteorological effects analysed in the study include changes in the sources of mineral dust, the way pollutants react to sunlight in the atmosphere, mixing and heat transfer, as well as the removal of pollutants from the atmosphere by precipitation.

### MELANIE HAMMER, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

**Washington:** Images of clear, blue skies instead of heavy smog post Covid-induced lockdowns were more due to weather and not just because of people being indoors, say researchers citing that the effect of lockdown on particulate matter (PM)2.5 was modest. A team led by Washington University in St. Louis, US, showed that the reports proclaiming Covid lockdowns drastically reduced pollution were mostly referring to nitrogen dioxide, NO2, a reactive gas emitted from burning fuel. Because PM 2.5 often comes from

the same sources as NO2, the researchers also began to question whether the lockdowns resulted in a decline of PM 2.5. They found seasonal differences in PM 2.5 between recent years were driven primarily by the natural variability of the meteorology, not by pandemic lockdowns. The findings are published in the journal Science Advances.

"Just decreasing transportation emissions would not be enough to account for the complexity of the problem," Hammer said. While there weren't many clear signals over North America or Europe, the most significant lockdown-related differences were detected in China. "Intuitively you would think if there is a major lockdown situation, that we would see dramatic changes, but we didn't. It was kind of a surprise that the effects on PM 2.5 were modest."



# RAINS EXPOSE MORE GRAVES IN UP, OFFICIALS HOLD CREMATIONS

Team Absolute | Prayagraj

Incessant rains and rising water level in the Ganga river have brought back haunting images of floating bodies in the waters.

The increasing water level has exposed the bodies buried in the sands, and the authorities have been working overtime to fish out the bodies and cremate them.

Local journalists have been taking photographs that can be termed as disturbing, to put it rather mildly.

A photograph taken on Wednesday showed a body stuck on the riverbank, with one hand covered in white surgical glove jutting out of the saffron shroud. The body was pulled out by a team from the Prayagraj Municipal Corporation.

A video from another ghat showed two men pulling out another shroud-covered body from the river and placing it on the sand bank.

Niraj Kumar Singh, a zonal officer for the Prayagraj Municipal Corporation, told reporters that he



had cremated 40 bodies in the last 24 hours.

"We are cremating all the bodies individually, following all the rituals," he told a news channel.

Asked about a body where an oxygen tube could be seen in the mouth of the dead person, he admitted that

it appeared that the person was ill before death. "It appears that the family dumped the deceased here and went away. Maybe they were scared, I cannot say," the official said.

Sources said that some of the bodies were not in a decomposed state, which indicates that they were buried

recently. Prayagraj Mayor, Abhilasha Gupta Nandi, who was filmed helping with the cremations on the river banks, told reporters that the state had a long tradition of burial by many communities.

While bodies buried in the mud are dissolved, the sandbanks tend to preserve them.

"Wherever we find exposed bodies because of the spate in the river, we are carrying out cremations," Nandi said. It may be recalled that visuals of mass shallow graves in the sands on the banks of the Ganga river at multiple locations in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had created international headlines in May, coinciding with the devastating second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The visuals led to public outrage and it was believed that the deaths were due to Covid and the fatalities were being under-reported by Uttar Pradesh. The state government had denied that the deaths were linked to the pandemic and had claimed that burial by the river is a long-standing tradition.

# Calcutta HC judge reserves verdict on Mamata's plea for recusal

Kolkata | Agencies

The Calcutta High Court single judge bench of Justice Kaushik Chanda, whose recusal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has sought from hearing her election petition, on Thursday reserved judgement on her plea, asking her lawyer Abhishek Manu Singhvi that if he withdraws, wouldn't it be giving in to the media trial.

The Chief Minister has objected to Justice Chanda hearing her petition citing "likelihood of bias" due to the associations the judge had with the BJP during his days as a lawyer.

Banerjee's election petition challenges the election of BJP candidate Suwendhu Adhikari, who defeated her in Nandigram in the recently-held West Bengal Assembly polls. Banerjee, who was present during the trial virtually, had already written to Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal seeking recusal of Justice Chanda few days back which is



presently pending. Referring to the application, Justice Chanda asked whether he should wait for an administrative order or should he proceed judicially.

To this, Singhvi said: "It is your Lordship's prerogative to decide the matter on the judicial side. If you see a ground, you may recuse at your own discretion. A request pending before the CJ is irrelevant after your Lordship is judicially seized of the matter." Justice Chanda then asked Singhvi: "This case was listed before me on (June) 18th. That day no one said that petitioner has sought re-assignment appre-

hending bias? Is it not the duty of counsel to point this out? You appear in courts across the country, Dr Singhvi, what is the standard practice?" In response, Singhvi replied that since a formal application was yet to be filed, there was no mention of recusal on the earlier date. Stating that there was a "clear conflict of interest" in the matter, Singhvi said that Justice Chanda has been "closely associated with BJP" and that he was earlier the head of legal cell of the BJP and has also appeared previously on behalf of the BJP in various cases.

# Cong to hold 10-day protest against fuel price hike, unemployment

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress on Thursday said it will launch a nationwide protest campaign from July 7 to 17 to highlight the plight of the people and alleged government apathy towards the public.

A meeting was chaired by interim party chief Sonia Gandhi with General Secretaries and state in-charges.

K.C. Venugopal, General Secretary-Organisation, in a statement said, "Moved by the plight of people already suffering on account of the coronavirus pandemic, rampant unemployment and salary cuts, the Congress party has decided to launch nationwide agitation programmes at Block, District



and state levels. These programmes shall be implemented by the state units between July 7 to 17."

The Congress would launch countrywide agitation of women involving Mahila Congress, Youth Congress and other front units at block level and leaders and workers would take out Cycle Yatra at district level. Leaders and workers will take out processions in state level with a signature

campaign to be run at petrol pumps across the country demanding reduction of prices of petrol and diesel.

Venugopal said the party aims to build a mass movement, which would pressure the ruling BJP-led NDA government to roll back the excessive excise on fuel and gas and provide relief to suffering consumers in the time of the pandemic, economic slowdown and unprecedented unemployment.

# Sonia expresses anguish over rise in fuel prices, edible oils

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday expressed anguish over the unprecedented rise in the prices of edible oil, pulses, household goods, fuel prices, saying it is causing intolerable burden and widespread distress. Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala in a tweet said, "Congress president expresses anguish and dismay at the unprecedented rise in prices of edible oil, pulses and household goods. Sonia Gandhi also conveys the pain of the common man from back breaking rise in price of Petrol-Diesel and profiteering from daily increase in prices." She made the remarks at the meet-



ing of the Congress general secretaries and in-charges of the party.

Surjewala also said that the Congress chief also expressed deep concern on the pace of vaccine, placing the need to prepare for the third wave of Covid-19 including protecting the children.

Addressing the party leaders, Sonia Gandhi said that party general secretary K.C. Venugopal has sent four important circulars to all of them recently. "Three of them dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic and the one dated June 7 concerned the rise in the fuel prices."

She said that very specific programmes for Congress had been suggested and "I am confident that you have followed up in your respective states".

# Delhi Police issue challan to Robert Vadra's vehicle

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Police have challaned the vehicle of Robert Vadra, the husband of Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, for dangerous and negligent driving.

According to a senior Delhi Police officer, a challan was issued on Vadra's car after it was hit from behind on the Barapullah flyover in south-east Delhi, apparently after sudden application of brake. The officer said that Vadra was going to his office on



Wednesday morning while his security personnel were accompanying him in another vehicle. "Suddenly

Vadra applied brake, which resulted in the vehicle of his security team hitting his car from behind," the officer

said, adding that the traffic police issued a challan following the incident.

# AAP TO ENROLL ONE CRORE MEMBERS IN UP

Lucknow: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is planning to enroll one crore members in Uttar Pradesh under its 'UP Jodo Abhiyan' from July 8 to strengthen its organisation further.

Sanjay Singh, AAP MP and in-charge of Uttar Pradesh, said, "The popularity and trust in the Kejriwal model of governance is growing in Uttar Pradesh. We are launching a membership drive under the 'UP Jodo' campaign from July 8 to August 8 and we plan to enroll one crore members.

We will enrol 25,000 members in each Assembly segment and our workers will organise camps in every village. There will be no membership charges."

He further said that under the membership campaign, there will be different missed call mobile numbers for each of 403 constituencies in UP to join the party.

The party will do wall writing from June 25 to July 28 and the missed call mobile numbers will be displayed on these write-ups.

# Kattur becomes first TN village with full vaccination

LUCKNOW | Agencies

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membership campaign, there will be different missed call mobile numbers for each of 403 constituencies in UP to join the party.

The party will do wall writing from June 25 to July 28 and the missed call mobile numbers will be displayed on these write-ups. There will be separate in-charges for each of the zones and the campaign will be steered by state president Sabhajeet Singh.

# While criticising PM and BJP, Cong insulting nation: Nadda

Team Absolute | New Delhi

BJP chief J.P. Nadda on Thursday alleged that the Congress party has stooped to such a low level of politics that while criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it has also started insulting the nation.

Nadda was virtually addressing the Madhya Pradesh BJP working committee meeting.

Referring to Congress leaders' recent comments, Nadda said, "Kamal Nathji said that India is not great. Kamal Nathji you are free to oppose the BJP, but you have no right to demean and degrade India's prestige and honour. What Digvijay Singh thinks about Article 370 and 35A the entire nation knows through his ClubHouse chats."

Talking about abrogation of Article 370, Nadda said, "The Congress government could not remove Article 370 and 35A, but Prime Minister Modi showed his iron will and strong political commitment, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah's efficient



planning led to abolition of the two, leading to integration of Jammu & Kashmir in India in the

real sense." He took the opportunity to attack Congress rule in MP under

the Kamal Nath government. "In just one-and-half years of Congress rule in Madhya Pradesh the people saw how the government engaged in extortion, transfer racket and massive corruption. During that period all the development works had come to a standstill and the government's mission was converted into commission. The Congress government cheated and fooled each and every section of the society," the BJP chief said.

Nadda explained to the party's Madhya Pradesh leaders about the good work done in the field of medical infrastructure development in the country in the last one year.

He also lauded the Madhya Pradesh government for administering 17.70 lakh doses on June 21 and 11 lakh doses on Wednesday. Nadda said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the Shivraj Singh Chauhan government in Madhya Pradesh has scaled new heights of growth and development in the state.

# Akhara Parishad calls meeting to check religious conversion

Team Absolute | Prayagraj

The Akhil Bhartiya Akhara Parishad (ABAP) -- the apex body of the 13 akharas (religious orders) -- has summoned a meeting of all the akharas to decide on the steps to be taken to check religious conversions. The meeting will be held soon, said akhara sources.

The development comes close on the heels of the arrest of two persons on charges of converting over 1,000 persons.

ABAP president Mahant Narendra Giri said, "We have to find a solution and provide an equal opportunity to all so that such incidents could be stopped."

"There are not only external factors for this but there are fault-lines within us also. Experiences have shown us that those who have been neglected in the mainstream or those who have been treated as outcasts, tend to take refuge in other religions.



"We will request the Hindus to rise above the considerations of caste and treat everyone with dignity, share mutual respect and avoid circumstances wherein someone changes his or her religion." The Mahant said that soon, a meeting of the representatives of all the 13 akharas would be held and the agenda would be to ask disciples and common Hindus to rise above the caste system and mull over steps for bringing back to the fold those who have changed their religion.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, Kasturi Bai is mother of Army No. 14831521M, Rank Sep/MT, Name Rakesh Singh Mevada, residing at : Village-Nandni, Post-Nandni, Teh.-Kalapipal, Dist.-Shajapur, State-Madhya Pradesh PIN - 465337. I have changed my name Kasturi Bai to Kasturi Bai as per affidavit no. AY-744360 date 22.06.2021 before Bhopal Court.



### Delta Plus Variant in MP:

## 5 CASES OF COVID-19 'DELTA PLUS' VARIANT, 1 DEAD

The new 'Delta Plus' variant has been formed due to a mutation in the Delta or B.1.617.2 variant, first identified in India and one of the drivers of the deadly second wave.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Five people have so far been found infected with the 'Delta Plus' variant of coronavirus in the state and one of them has died, state Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang said on Thursday.

"The other four persons, who were vaccinated against COVID-19, are fine," Sarang told media persons. "One person from Ujjain, who died, was not inoculated," he added.

"Delta Plus" has been declared a variant of concern by the Centre.

So far, three people from Bhopal and two from Ujjain have been found infected with the 'Delta Plus' variant in Madhya Pradesh, the minister said.

"A genome sequencing machine will soon be installed in Bhopal and the state would then not have to send samples to Delhi," he added.

Ujjain Collector Ashish Singh confirmed that a 59-year-old woman, who died of COVID-19 on May 23, was infected with the 'Delta Plus' variant.

She tested positive for coronavirus on May 17. Later, her sample was sent for genome sequencing. On Tuesday, it was found that she was infected by the 'Delta Plus' variant, the official said.

Earlier, the sample of a 65-year-old woman



from Bhopal was sent to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) on May 23 and it came out positive for the 'Delta Plus' variant on June 16, officials said.

"The woman, who had received both doses of the anti-COVID-19 vaccine, recovered in home isolation," they said.

The new 'Delta Plus' variant has been formed due to a mutation in the Delta or B.1.617.2 variant, first identified in India and one of the drivers of the deadly second wave.

Though there is no indication yet of the severity of the disease due to the new variant, 'Delta Plus' is resistant to the monoclonal antibody cocktail treatment for COVID-19 recently authorised in India

On Wednesday, Madhya Pradesh recorded 84 new cases of coronavirus and 21 fatalities, raising the tally of infections in the state to 7,89,499 and the number of deaths to 8,827, as per official data.

## Every citizen became a warrior in the war against Corona: CM Chouhan

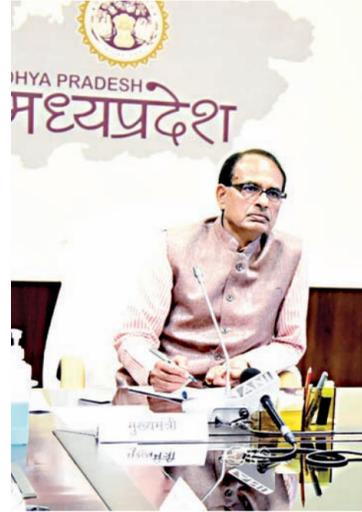
Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that every citizen of the state has played the role of a warrior in the war against Corona. With the support and participation of the people of the state, not only could we bring down the outbreak of the second wave of Corona infection to the minimum, but we also created a world record in the Corona vaccination campaign, and were nationally recognized as an aware state. This achievement of Madhya Pradesh is a matter of pride for every citizen of the state.

Chouhan said that today the public-participation model of Madhya Pradesh is a matter of curiosity in the entire country. People are wondering how Madhya Pradesh actually overcame Corona in time and achieved maximum achievement in the campaign of vaccination. The credit for this goes to the people of my state, who understood their responsibility through their solidarity. Chouhan said that every citizen of the state who along with the government played an active role in humanitarian work is blessed.

Chouhan said that works were done on war footing for prevention and treatment of Corona infection in the state. Along with the expansion of treatment facilities in health institutions, facilities for Covid Care Centres, essential medicines, injection and oxygen were also made available. Due to these arrangements, we have also controlled Corona to a great extent in time. Along with this, vaccination drives were carried out so that people do not get affected by Corona infection in future.

Chief Minister said that a positive environment was created in the entire state before launching the vaccination campaign on June 21. Public participation



was also ensured in this. Due to everyone's efforts, Madhya Pradesh topped the entire country in the matter of Corona vaccinations on the first and second day.

For the success achieved in the vaccination campaign, Chouhan has described it as a unique example of public participation. Due to public participation, about 17 lakh people could be given protection from Corona in just one day in the state. On the second day of the campaign, Madhya Pradesh remained the leader in the entire state by vaccinating more than 11 lakh

people in the state. Chouhan said that the work of vaccination will continue at greater pace. Due to the support being extended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, there is sufficient availability of vaccine in the state now and will continue in future also.

Third wave will be stopped with concrete arrangements and public participation

Chouhan said that the state government is preparing to face the possible third wave of Corona by improving the strategy with which its second wave was controlled in the state. All necessary arrangements are being ensured, so that people of the state stay protected from the third wave. The vaccination campaign is also one of those arrangements. Chouhan said that the initiative taken to make Madhya Pradesh self-reliant in oxygen has now started showing results. The work of setting up more than 100 oxygen plants has already started two months back. Some of these oxygen plants have started functioning. Work on the remaining plants is going on at a brisk pace. He said that nature also provides us sufficient amount of oxygen through trees and plants. The Corona period has made us understand the importance of oxygen. Chief Minister said that I urge everyone to plant a sapling on every happy occasion in their life, so that it grows into a huge tree and provides us our lifeline oxygen.

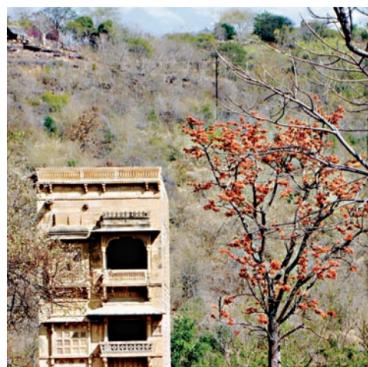
Chouhan said that Corona virus is polymorphic, which is affecting humans in different forms. We are receiving information news about different countries including India being affected by the new Delta Variant of Corona. Chouhan said that according to experts, the Delta Variant is a very deadly infection. Concrete arrangements are being made to ensure that it does not spread in Madhya Pradesh.

## Paliwal House is at display under Online Exhibition at IGRMS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the fifty four series of its online exhibition by Indra Gandhi Rashtriya ManavSangrahalaya (IGRMS) on Thursday the Paliwal House, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan From Desert Village open air exhibition of Manav Sangrahalaya has been presented online with its basic information and photographs and videos.

About this exhibition, Praveen Kumar Mishra, Director, IGRMS said that - A community of Adi-Gond Brahmins who had been living in Paliwal district for a long time came to be known as Paliwal. In the 13th century, they left this place and moved towards the interior region of Jaisalmer. Here the group established 84 villages which were known as "Khera". These villages were having beautiful examples of architecture. Jaisalmer is a beautiful city showcasing grandeur of yellow stone carvings. It is known as Swarnanagari because of all the grand and attractive architectural structures



built with yellow stones.About the Paliwal House Dr Ashok Kumar Sharma, Assistant Keeper told

that - Paliwal style housing is an indicator of home splendour. Here the wealthy people like to make a comfortable living with their favourite things. The front of each house has an open terrace and a balcony (covered window) with a narrow entrance. Mole a large rectangular chamber in the middle, opens inwards and closes from the wall on all sides. The same plan is repeated in the upper floor. The roof is made by parallel wooden log joined together in a row, which gives strength to the heavy beam of the wood. Which is made a soil-resistant water barrier. The house also has two underground chambers which are used as rest rooms. In addition to the decoration on the front of the house and on the wood, the intricately printed forged perforations on the stone have been characteristic of the Paliwal houses. The beautiful carved jaalis depicting variations based on geometrical and life-like patterns on the windows (balconies) and embosses give exquisiteness to these houses.

## 40 contacts of Delta Plus Covid-19 patients test negative for virus in Ujjain

As many as 15 random samples sent to virology laboratory in Delhi of which two had tested positive for Delta Plus variant of Covid-19 a 68-year-old woman of and 56-year-old woman of Ghatiya tehsil of Ujjain district, bringing the administration on their toes.

Team Absolute | Indore

Ujjain health department has tracked down 40 contacts of two women who were found positive for Delta Plus variant of Covid-19, but none of them

were found inflicted with the virus.

Of the two tested positive for Delta Plus Covid-19, a woman had succumbed to the infection on May 23, while the other had recovered from the illness. As many as 15 random samples sent to virology laboratory in Delhi of which two had tested positive for Delta Plus variant of Covid-19 a 68-year-old woman of and 56-year-old woman of Ghatiya tehsil of Ujjain district, bringing the administration on their toes.

Health department swung into action tracing the contacts of the patients and found 18 people coming in contact with the Rishi Nagar resident, including her husband, family members and house owner's family, chief medical and health officer Dr Mahavir said. The woman was admitted to Patidar Hospital in Ujjain four days after exhibiting the first symptom. She died four days later on May 23. Her swabs were collected as part of random sampling, he said adding "she was not vaccinated for Covid-19 vaccine. Her husband, who also tested positive for Covid-19 and recovered fast, had received both doses of vaccine."

The health officials also traced the Ghatiya resident and found 22 people coming in contact with the woman. "None of the traced contacts were tested positive for Covid-19," Dr Khandelwal said. Delta plus Covid-19 has already been declared a variant of concern by the Centre. Madhya Pradesh is among a handful of states where cases of Delta Plus Covid-19 variant have been found

## RMNH ORGANISING AN ONLINE SUMMER NATURE STUDY PROGRAMME

Bhopal:Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal is organising an Online Summer Nature Study Programme (Green Teens) from 14th June to 25th June, 2021. On 24th June, 2021 in the seventh session of the program Manoj Kumar Sharma, Scientist- C and In-charge of the Museum, detailed information to the participants about the Conservation of Natural Resources through indigenous scientific knowledge. Nearly 80 participants from all over the country joined in this programme.

During the programme, Manoj Kumar Sharma told the participants that what is indigenous knowledge and why it is important for us. He detailed about Peepal, Banayan, Ashok, Tulsi and Amla trees. These trees are huge and their leaves are large in size, due to of which lot of oxygen is produced. Along with this, he explained about Cow, Peacock, King cobra etc. The participants were also told in detailed about their importances, uses and measures for their conservation. During the lecture, water conservation was also explained. He appealed to make people aware about water conservation and to use water with your intelligence and need. In Rajasthan and Gujarat big wells and Babaris are used to store water.

He also requested that all of us together should conserve all the natural resources found in nature because their presence is very important for our life. Manik Lal Gupta, Scientist-C was the coordinator of this programme.

After this, the museum organised a lecture on Traditional Conservational Programme of nature and natural resources on June 24th, Under the Online Summer Nature Study Programme (Green Cubs). Scientist-C, Manik Lal Gupta, gave information to the participants about the traditional conservation of nature and natural resources. 35 participants joined in this programme.

During the programme Shri Gupta told to the participants that our ancestors, who had their scientific understanding continued to benefit the coming generation for nature and natural resources. So, various animals like elephant, lion, tiger, wild pigs, snakes, cows, bulls etc. were given the status of Gods. Similarly, various trees like Peepal, Banayan, Neem, Amla, Tulsi, Bel etc were told about the abode of the deities and in the worship of the method using Coconut, Sandal wood, Turmeric, Betelnut, Rice etc. In this way, in future also everyone including this nature and natural resources should be respected and protected so that we all continue to benefited.

Beenish Rafat, Scientist-C was the coordinator of this programme.

## Colleges likely to reopen in August, entry only after vaccination

Madhya Pradesh Colleges are likely to reopen in August 2021. However, entry would be allowed only to those students who at least have got one dose of COVID vaccine. There is no decision on school reopening yet.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Colleges are expected to reopen in the month of August. However, only vaccinated students will be allowed to attend the offline classes. State Government is considering the reopen-

ing of colleges keeping in view the improvement in the COVID situation and the pace of vaccination. It has not taken any decision on the reopening of schools yet.

Faculties, students and other helping staffs must mandatorily get at least one dose of vaccine before entering the campus. A committee agreed upon the decision in a high-level meeting held on June 23, 2021. However, the final decision to reopen Madhya Pradesh Colleges would be taken by the Chief Minister, Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

The decision on the reopening of schools and the evaluation criteria for MP Class 12 Board Result 2021 is likely to be taken on June 28, 2021. As per the sources, the Higher Education Department said that more than 77 lakh

people above the age of 18 years had received their first dose of vaccine. In such a situation, Madhya Pradesh Colleges could be reopened by following the strict COVID 19 protocols.

The Chief Minister has given a hint on the reopening of colleges across the state. He said if the vaccination pace remains the same, the state will consider opening colleges, coaching centres and cinema halls. Students and faculties, at this moment, advised getting vaccinated, as sooner or later it is going to become a compulsory protocol to attend offline classes. It is also expected that the government would review the situation again in the month of July before taking any decision on the reopening of Madhya Pradesh Colleges.

## Vaccines work against 'Delta plus' COVID-19 variant: ACH Health

Team Absolute | Indore

With Madhya Pradesh reporting five cases of the "Delta plus" variant of COVID-19 so far, a top health department official on Thursday said the vaccines currently being administered to people are effective against the highly contagious strain.

Delta plus has already been declared a variant of concern by the Centre. Madhya Pradesh is among a handful of states where the cases of "Delta plus" variant have been found.

"Among the five people found infected with the Delta plus variant, three are already vaccinated and even after get-

ting affected with the new variant, there was no need for them to rush to hospital, which means the vaccine is effective against it (the new variant) also," additional chief secretary (health) Mohammad Suleiman told reporters. He quoted an official of the Delhi-based National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) as saying that the Delta plus variant's severity is comparatively more (than existing strains), but at present there are not many cases of this variant in the country. Therefore, it is not possible to predict what will be its impact on the population, Suleiman said, quoting the NCDC official.

## CM Chouhan pays obeisance on Sant Kabir Jayanti

### Tribute to Maharani Durgavati on her martyrdom day

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid tributes on the martyrdom day of Maharani Durgavati, the brave woman who laid down her life for freedom and self-respect. Chouhan garlanded the picture of Maharani Durgavati at his residence. Chouhan said that the saga of Maharani Durgavati will always give a sense of pride to the future generations of India and will continue to inspire them for the progress and service of the nation.

The kingdom of Rani Durgavati was Garhmandala, whose centre was Jabalpur. After the untimely death of her husband, the Gond king Dalpat Shah, she placed son Veer Narayan on the throne and started ruling as his patron. The state progressed a lot under her rule. The Mughal ruler Akbar wanted to conquer the kingdom. Akbar attacked the Gondwana kingdom under the leadership of his relative Asaf Khan. The queen fought fiercely till the end. Finally, on

24 June 1564, the queen made self-sacrifice by piecing her own dagger into her own chest.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid homage to Saint Kabir Das at his residence on Thursday, remembering



him on the occasion of his birth anniversary. Chouhan tweeted and said that respects on the birth anniversary of the great poet and saint Kabir Das ji, who taught the true lesson of humanity through his unique compositions and couplets. The creations of Kabir Das ji will forever keep people moving on the path of success by providing them the vision of the truth of life.

Kabir Das, the great saint and spiritual poet of India, was born in the year 1440. He lived a balanced life of a simple family man and a saint. He received education from Ramanand ji. He emerged as a great promoter of devotion to God in the Bhakti era of Hindi literature. His writings influenced the Bhakti movement of Hindi region to a deep level. His writings are also found in the Adi Granth of the Sikhs. He believed in one supreme God. He condemned the evils, rituals, superstitions spread in the society and also strongly criticized the social evils. The religious sect called Kabir Panth is based on his teachings.



# MAHA'S COVID TALLY CROSSES 60L, 4TH IN GLOBAL RANKING

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On a day when Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray warned of a possible third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, Maharashtra's tally crossed the 60 lakh-mark, catapulting it to the fourth slot globally, health officials said here on Thursday.

As on Thursday, Maharashtra has reported a total of 60,07,431 Covid cases, higher than France which has recorded a tally of 57,62,322 till date, and figures at No. 4 in the world behind the US, India and Brazil.

Compared to 508 deaths declared on Wednesday, the state reported 556 fatalities on Thursday, including 197 new deaths and 359 earlier casualties, taking the state's overall Covid death toll to 119,859, the worst in the country. The number of fresh cases fell below the 10K-level to 9,844 on Thursday, much less than the record



peak of 68,631 reported on April 18, taking the state's overall Covid tally to 60,07,431.

In Mumbai, for a month running, new infections remained below the 1K-level at 773 on Thursday, taking

the city's tally to 722,736 till date, after touching the highest daily spike of 11,206 cases on April 4.

The daily deaths decreased from 23 a day earlier to 10 on Thursday, taking the country's commercial capital's

total fatalities to 15,348.

The state's death rate was reported at 2 per cent on Thursday, while the number of active cases remained below the 2 lakh level at 121,767.

On the brighter side, as many as 9,371 fully cured persons returned home on Thursday, taking the state's total number of recoveries to 57,62,661, with a recovery rate of 95.93.

The Mumbai Circle, comprising Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and Raigad districts, recorded a drop in new cases, from 2,515 a day before to 2,313 on Thursday.

With this, MMR's Covid tally went up to 15,83,950, while 47 more fatalities took its Covid death toll to 31,581, in view of reconciliation of the data.

Meanwhile, the number of people sent to home isolation increased to 632,453 on Thursday, while those shunted to institutional quarantine came down to 4,166.

## Over 2000 people administered fake vaccines, Mumbai Police tells High Court

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Girish S Kulkarni sought responses from the state and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation over the matter.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Over 2,000 people received fake Covid-19 vaccines at nine separately held private vaccination camps in Mumbai, the police informed Bombay High Court on Thursday. The police also said that four FIRs have been registered in connection with the matter after recording statements of nearly 400 witnesses so far.

The high court expressed concern over the citizens who received the fake vaccines and asked the state government and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to formulate specific policy or guidelines to prevent such incidents in the future and, without delay, file affidavits by next hearing.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Girish S Kulkarni was hearing a PIL filed by Siddharth Chandrashekhar seeking the court's intervention over the issues faced by citizens in booking vaccination slots on the CoWin portal. The petitioner also sought priority slots for the elderly.

Advocate Anita Shekhar-Castellino, appearing for the petitioner, had earlier informed the high court about news reports pertaining to incidents of unauthorised or fake Covid-19 vaccination drives in the city and said strict action was required. On Tuesday, the high court had directed the state and BMC to formulate a policy to ensure such instances were not repeated and had sought progress reports on investigations into such incidents.

On Thursday, Chief Public Prosecutor Deepak Thakare, representing Mumbai Police, submitted a 'confidential' status report on the investigation and said that four FIRs have been registered in Mumbai and the probe is in progress.

He added that one of the accused, Dr.

Manish Tripathi, was absconding and another accused Ashish Mishra, who belongs to Aditya College of Architecture is yet to be arrested. He also said that the bail pleas of Mishra and another accused Rajesh Pandey were rejected by courts. Thakare requested the court to direct authorities and others to inform police before holding private vaccination camps.

Thakare further informed that 2,053 persons were given fake vaccines, including 390 vaccinations at Hiranandani Health Club at Kandivali (W), 207 at Podar Education Society in Parel, 514 in Borivali, 30 at Malad West and nearly 365 persons at a drive organised for employees of Tips Industries at Khar, among others, Senior Counsel Anil Sakhare for the BMC submitted that the civic body has also lodged a police complaint after it came to know about the fake drives. The BMC counsel also said that it has written to Serum Institute of India (SII), which manufactures Covishield, to look into the issue.

The bench then asked the state and BMC whether they had come up with any policy or guidelines to prevent such fake vaccination drives/camps as directed earlier, to which Additional Government Pleader Geeta Shastri sought time to respond.

The bench said, "Tell us how will you (authorities) take care of all of these issues? We want a specific policy on fake vaccination. You cannot delay like this, every minute is important. This is an urgent matter. Every minute is important and time is of essence."

"Our anxiety is what happens to these people who received fake vaccines? They all should be tested for antibodies and find out what is the effect of these fake vials and thereafter they can be properly vaccinated," it added. Seeking affidavits from state government and BMC, the High Court posted the matter for further hearing on June 29.

## Maharashtra vaccination tally crosses 2.92 crore on Thursday

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In the ongoing vaccination drive, Maharashtra on June 23 has vaccinated 6,17,706 people through 5,639 centres. According to data released by the government, Maharashtra, as of 7 am on June 24, inoculated 2,92,92,642 people.

As per the state government data, 45,05,852 individuals aged between 18 and 44 years received the vaccine doses in the state till Thursday since the inoculation drive for this age group began on May 1.

So far, 12,61,391 health care workers have been administered the first dose of the vaccine, while 8,23,473 of them have got their second dose.

Similarly, 20,76,211 frontline workers in the state have till now received their first vaccine dose and of them, 8,81,996 got their second dose. Maharashtra tops



the states with a total of 2,92,92,642 inoculations followed by Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, with 2,80,17,467, 2,34,78,034 and 2,24,71,201 doses respectively.

Maharashtra on Wednesday administered more than 6 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccines, setting a new single-day record of inoculating people against the infection. Dr Pradeep Vyas, additional chief secretary (public health department), said, "Today, we have bettered the performance of yesterday (Tuesday)

and administered the highest-ever number of COVID-19 vaccination doses in a single day. The state administered 6,02,163 doses till 7 pm on Wednesday. The actual number could be more after the final figure comes."

Meanwhile, state on Wednesday crossed the 10,000 single-day case mark and reported 10,066 COVID-19 infections, taking its tally to 59,97,587. With 163 more deaths, the fatality count increased to 1,19,303, the health department said. The state's COVID-19 recovery rate is 95.93 per cent, while the case fatality rate is 1.99 per cent, the report said. As many as 11,032 patients were discharged during the day, taking the number of recovered cases to 57,53,290 and leaving the state with 1,21,859 active cases, the department said. There are 5,92,108 people in home quarantine and 4,223 in institutional quarantine, the report said.

### ADANI GROUP TO OPERATE NEW NAVI MUMBAI INT'L AIRPORT

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government on Wednesday approved Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL) to operate the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport in the adjoining Thane-Raigad region, an official said here. The state cabinet presided over by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray gave its green signal to AAHL as the new concessionaire to the prestigious greenfield airport coming up as a public-private partnership (PPP) project. Earlier, the airport was to be developed by GVK, which was running the Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL). But last year it was taken over by AAHL, and the same was approved by the Directorate of Civil Aviation, Airports Authority of India, SEBI, CCI and finally the CIDCO, which is overseeing the mega-project.

## Thousands protest over Navi Mumbai airport naming row

People in Navi Mumbai have been clamouring for it to be named after veteran local leader and Parliamentarian, the late DB Patil, while the Shiv Sena is keen on naming it after the party's founder, the late Balasaheb Thackeray.



Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL), an entity of Adani Group.

Besides those in Navi Mumbai, thousands of people have marched in from Palghar, Thane, Raigad and Ratnagiri districts since the past couple of days to converge under the banner of the All Party Action Committee (APAC). They have been supported by the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party and the

Aam Aadmi Party, even as the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi allies -- Shiv Sena, Nationalist Congress Party and Congress -- remained aloof. Anticipating a large turnout, Maharashtra Police had made elaborate security arrangements in Navi Mumbai and its surroundings areas, blocking several approach roads besides deploying a huge posse of personnel to thwart any untoward

incidents.

On Thursday evening, the organisers of the protest gave an ultimatum to the state government till August 15 to name NMIA after the late D.B. Patil, failing which they would hinder work at the airport, which is expected to launch operations in 2023-2024.

The CIDCO has already approved a proposal to name it after the late Balasaheb Thackeray, and senior Sena leader and Urban Development Minister Eknath Shinde had also stated that the NMIA would be named after the late Sena founder.

While Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has refrained from making any comments on the issue, his cousin and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena President Raj Thackeray had stated recently that since the NMIA is an extension of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai, the same name should be continued for the new airport. Besides these, two other prominent names have been floated by various groups and online campaigns in favour of the late J.R.D. Tata, the father of civil aviation in India, while a BJP leader has demanded it to be christened after the late Vasantrao Nail, the state's longest-serving Chief Minister.

## Farmers urge President to 'Save Agriculture & Democracy'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) has sought President Ram Nath Kovind's intervention to 'Save Agriculture and Save Democracy' on the occasion of the 47th anniversary of the Emergency and the completion of seven months of the ongoing farmers' agitation, a top farmer leader said here on Thursday.

"We are sending a memorandum from all over India to the President, expressing our deep anguish and indignation, and appeal to him to protect both our agriculture and democracy," said All India Kisan Sabha President and SKM leader Ashok Dhawale.

Indian society calls farmers 'annadaatas' (food providers) and in the past 74 years since Independence, they fulfilled that responsibility.

"When India became Independent, we used to feed 33 crore citizens, today in the same extent of land, we manage to feed around 140 crore Indians. During the coronavirus pandemic, while the other sectors in the economy decelerated and slumped, we achieved record production in agriculture, ensured that our granaries were overflowing and risked our lives," said the memorandum to the President. However, in return for this service to the entire country, "the Government of India has thrust the 3 anti-farmer black laws" which will destroy our farming as well as our future generations, snatch agriculture from our hands and hand it over to big

corporations, it said.

There are other swords hanging over the farmers' heads - penalties or jail for stubble burning in a new Ordinance related to Delhi's air pollution and subsidy withdrawal through the Electricity Amendments Bill, 2020, said Dhawale.

The memorandum that will be sent to the President through various state Governors and other channels terms the three Central farm laws as 'undemocratic', created without consultations with the farmers, thrust in the form of Ordinances, tabled in Parliament before sending to Committees for further study or debates, and while pushing the Bills voting by division was not allowed in the Rajya Sabha, etc.

Dhawale added that as the first guardian of our Constitution created by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and others, the farmers had hoped that the President would refuse to give assent to such unconstitutional and undemocratic anti-farmer laws, but he (President) did not.

Seeking justice in the form of remunerative returns for their hard work and toil, the memo said that the farmers are in debt, farming has become an unviable profession and over 4 lakh peasants were compelled to commit suicide in the past 30 years.

Among other things, the memo has reiterated the farmers demands to repeal the 3 new farm laws, MSP on the basis of Swaminathan Commission of C2 cost+50 percent with a guarantee in the legal framework.

## Beed district makes RTPCR test must for attending weddings

The police have been instructed to take contact details of 50 persons permitted to attend the ceremony and ensure that their RT-PCR and antigen test reports are negative



cities and districts in the state based on the infection positivity rate and occupancy of oxygen beds.

Now, the Public Health Department declares the positivity rate and oxygen beds occupation percentage for each district. Notably, The government has defined "Level 1" areas as having a positivity rate of less than 5% and occupancy of oxygenated beds should be below 25%. "Level 2" will include areas with a positivity rate below 5% and oxygenated bed occupancy between 25% and 40%. For "Level 3", the areas will be required to have a positivity rate between 5% and 10% or oxygenated bed occupancy of more than 40%. Further in "Level 4", the positivity rate should be between 10% and 20% or oxygen bed occupancy of more than 60%. To be categories in "Level 5", the strictest level, areas will be required to have a positivity rate of more than 20% or occupancy of oxygen beds should be more than 75%.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Beed district has made Covid RT-PCR test mandatory for people attending weddings. The administration has permitted only 50 guests at the venue. The decision was taken after the district administration observed crowding at marriage ceremonies despite restrictions. The fresh directives make it mandatory for people to take permission for advance booking of wedding venues and to conduct the ceremony. Organisers and owners of wedding halls can host only one wedding per

day. The police have been instructed to take contact details of 50 persons permitted to attend the wedding ceremony and ensure that their RT-PCR and antigen test reports are negative.

The ceremonies that are conducted at home will also require police permission in Beed till further orders. As per official data, the positivity rate in the district currently stands at 7.11 per cent and the oxygen bed occupancy rate is at 11.97 per cent.

Earlier this month, Maharashtra announced a five-level plan to unlock

## BJP demands CBI probe against Pawar, Parab over corruption allegations

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra unit of Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) on Thursday passed a resolution in its state executive meeting, demanding CBI inquiry against Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and Transport Minister Anil Parab in connection with corruption charges made by former Mumbai Police Commissioner, Param Bir Singh. Days after he was shunted as Mumbai police commissioner and transferred to Home Guards, Singh claimed in a letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray that Deshmukh used to ask police officers to collect money from restaurant and bar owners in Mumbai. But Deshmukh has denied the allegations.

Singh, in his letter to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, had alleged that Deshmukh had

indulged in "malpractices" and asked for suspended Mumbai Police officer Sachin Vaze to collect Rs 100 crore every month.

Just a few days after Param Bir Singh's letter, suspended cop Sachin Vaze also claimed that former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh demanded Rs 2 crore from him to continue his service in the Mumbai Police and alleged another minister, Anil Parab, asked him to collect money from contractors.

Transport minister Parab had refuted the allegations made by Vaze, saying they were incorrect and aimed at maligning his image, and expressed readiness to face any probe. In the letter, Vaze had also claimed that a "very close circle person" of Ajit Pawar had approached him and insisted him to collect a monthly amount of Rs 100 crore from illegal gutka sellers.





EDITOR'S SPECS

Digital payments increased charity in lockdown 2.0

PayU, India's leading online payments solution provider, released the PayU Insights Report on Tuesday, providing a comparative analysis of lockdown periods in 2020 and 2021, as seen through changes in digital payments transactions across the platform. Year on year, there has been a 52 per cent increase in the number of transactions and a 76 per cent increase in expenditure (May 2020 vs. May 2021). Compared to pre lockdown months, there was a 10 per cent increase in the number of transactions post lockdown 2021, and a 21 per cent decrease in average ticket size indicating that users are adopting online payments even for smaller size transactions. Among the key insights of the report, online donations to charitable causes reach an all-time high in lockdown 2.0. Digital payments for charitable causes witnessed a massive 731 per cent increase in the number of transactions, a 2308 per cent increase in expenditure, and a 128 per cent increase in average ticket size vis a vis pre-lockdown months in 2021. Compared to lockdown 1.0, the number of transactions and expenditure increased by 575 per cent and 476 per cent in lockdown 2.0. As the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded, numerous donation campaigns were organised by NGOs and crowdsourcing platforms to raise funds for Covid relief. Lockdown 2.0 recorded phenomenal growth for UPI as a payment mode. The number of transactions through UPI increased by 320 per cent and expenditure increased by 306 per cent in lockdown 2.0, compared to lockdown 1.0. The next highest growth in modes of payment was observed in credit card transactions, as the number of transactions increased by 87 per cent and expenditure increased by 69 per cent year on year. For net banking and debit card modes, the number of transactions grew by 12 per cent and 6 per cent respectively year on year.

WOMEN IN RAJASTHAN JAILS TO WEAR BLUE SAREE INSTEAD OF WHITE

Archana Sharma

Women inmates in jail! The sudden utterance of these words often bring to fore a scene from a Bollywood flick with a lady wearing a white saree! However, Rajasthan is making a fresh start in this direction by changing the colour of the uniform of these women jail inmates who will drape a blue coloured saree instead of white one, said Rajasthan jail DG Rajeev Dasot. Speaking to correspondent, he said that the decision will be implemented with effect from June 30. "All women convicts in Rajasthan Jails will wear sky blue coloured saree. There will be no white coloured sarees for women prisoners any more. The white coloured saree brings in depression among women prisoners and hence the decision," he told correspondent. The women prisoners are already sad after coming to jails, missing their families and kids and white colour adds



more to their miseries and hence comes a change, he said. Besides this decision, many other reform measures are being taken by jail administration. First among it is the opening of six petrol pumps in the state which will be operated by jail inmates. This decision has been taken to turn jail inmates self-reliant, said Dasot. Next in series is the allotment of barracks for prisoners on the basis of their alphabets. Earlier, the inmates were given barracks on the wish and will of jail administration. However, from now onwards, the prisoners will be allotted barracks on the basis of the alphabetical order, he added.

Global Covid-19 cases dropped by 6% in last week: WHO

The global number of Covid cases has declined by six per cent, and the number of deaths by 12 per cent over the past week, the World Health Organisation has said. While the number of cases reported globally now exceeds 177 million, last week saw the lowest weekly case incidence since February 2021. "Global numbers of cases and deaths continued to decrease over the past week (14-20 June 2021) with over 2.5 million new weekly cases and over 64,000 deaths, a 6 per cent and a 12 per cent decrease respectively, compared to the previous week," according to the WHO's weekly epidemiological update on Tuesday. Last week, the incidence of new cases declined in Southeast Asia (21 per cent) and Europe (6 per cent). The rate of mortality was also down in Americas (4 per cent) Southeast Asia (26 per cent), Europe (12 per cent) and Western Pacific (9 per cent). On the other hand, deaths rose by 2 per cent in the Eastern Mediterranean. Africa reported a 39 per cent increase in cases and 38 per cent rise in mortality. Globally, mortality remained high with more than 9,000 deaths reported each day over the past week, however, the number of new deaths reported in the past week decreased across all regions except for the Eastern Mediterranean and the African Regions, the WHO said. The highest numbers of new cases were reported from Brazil (505,344 new cases; 10 per cent increase), India (441,976 new cases; 30 per cent decrease), Colombia (193,907 new cases; 10 per cent increase), Argentina (149,673 new cases; 16 per cent decrease), and the Russian Federation (108,139 new cases; 31 per cent increase).

FOR PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN, HOLD TERRORISM SUPPORTERS ACCOUNTABLE: JAISHANKAR

Arul Louis

As Afghanistan prepares for the pullout of the US troops, peace there requires zero tolerance for terrorism and those supporting terrorists must be held accountable, according to India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. "A durable peace in Afghanistan requires a genuine 'double peace' -- that is, peace within Afghanistan and peace around Afghanistan. It requires harmonising the interests of all, both within and around that country," he said on Tuesday during a Security Council debate. While ensuring that Afghanistan is not used by terrorists to threaten or attack other countries, "those providing material and financial support to terrorist entities must be held accountable", he said. "For enduring peace in Afghanistan, terrorist safe havens and sanctuaries must be dismantled immediately and terrorist supply chains disrupted. There needs to be zero tolerance for terrorism in all its forms and manifestations including its cross-border one," he said. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, acknowledged the broader impact that developments in that country



have beyond it's border. "What happens in Afghanistan remains of global consequence," she said while briefing the Council. Jaishankar said, "Any political settlement in Afghanistan must ensure that the gains of the last two decades are protected, and not reversed. It should, therefore, preserve the constitutional democratic framework and ensure the protection of rights of women, children and minorities." In a criticism of Pakistan for limiting Afghanistan's supply routes, he said, "The international community should work towards the removal of artificial transit barriers imposed on Afghanistan and

ensure full transit rights guaranteed to Afghanistan under bilateral and multilateral transit agreements without any hindrance." "For Afghanistan's economic development, it is important to have unhindered access to the high seas," he added. He said that to India has operationalised air freight corridors and the Chabahar Port to link Afghanistan regionally. The Chabahar Port developed by India in Iran, close to Afghanistan's border, provides a sea outlet for the landlocked nation. Using the port, Jaishankar said, India has sent it 75,000 metric tonnes of wheat to overcome food insecurity due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Lyon told the Council that the US and NATO troop withdrawal announcement has "sent a seismic tremor through the Afghan political system and society at large". "The withdrawal decision was expected but its speed -- with the majority of troops now already withdrawn -- was not. All actors have had to adjust to this new reality that is unfolding," she said. She noted the advances made by the Taliban that threatens to put the country firmly in its grip and said, "There is still time, barely but still time, to prevent the worse-case scenario from

materialising. Enough has been built in Afghanistan to allow further building... if only there can be peace." She said that "for the Taliban to continue this intensive military campaign would be a tragic course of action". The Taliban has been taking advantage of the disunity in the non-Taliban leadership, but she said that she was "cautiously encouraged" by the efforts of President Ashraf Ghani and two other leaders to discuss security and show unity. US Permanent Representative Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that despite the troop pullout, Washington's "commitment to Afghanistan's safety and security endures". She said, "We will continue to support the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces in securing their country." "We will use our full diplomatic, economic, and assistance toolkit to support the peaceful, stable future the Afghan people want and deserve," added But Thomas-Greenfield also acknowledged that "we have now seen months of unacceptable violence, often directed toward ethnic and religious minorities and innocent women and girls".

international

'DELTA VARIANT COULD BE DOMINANT IN EUROPE BY AUGUST 2021'

Stockhol|Agencies

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said that the Covid-19 Delta variant is expected to account for nearly all new cases in the continent by August. In its latest threat assessment report, the ECDC said on Wednesday that since the Delta variant is 40-60 per cent more transmissible, it is projected to cause 70 per cent of the new infections in the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA) by early August. By late August, this figure could reach 90 per cent, Xinhua news agency reported citing the Centre as saying. The ECDC also warned that the daily number of new cases, hospitalisations



and deaths, could increase to the late 2020 levels if non-pharmaceutical measures, such as physical distancing, hand and respiratory hygiene, use of face masks, are relaxed. The ECDC said the Covid-19 vaccination campaigns must be accelerated and the second doses should also be administered as early as possible. "Unfortunately, pre-

liminary data shows that (the Delta strain) can also infect individuals who have received only one dose of the currently available vaccines," ECDC Director Andrea Ammon said. "It is very likely that the Delta variant will circulate extensively during the summer, particularly among younger individuals who are not targeted for vaccination. This could cause a risk for the more vulnerable individuals to be infected." They could experience severe illness and death if they are not fully vaccinated," she said. Nevertheless, Ammon stressed that there is still hope. "The good news is that having received two doses of any of the currently available vaccines provides high protection against this variant and its consequences."

Russia expels UK warship for 'violating' territorial waters

Moscow|Agencies

Russia's Black Sea Fleet and Federal Security Service have expelled a British warship that "violated" the country's territorial waters, the Defence Ministry in Moscow said. The British destroyer HMS Defender crossed Russia's border in the northwestern part of the Black Sea at 11.52 a.m. on Wednesday after going 3 km beyond the sea border in the area of Cape Fiolent, Xinhua news agency quoted the ministry. The vessel ignored warnings on the possible use of weapons from the Russian side, causing a Russian border patrol ship to fire warning shots, it added. At 12.19 p.m., Russia's

Black Sea Fleet Su-24M aircraft dropped bombs along the destroyer's path as a warning. The warship left the Russian territorial waters at 12.23 p.m., the Ministry added. In a statement later in the day, the British Ministry of Defence's Press Office said that "no warning shots have been fired at HMS Defender". "The Royal Navy ship is conducting innocent passage through Ukrainian territorial waters in accordance with international law," it said. The Press Office further said: "We believe the Russians were undertaking a gunnery exercise in the Black Sea and provided the maritime community with prior-warning of their activity."

'Delaying Palestinian polls hinder efforts to end internal split'



Gaza|Agencies

Reaffirming that East Jerusalem as "a red line," Abbas had said the general elections could not be held if Palestinians in East Jerusalem can't participate. The Palestinian leadership insists on holding the general elections in occupied East Jerusalem, just like the two previous legislative elections in 1996 and 2006 and the 2005 presidential elections. In January, Abbas announced that the 2021 general elections would include the legislative elections on May 22, the presidential elections on July 31, and the elections of the Palestinian National Council, the highest decision-making body of the Palestine Liberation Organization, on August 31. Abbas chaired a meeting for his ruling Fatah party's revolutionary council on Monday in the West Bank city of Ramallah, calling on the Palestinian factions to launch a serious dialogue to end the internal split.

N Korea rules out possibility of contact with US

Seoul|Agencies

North Korea has ruled out the "possibility of any contact" with the US, according to a state media report. "We are not considering even the possibility of any contact with the US, let alone having it, which would get us nowhere, only taking up precious time," Foreign Minister Ri Son-gwon said in a statement on Wednesday released by the North's state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). Ri also said his Ministry "welcomes the clear-cut press statement issued by the vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, which is to brush off hasty judgment, conjecture and expectation of the US", Xinhua news agency reported. He was referring to a statement on Tuesday by Kim Yo-jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, who said Washington's expectation of resuming talks with Pyongyang was wrong and "would plunge them into a greater disappointment". On Sunday, US National

Security Adviser Jake Sullivan called Kim Jong-un's comments of preparing both dialogue and conflict with Washington as an "interesting signal". The remarks made during a key Workers' Party meeting on June 17 in Pyongyang marked the first time that Kim Jong-un spoke of the US since President Joe Biden took office in January. Sullivan added the US will "wait to see whether they are followed up with any kind of more direct communication to us about a potential path forward". The Biden administration at the end of April completed its policy review towards North Korea. Kim Jong-un and former US President Donald Trump held their first summit in Singapore in June 2018, agreeing on a complete denuclearization of and a lasting peace settlement on the Korean Peninsula. Denuclearization talks between Pyongyang and Washington have been stalled since the second Kim-Trump summit ended without agreement in February 2019 in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi.

US begins study on Covid vax during pregnancy, postpartum

Moscow|Agencies

Washington: US researchers have started a new observational study to evaluate the immune responses generated by Covid-19 vaccines administered to pregnant or postpartum women, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced. In its announcement on Wednesday, the NIH said that researchers will measure the development and durability of antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 in women vaccinated during pregnancy or the first two postpartum months, reports Xinhua news agency. They also will assess vaccine safety and evaluate the transfer of vaccine-induced antibodies to infants across the placenta and through breast milk, according to the NIH. The study will enrol up to 750 pregnant women and 250 postpartum individuals within two months of delivery who have received or will receive a Covid-19 vaccine authorised by the US Food and Drug Administration. Their infants also will be enrolled in the study. Participants and their infants will be followed through the first year after delivery. To assess the development and durability of vaccine-induced antibodies overall and by vaccine type and vaccine



platform, researchers will analyse blood samples collected from pregnant and postpartum participants, according to the NIH. "Tens of thousands of pregnant and breastfeeding people in the US have chosen to receive the Covid-19 vaccines available under emergency use authorisation. However, we lack robust, prospective clinical data on vaccination

in these populations," said Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. "The results of this study will fill gaps in our knowledge and help inform policy recommendations and personal decision-making on Covid-19 vaccination during pregnancy and in the postpartum period," he said.

'Turkey won't send additional troops to secure Kabul airport'

Ankara: Turkey's Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said that the country will not send additional troops to Afghanistan as part of a plan to secure the Kabul airport since it already has soldiers in the country. "At the moment, we're not in any situation to send (new) soldiers. It is out of the question for us to send any soldiers there in any way now," Akar told reporters at Parliament on Wednesday. Turkey has been operating Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport for six years, with some 500 troops in the NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. Ankara has proposed to secure and run the airport after the withdrawal of NATO forces in the war-torn country.



## CHRIS PRATT ON 'THE TOMORROW WAR': I FIGHT ALIENS, SAVE THE WORLD, CRACK THE OCCASIONAL JOKE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actor Chris Pratt, who stars in and makes his debut as an executive producer in the upcoming sci-fi action thriller "The Tomorrow War", reveals why he was interested in playing Dan Forester in the film. "I just loved it from beginning to end," Pratt says, adding: "It's a fantastic original concept filled with humour and heart, but it's also a

gigantic movie with a ton of action and visual spectacle. Best of all, it's grounded in real relationships. I have to confess, making a film where I get to fight aliens and save the world while cracking the occasional joke is right in my wheel-house."

The actor found it cool to be part of the process and give his input as a producer.

"(Director) Chris McKay and his team of designers and visual effects

artists pioneered incredible new technologies to bring the creatures to life in this movie, and it was extremely cool to be part of that process and give my input as an executive producer along the way," he says.

"The Tomorrow War" also features JK Simmons, Yvonne Strahovski, Keith Powers, Sam Richardson, Betty Gilpin and Edwin Hodge. The film is set to premier on July 2 on Amazon Prime Video.



## Vanessa Hudgens 'still cannot get over' finding love on a dating app

Los Angeles | Agencies

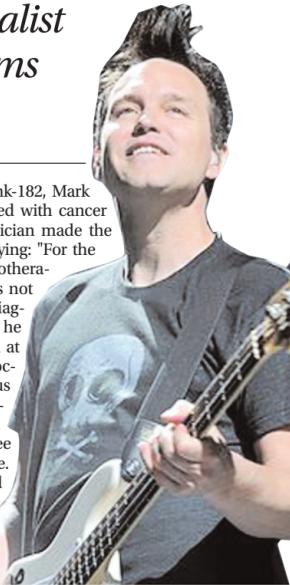
Actress Vanessa Hudgens says she never fancied finding love on a dating app, and yet ended up meeting the new man in her life, American baseball star Cole Tucker, over Zoom. "I still cannot get over the fact that it happened. I remember during quarantine I was single, and I thought I'll go on a date. I always said I would never go on a dating app and then I found myself on the dating app. I was working in New York and my girlfriend would want to help, and they added me to a group text. Everyone's sending gifts of themselves, like Joe Jonas had a little herbal aroma and I had a GIF of myself," she said.

"Then, there's a gift in the group chat of a baseball player and sliding onto the chat. I thought it was a joke. So, I just responded and we started talking. It's wild that I know we found each other over zoom," she added on "The Drew Barrymore Show", which airs on Zee Cafe in India.

## Blink-182 bassist-vocalist Mark Hoppus confirms cancer diagnosis

Los Angeles | Agencies

Bassist and vocalist of the rock band Blink-182, Mark Hoppus, has shared that he is diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing treatment. The musician made the announcement on Twitter on Wednesday, saying: "For the past three months I've been undergoing chemotherapy for cancer," reports nme.com. Hoppus has not confirmed which type of cancer he has been diagnosed with and did not share at which stage he was diagnosed. "It sucks and I'm scared, and at the same time I'm blessed with incredible doctors and friends to get me through this," Hoppus said. He concluded: "I still have months of treatment ahead of me but I'm trying to remain hopeful and positive. Can't wait to be cancer free and see you all at a concert in the near future. Love to you all." Many of Hoppus' friends and fans have shared support for his recovery, including his Simple Creatures bandmate Alex Gaskarth (also of All Time Low) and members of A Day To Remember, Of Mice & Men and Good Charlotte.



## JLo & Ben Affleck 'plan to wed by the end of the year'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck are "planning to wed by the end of the year" as he is desperate not "to lose her" a second time. The former couple, who are both newly single, recently rekindled their romance back 18 years after the tragic Bennifer split happened. In 2004, Jennifer, 51, and Ben, 48, broke off their relationship just days before their planned wedding and within a year, were married to other people. But Ben is keen not to let history repeat itself, and is said to be planning to get down on one knee "before the end of the year". A source told OK! magazine that Ben wouldn't "let Jen get away" a second time as he "doesn't want to lose her again". "The new relationship might technically only be a few weeks old, but in reality they are picking up where they left off," the source added. Jen and Ben both know everything about each other - the good, the bad and the ugly. They are not starting at square one. "Bennifer reignited their old flame back in April, and were seen soon after in May at the Global Citizen's Vax Live: The Concert To Reunite The World.

## NEWLY SINGLE LIAM PAYNE SHOWS OFF BLEACH BLOND HAIR

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Liam Payne showed off his blond hair at Wembley, after splitting from fiancé Maya Henry. Liam, 27, was first seen after his break-up from model Maya attending the England and Czech Republic match. The One Direction singer seemed to be in good spirits as he showcased his new look.

Liam had short bleached spiky hair and a shaved eyebrow. He wore a light khaki jacket over a black t-shirt and matching jeans. He added a pair of Dior trainers for a designer flourish.

Talking on the Diary of a CEO podcast earlier this month, Liam admitted to "hurting"

Maya. He recently decided to go on a health kick after noticing he was putting on weight and becoming reliant on alcohol.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Flavia Cacace and actor husband Jimi Mistry have quit fame to run a farm in North Devon. The couple decided to step away from the world of showbiz and live a more rural life on the southwest coast of England. The 2012 Strictly winner runs an Instagram account with her other half called 'Our Life At The Barn', where they document their life on the farm. The account bio reads: "Follow us @flavia\_cacace @mistryeats and #pabloandzak on our life changing journey as we move to the country and follow our self sustainable dream." The couple, who have been married since 2013, are currently working on a new kitchen in their home and also doing some painting. The caption read: "Working late tonight painting getting things together ready for a new kitchen and other exciting things happening which will all be revealed soon."

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Karrueche Tran



# ROSS TAYLOR: THE UNSUNG HERO WHO CARRIED NEW ZEALAND THROUGH

Southampton | Agencies

Veteran batsman Ross Taylor, who is New Zealand's top scorer in Tests and took his country through a tough phase on the reserve day on way to a win in World Test Championship (WTC) final on Wednesday, fits into the "we don't always have the stars" description given by Kane Williamson on Wednesday night.

Taylor, who began his Test career in 2007, has quietly rolled up 14 years of Test cricket, playing 108 Tests and racking up 7,564 runs. The 37-year-old batsman will soon be overtaken by Kane Williamson, who is 334 runs behind him, but he will surely go down as one of New Zealand's all-time greats.

At one point when R Ashwin was looking to put India into a winning position in the last session of the WTC final on Wednesday in Southampton, having removed the openers, Taylor buckled down and accorded the off-spinner due



respect. He wasn't able to open his account for the first 18 deliveries. Sensing that playing the slog sweep, which is his strength, may not be ideal since Ashwin was bowling a tight stump-to-stump line, Taylor went a bit straighter and hit a

four over mid-on to break the shackles. A couple of balls later while Ashwin was trying to push the line towards off, Taylor carved it through mid-off. He was away and ended with a 100-ball 47 not out. New Zealand may not have seen

this day with him negotiating a testing period had they won the 2019 World Cup. Taylor had earlier said that he would have retired had the Kiwis won the 50-over World Cup two years ago in England. But the desire to go out on top kept him going.

Former New Zealand wicketkeeper Ian Smith said that Taylor's time is not up yet. He feels that Taylor is in New Zealand's best ever cricket XI. "He'll be in our best ever cricket XI and will be there until the year dot. He deserves to be as well," said Smith, who is now a commentator.

This isn't the first time Taylor has put India in a spot of bother with his batting. Two years ago, in the 2019 50-over World Cup semi-final, the right-handed batsman scored 74 off 90 deliveries to help the Kiwis get to a competitive total from where they won. While he shared an unbeaten 96-run stand for the third wicket with Williamson on Wednesday, he shared a 65-run stand wit

# Iran's Daei pays tribute to Ronaldo after he equals his 109-goal world record

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies

Asian football legend Ali Daei of Iran on Thursday congratulated Cristiano Ronaldo after the Portugal star scored his 109th goal in Wednesday's Euro 2020 game against France to equal his all-time international record.

The 36-year-old Ronaldo, the leading scorer in European Championship history, converted his second penalty of the game in Budapest to match the record in his 178th international appearance.

"Congratulations to @cristiano who is now one goal away from breaking the men's international goal scoring record," Daei, a prolific striker, posted on Instagram. "I am honoured that this remarkable achievement will belong



to Ronaldo - great champion of football and caring humanist who inspires and impacts lives throughout the world. "Daei scored a remarkable 109 goals in 149 appearances for Iran between 1993 and 2006, an achievement many thought would never be matched. Ronaldo responded to Daei with an Instagram story of his own. "True cham-

pions remain champions forever. I'm very proud to read such kind words from a huge idol like you. Thank you Ali Daei," the Portugal legend said. Ronaldo can edge clear of Daei with Portugal having advanced to the Euro 2020 Round of 16 as one of the best third-placed teams. The defending champions play Belgium on Sunday.

# Last chance to qualify for Olympic: Spotlight on men's, women's relays

Patiala | Agencies

The spotlight will be on the women's 4x100m and men's 4x400m relay squads at the five-day National Inter-State Championships starting here on Friday. This will be the last chance for athletes to make the cut for the Tokyo Olympic Games before the June 29 deadline.

The goal of the women's 4x400m relay team, comprising Dutee Chand, Hima Das, Archana Suseendran, and S Dhanalakshmi, is to clock 43.05 seconds to win a smooth passage for the Olympics.

Only top 16 world ranking teams in the women's 4x100m will be eligible to compete at the Olympics starting on July 23. India's current world ranking is 20. On Monday, the national team had clocked 43.37 seconds at the Indian Grand Prix IV held in Patiala which was a national record. The previous best was 43.42 secs. The men's 4x400m relay too has a challenging task to improve their ranking and



win a ticket for Japan. In the IGP IV on Monday, the national 4x400m men relay team of Mohammed Anas Yahya, Amoj Jacob, Arokia Rajiv, and Noah Nirmal Tom had clocked 3 minutes 02.61 seconds. But they need to run faster in the Inter-State Athletics Championships to stay on course for the Olympics.

# Euro Cup: Portugal tie France; Germany advances over Hungary with a draw

Budapest | Agencies

France and defending champions Portugal both qualified for the round-of-16 at the Euro 2020 after they played out a 2-2 draw in a thrilling match that saw three penalties given and scored.

Before the game, the Euro 2016 winners only needed to avoid defeat to advance. Portugal would have finished on top had they won, and Germany lost. For France, they had secured a spot in the round-of-16 before the game, reports Xinhua.

Kylian Mbappe almost put the 2018 World Cup winners France ahead in the 16th minute with a low shot, after collecting Paul Pogba's accurate through ball, but the talented French player's attempt was denied by Portugal goalkeeper



Rui Patrício. Karim Benzema levelled for France with a penalty before the half break, after it was adjudged that Nelson Semedo had halted an off-the-ball run of Kylian Mbappe in the

box. In the round of 16, Portugal will face Belgium and Group F toppers France will meet Switzerland.

In the parallel universe, The Germans draw the match on 2-2 with Hungary. Hungary's defence

was able to soak up Germany's pressure and frustrated the hosts with the opener against the run of the game as Adam Szalai headed home a long ball into the penalty area with 11 minutes into the match, reports Xinhua.

With the draw, Germany clinched their berth in the round of 16, while Hungary crashed out of the tournament. "We are of course relieved. We fell behind twice and had to run behind a deficit. That is of course not easy against a deep-defending opponent. It was a thriller until the final whistle," Germany captain and goalkeeper Manuel Neuer said.

France (5 points) finished on top of Group F followed by Germany, Portugal (both 4 points) and Hungary (2 points).

# NZ more suited to Southampton conditions, hints coach Shastri

Southampton | Agencies

Indian team head coach Ravi Shastri attributed New Zealand's victory in the World Test Championship (WTC) final to conditions even though skipper Virat Kohli and fielding coach R Sridhar had earlier said that the playing XI chosen for the Hampshire Bowl Test had taken conditions out of the equation.

"Better team won in the conditions," tweeted Shastri on Thursday. "Deserved winners after the longest wait for a World Title. Classic example of Big things don't come easy. Well played, New Zealand. Respect."

New Zealand's pace attack skittled out India on the sixth - and reserve - day for just 170 even as the Indian spinners failed to find any support from the surface. India had picked two spinners even as the Kiwis went in with a four-pronged pace attack and kept no spinner in the line-up. Their fifth bowler's duties were done by seam bowling all-rounder Colin de Grandhomme.

With rain playing spoilsport and washing out the first day, there were expectations that India might leave out one of the spinners from the playing XI named on Thursday and play four pace bowlers. They stuck to the team even as New Zealand waited for the toss on Saturday to decide their final XI.



"I think the XI which has been announced is the XI that takes the pitch and conditions out of the equation. I think it is an XI which can play and perform on any given surface and in any given weather conditions. So that is what I believe: this XI is all about which we have put on the park." India's fielding coach R. Sridhar had told the media on Friday after Day 1 was washed out.

Kohli reiterated Sridhar's stance on Wednesday saying, "I don't regret announcing my [playing] XI beforehand, because you need an all-rounder in the side but we made a unanimous decision that these are the best eleven players we can take into the park."

# BENGALURU UTD'S RAMESH IS INSPIRED BY EX-INDIA FOOTBALLER GOURAMANGI

Bengaluru: Bengaluru United goalkeeper Srijith Ramesh draws inspiration from the former India footballer Gouramangi Singh, and believes that the retired centre-back is hugely beneficial for the Bengaluru United squad.

"Gouramangi serves as an ideal role model for each player at the club because of what he has already done in his playing career, and how he continues to dedicate himself to training every single day. His insight feels very easy to relate to because he can analyse each situation from a player's perspective and help the team out," said 25-year-old Ramesh from Karnataka. "Moreover, he is a very approachable person and he takes a lot of interest in each player, particularly in the defensive unit of the team, as that's where his biggest expertise lies," he said. Gouramangi made 71 appearances for the Indian team in his career and is currently the first-team coach of I-League 2nd Division side Bengaluru United. Bengaluru United have created a pathway for first-team players to become trainers by enabling them to take up coaching responsibilities in the youth setup. Ramesh is making the most of this opportunity at the moment.

# Buttler slams unbeaten 68 as England thrash Sri Lanka

Cardiff | Agencies

Jos Buttler smashed an unbeaten 55-ball 68, while Sam Curran and Adil Rashid took two wickets each as England thrashed Sri Lanka by eight wickets in the opening T20 International to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series here.

Chasing a 130-run target set by Sri Lanka, the England batsmen, led by Buttler, reached the target in the first ball of the 17th over with 17 balls remaining on Wednesday.

England openers, Jason Roy and Buttler, took advantage of an inexperienced Sri Lanka bowling attack, scoring 61 runs in the first six overs of the power play.

Buttler's innings, with eight boundaries and a six, earned him the Player-of-the-Match award. Sri Lanka skipper Kusal Perera won the toss and elected to bat. However, the visitors did not



get off to a good start and Avishka Fernando was dismissed in the second over for a duck. Perera, along with Dasun Shanaka, tried to build the innings, but Adil Rashid dismissed the Sri Lanka skipper on 30 just when he had started looking dangerous.

Dasun Shanaka, Sri Lanka's only batsman to score a half century (50 off 44 balls), took the visitors to a fighting total.

This was Shanaka's second half-century of his T20I career.

The second match will be played here later on Thursday.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 129/7 in 20 overs (K. Perera 30, D. Shanaka 50; S. Curran 2/25, A. Rashid 2/17) lost to England 130/2 in 17.1 overs (J. Buttler 68 not out, J. Roy 36) by eight wickets.

# Copa America: Peru rally to earn 2-2 draw with Ecuador

Goiania | Agencies

Peru came back from a two-goal deficit to keep alive their hopes of reaching the Copa America knockout phase with a 2-2 draw against Ecuador here. Celta Vigo midfielder Renato Tapia gifted Ecuador the perfect start by sliding the ball into his own net after a Pervis Estupinan cross from the left flank on Wednesday, reports Xinhua.

Ayrton Preciado doubled Ecuador's lead on the stroke of half-time with a low finish following Damian Diaz's curling 30-yard free kick from the right wing.

Peru struck just after the restart through Ianluca Lapadula, who finished coolly when Christian Cueva's defence-splitting pass left him one-on-one



with goalkeeper Hernan Galindez. Andre Carrillo put Peru on level terms five minutes later, slotting a first-time shot past Galindez after combining with Lapadula.

The result means Peru have four points from three matches while Ecuador have two points, with both teams having one group match left.

# Losing Kohli, Pujara quickly put pressure on India: Tendulkar

Southampton | Agencies

Losing Indian team skipper Virat Kohli and No. 3 batsman Cheteshwar Pujara within the space of two overs cost India the World Test Championship final, Sachin Tendulkar has said.

The world's top run-getter across Tests and ODIs said the Blackcaps were the superior team. "Congrats @BLACKCAPS on winning the #WTC21. You were the superior team," Tendulkar posted on his Twitter account.

"Team India will be disappointed with their performance. As I had mentioned the first 10 overs will be crucial & India lost both Kohli & Pujara in the space of 10 balls & that put a lot of pressure on the team (sic)," he added in the same



tweet. Both Kohli and Pujara were scalped by tall pace bowler Kyle Jamieson, who extracted movement and bounce from the Southampton pitch even on the sixth day, which was the reserve day. While Kohli fell on the fifth ball of the 35th overs, Pujara was dismissed on the third ball of the 37th over.

Overall, the Kiwis put in a much more superior bowling and batting effort, something acknowledged by many former cricketers.

"Congratulations @BLACKCAPS on being deserving champions. NZ bowlers were terrific, Williamson & Taylor brought in their experience to finish the job," said former India batsman VVS Laxman on his twitter handle.



## SONU SOOD KI SUPER MARKET CALLS FOR SUPPORT TO LOCAL VENDORS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor and philanthropist Sonu Sood was seen selling eggs, bread, chips, and daily grocery items on a cycle, calling it 'Sonu Sood ki Supermarket' in his latest video on social media. The gesture was meant to promote small businesses. Sonu posted a video of him on a cycle with the grocery items on Wednesday night. In

the video, he says "you don't need to go to a mall to buy grocery items", adding that the most important supermarket is ready to deliver your daily items on your doorstep. He stressed the importance of buying from the local vendors as he said: "This market is a hit."

He captioned the video, "Free home delivery. 1 bread free with every 10 eggs #supermarket #supportsmallbusiness."

## Why Shruti Haasan secretly dances to nineties music for hours

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shruti Haasan on Thursday revealed what she claims is a formula for fitness -- she secretly dances to nineties music for hours. "Back to training hard!!! Loving that burn and glow knowing I'm strengthening my body and my mind -- only the toughest steel for the... getting into a double workout today cause like many people this lockdown I took it a little easier than I should have but what counts is getting back on the routine and not punishing yourself mentally but pushing yourself further and rewarding yourself with a new mindset #lets go tell me what work outs you love ???" Shruti shared in an Instagram post.

"I'm obsessed with fight training and mixing it up with good old fashioned cardio and most secretly I dance to 90s music for HOURS," she added.

On the work front, the actress will feature alongside Prabhas in the film "Salaar", which is being shot in Kannada and Telugu languages, and will be dubbed in Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam. Shruti will also be seen in the Tamil film "Laabam" alongside Vijay Sethupati.



## Big B finds bit of rhyme in day's work schedule

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amitabh Bachchan on Thursday informed with rhyme and relish that he left for work early in the morning at 7am, wrapped up shoot and returned home. "T 3945 -- 7 baje nikle kaam pe; shooting hogayi poori toh vaapas apne dhaam pe (left for work at 7 in the morning; shoot over, back home)," he wrote in Hindi. Big B posted two pictures on Twitter with the words. One features him going for the shoot while in the other, he is seen stepping back inside his home.

He did not share details about the project he ventured out for.

Big B earlier posted a picture on Instagram from the 1981 film "Naseeb" directed by Manmohan Desai. In the image, the actor is dressed like a matador.

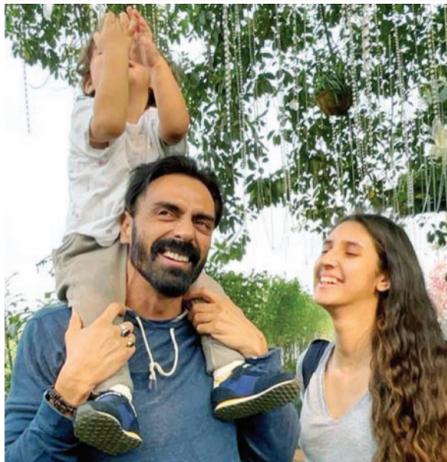
"The matador and the gun .. film NASEEB .. climax on a rotating Restaurant .. a set built at Chandivali Studio .. and it rotated .. so action scenes, drama, Restaurant on fire, all .. done while it rotated .."

Only the great Manmohan Desai could conceive all this .. and succeed .. and we're talking the 80's .. no VFX no CG nothing .. those were the days my friend," he wrote as caption.

"Naseeb" also stars Shatrughan Sinha, Rishi Kapoor, Hema Malini, Reena Roy, Kim, Pran, Prem Chopra, Shakti Kapoor, Kader Khan, Amjad Khan and Amrith Puri, and is directed by Manmohan Desai.

The actor currently has "Brahmastra", "Chehre", "Jhund", "MayDay", "Goodbye" and a remake of the Hollywood film "The Intern" coming up, besides an untitled film with Prabhas and Deepika Padukone.

## Arjun Rampal shares birthday wish as daughter Myra turns 16



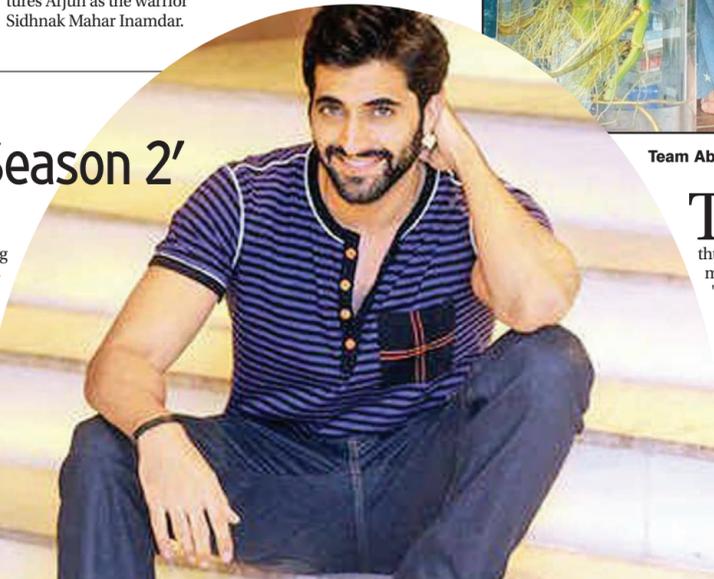
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Actor Arjun Rampal took to social media on Thursday to wish daughter Myra on her 16th birthday. Arjun, who has two daughters -- Myra and Mahikaa -- with ex-wife Mehr Jesia, is currently on vacation in Budaapest with girlfriend Gabriella Demetriades and their son Arik. The actor wrote that he wishes to meet Myra soon. Posting multiple pictures that feature him with Myra and Arik on Instagram, Arjun captioned: "Happy happy sweet 16 my little jaan @myra\_rampal love you beyond and more can't wait to have you in my arms again. Happy birthday." Arjun and Gabriella have been putting up pictures from their vacations and giving followers major vacation goals. The actor also recently debuted a new look, donning silver platinum hair colour. He was widely appreciated by fans for the new look. On the work front, the actor will be seen in the film "Dhakkad", with actress Kangana Ranaut. He plays the role of the antagonist Rudraveer. The actor will also be seen in the film "The Battle Of Bhima Koregaon". The Ramesh Thete directorial features Arjun as the warrior Sidhnak Mahar Inamdar.

## Akshay Oberoi starts shooting for 'Illegal Season 2'

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Actor Akshay Oberoi is back on set and has started shooting for the second season of "Illegal". The actor reprises his role of advocate Akshay Jaitley. The actor spent time with family in the US before flying back to work. "When I was cast to play a lawyer, I was excited about exploring the legal thriller. The challenges in playing this kind of a character include looking believable and owning the script because there's no palpable facade that you can project to look the part you're portraying," said Akshay. The actor had earlier said that he took inspiration from American actor Gabriel Macht's character in the legal drama series "Suits". "I'm glad to be reprising the role of Akshay Jaitley. He comes bearing surprises in this season," he adds. Besides "Illegal Season 2", Akshay's upcoming projects include Vikram Bhatt's "Cold", "Inside Edge Season 3", Ekta Kapoor's "KTina" starring Disha Patani, and the Hindi remake of Tamil film "Thiruttu Payalaye 2".



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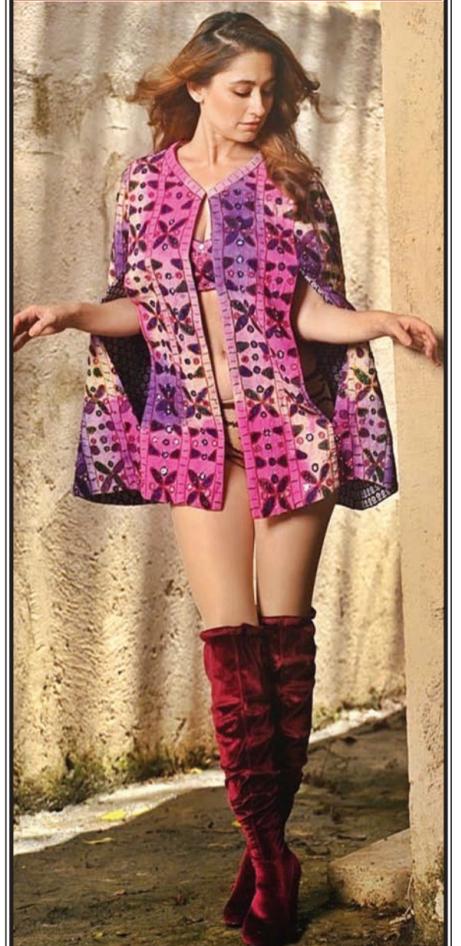
Twinkle Khanna on Thursday afternoon opened up about her green thumb, posting a picture with a money plant at her home.

"There are stars my eyes and not just on my shirt when I potter around with my plants," she wrote in the caption, and gave the hashtag #greenthumbstosup to her post. She wears a blue denim shirt with stars printed on it in the image, and focuses on the money plant. Twinkle's sense of humour is not hidden from netizens ever since she ventured out to be an author after a film career.

## Twinkle Khanna loves to 'potter around' with her plants



## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sanjeeda Shaikh