

# absolute india

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**NATION**

> 02

'Mann Ki Baat': PM urges people to overcome vaccine hesitancy...



**HOLLYWOOD**

> 06

Quentin Tarantino talks plans for final movie before retirement ...



**SPORTS**

> 07

England humble Sri Lanka again, clinch T20I series 3-0...



## INDIAN ECONOMY POISED FOR RECOVERY IN FY22: SBI CHAIRMAN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Although the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic again brought businesses and economic activities to a standstill, Chairman of the State Bank of India (SBI), Dinesh Kumar Khara has expressed hope that the country's economy would recover in the ongoing financial year.



The Chairman noted that the global economy contracted by 3.3 per cent in 2020 with the pandemic causing significant loss of lives and livelihood.

The GDP in India contracted by 7.3 per cent in FY2021 and the country experienced a second wave of infections with cases rising rapidly since March 2021, he said while addressing the 66th Annual General Meeting of the bank. He, however, said that policy measures and the coordinated efforts of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Centre were directed towards enabling growth on a more durable basis during these difficult times. "Notwithstanding the second wave of Covid-19, Indian economy, through its resilience, is poised for a recovery in FY2022," the SBI chief told the shareholders of the bank. Speaking on the performance of the bank in FY21, he said that although the last fiscal was an exceptionally challenging year for the entire world, the state-run bank was able to function against all odds with minimal disruption for the customers.

"The business continuity plans that were chalked out have worked well for the Bank and this is reflected in various parameters of

the Bank's performance in FY 2021."

Notably the bank has achieved high level of digitization with share of Alternate Channels in total transactions increasing to 93 per cent in FY2021, thereby converting a challenging situation into an opportunity, the Chairman said. He said that in the current financial year, SBI will continue to accelerate its digital agenda, adding that the scope and reach of YONO will be expanded further. "With the rollout of pre-package insolvency for resolution, resumption of courts and formation of National Asset Reconstruction Company, efforts will be in full force to keep the momentum in stressed asset recovery in the current financial year."

The bank is comfortably placed in terms of growth capital. Opportunities for lending in promising sectors will be explored to diversify the portfolio and contain risk.

"In conclusion, the bank adjusted to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and is better positioned to tackle any subsequent wave. I am cautiously optimistic that the performance trajectory of FY2021 will continue in FY2022 as well."

## 2 low intensity blasts at Jammu Air Force Station, use of drones suspected

JAMMU | Agencies

Two low intensity explosions took place early Sunday morning in the technical area of Jammu Air Force Station. Security agencies suspect that drones were used to drop bombs at the Air Force station, however, there was no confirmation from the Indian Air Force so far. The explosions happened at 2 a.m. Bomb disposal and forensic teams were at the Airport and cordoned off the entire area. Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who is on his way to Ladakh to review operations preparedness of the force, spoke to Vice Air Chief, Air Marshal HS Arora regarding explosions at the Station.

Singh said that Air Marshal Vikram Singh is reaching Jammu to take stock of the situation.

"One caused minor damage to the roof of a building while the other exploded in an open area," said Indian Air Force (IAF) in a statement.

The force said that there was no damage to any equipment.



"Investigation is in progress along with civil agencies," IAF said.

Defence ministry PRO, Lt Colonel Devender Anand said, "There were reports of an explosion inside Air Force Station Jammu. There is no injury to any personnel or any damage to any equipment."

Security agencies suspect that drones were used to drop bombs at the Air

Force station. The security establishments stated that there is suspicion that drones were used to drop IED inside the airport to trigger the blast.

They also cited that drones were used to drop weapons in the past as it cannot be detected by radar.

Till now, IAF has not yet confirmed that drones were used to drop the bombs.

### NIA TEAM REACHES JAMMU AIR FORCE STATION



Jammu: A team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) reached the Air Force Station Jammu on Sunday while all flight operations took place normally from Jammu airport except for two earlier flights which were cancelled due to operational reasons.

In the wake of two explosions that occurred at the Air Force Station here, a team of the NIA reached the spot where some damage was caused to the concrete structures at the Air Force Station. It is yet to be established whether drones were used to drop low intensity bombs at the Air Force station.

Meanwhile, Additional Director General Police (ADG) Jammu, Mukesh Singh told reporters that the police have arrested a militant near a mall in the jurisdiction of the Trikuta Nagar police station from whose possession an IED weighing 5 Kgs has been recovered.

### HIGH ALERT AT PATHANKOT AIRBASE AFTER JAMMU AIR FORCE STATION BLASTS

Chandigarh: Security agencies were put on high alert in border areas of Punjab, mainly the Pathankot airbase, on Sunday after two explosions occurred at the Air Force Station in Jammu. Security was stepped up, particularly in border districts of Pathankot and Gurdaspur, including near Indian Air Force base in Pathankot which saw the terror attack on January 2, 2016, as well as nearby Mamoon Cantonment of the Indian Army, officials told IANS. India's international border with Pakistan falls in both the districts adjoining Jammu and Kashmir. Apart from Punjab Police, personnel of the Border Security Force and other security agencies have been put on alert following intelligence inputs. There were two bomb blasts at the station on Sunday morning which security agencies suspect were carried out by using drones.

## Bengal post-poll violence: NHRC invites victims to file complaints

Team Absolute | New Delhi

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) committee members on Sunday invited victims, complainants, and different stakeholders to interact with it on the issues and complaints related to post-poll violence in West Bengal.

The NHRC team will be available for at least three hours on Monday from 10 am at Staff Officers' Mess, Sector V Saltlake, Kolkata to interact with complainants, victims, petitioners and other stakeholders to address their grievances and listen their points. These members were also present at 4 pm on Sunday too.

The NHRC has made it clear that its members would meet victims or complainants, irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, gender, ethnicity and political affiliation. Those who are unable to come have been advised to send their complaints, petitions, supporting evidence and documents at its email ID: [nhrccwrit142@gmail.com](mailto:nhrccwrit142@gmail.com) and or talk to the NHRC team member on



Mobile No.: 8826705906 and 8799712259. As per the direction of West Bengal High Court dated June 18 this year, a Committee was constituted by NHRC Chairperson, Justice (retd) A.K. Mishra, to look into the various cases, complaints, allegations of violations of human rights, particularly in the post-poll period in West Bengal. The NHRC was asked to submit its report before the court by June 30, the next date of hearing.

Hours later, the NHRC constituted a seven-member panel to "enquire

into complaints of post-poll violence in West Bengal" and told the panel to identify people who were prima facie responsible for the violence and the officers who maintained a "calculated silence". The Committee, headed by former Intelligence Bureau chief Rajiv Jain, who assumed charge as NHRC member on June 2, has been touring various places in West Bengal and enquiring into veracity of these complaints and allegations.

The committee also comprises National Commission for Minorities

Vice Chairman Atif Rasheed, National Commission for Women member Rajulben L. Desai, NHRC's Director Investigation Santosh Mehra and DIG, Investigation, Manzil Saini, West Bengal Human Rights Commission Registrar Pradip Kumar Panja and West Bengal State Legal Services Authority member Secretary Raju Mukherjee.

The High Court, which heard several petitions on the violence that erupted after the ruling Trinamool Congress won the state elections, ordered on June 18 that the NHRC has to constitute the committee. The state government rushed to the high court the following day with a review petition, requesting the five judges to recall their order.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has mounted a relentless campaign against the Mamata Banerjee government, alleging that its supporters are being targeted. It has alleged that more than 30 people have been murdered and women have been raped and molested as well for supporting the party.

## Turmoil in Telangana Congress over appointment of new chief

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

The appointment of A. Revanth Reddy as the new Congress chief in Telangana triggered turmoil in the party as senior leader and Bhongir MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy vowed never to enter the party headquarters Gandhi Bhavan again while some other leaders have resigned from the party.

Venkat Reddy, who was also an aspirant and strong contender for the post, alleged that appointment also happened like "note for vote".

He was referring to the "note for vote" scam in which Revanth Reddy is an accused. In 2015, Revanth Reddy, who was then in the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), was caught re-handled by the Anti-Corruption Bureau while offering Rs 50 lakh cash to a nominated MLA to make him vote for the TDP candidate in the Legislative Council election. Venkat Reddy also alleged that Congress Telangana incharge Manickam Tagore favoured Revanth Reddy for monetary gains.

The MP, who returned to Hyderabad from New Delhi on Sunday, termed the new state unit an extension of the TDP.

Congratulating the new team, he remarked that they should save the party from forfeiting its deposit in the by-election to Huzurabad Assembly seat. He also announced that he will launch a padyatra from Ibrahimpatnam to Bhuvanagiri from Monday and will remain amongst people. Stating that some leaders



were trying to meet him, Venkat Reddy said nobody including Revanth Reddy should try to meet him. "Party workers have a feeling that injustice has been done to Komatireddy Venkat Reddy despite his loyalty to the party. 'Tomorrow, we may face the same situation,' the MP said. Meanwhile, senior leader and former minister M. Shashidhar Reddy on Sunday resigned as Chairman of TPCC Election Commission Coordination Committee. He sent his resignation to party President Sonia Gandhi. He, however, said he would remain in the party. Senior leader and former MLA L Lakshma Reddy resigned from the primary membership of the party to protest against Revanth Reddy's appointment.

## Schools to remain shut, says Centre and states

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Even as the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic across the country is slowly receding with each passing day, the Centre and the state governments have decided not to allow schools to be reopened yet. Experts have now predicted a third wave of the pandemic, however, many students, parents and parent organisations want schools to be opened in such places where the outbreak of Covid-19 is under control.

Ashok Agarwal, All India Parents Association President, told IANS, "According to an estimate, nearly 30 per cent of the students studying in government schools are 'school dropouts'. We should not ignore the fact that the best and the safest place for children is school. The closure of schools for a longer period of time has given rise to social evils and other abuses like child labour, sexual harassment, diseases etc."

"When all other economic activities have resumed during the unlocking of the lockdown, why can't schools be opened. The Delhi government must reopen schools with 50 per cent occupancy following the necessary Covid protocol. Schools could be closed at any time if necessary," Agarwal said. The All India Parents Association, which is



a nationwide organisation of parents, told IANS, "All ration stores, vaccination centres, ration and food distribution centres should be shifted from Delhi government schools immediately. Schools should be reopened for students with immediate effect. Twenty-five lakh students of Delhi alone are not able to avail of regular education since March 2020."

According to a survey, more than 70 per cent of parents in the country still do not

want to send their ward to school. These parents say that schools should not be opened till the coronavirus situation in their areas is completely under control. On the other hand, 30 per cent parents are ready to send their children to school.

Delhi deputy chief minister and education minister, Manish Sisodia, said the schools will remain closed in the national capital till the Covid-19 situation normalises. However, the interaction between teachers and stu-

dents using online and semi-online means will resume soon. Parents of many students studying in government schools across Delhi have demanded from chief minister Arvind Kejriwal to start online studies for all classes. One parent, Vimlendra Singh, said, "Teachers in government schools send recorded videos on mobile phones. Live online classes should be organised between students and teachers. This will help in maintaining the bond between the student and teacher." The Delhi government also believes that with the onset of the pandemic, there has been a massive loss to students' studies. This year there is a need not only to bridge the learning gap of children but also to provide them emotional support. The students also need to be mentally prepared again for the teaching and learning process.

While Delhi schools are closed, some states neighbouring the national capital are considering opening schools from July. The union education ministry is urging for caution at the moment regarding the opening of schools. According to senior officials, the safety of the students should be ensured before opening schools, only then any step can be taken in the direction of resuming classes.

## BJP trying backdoor entry to capture power in Puducherry

Team Absolute | Puducherry

Ministers of the Puducherry Cabinet will be sworn-in on Sunday with two BJP ministers and three All India NR Congress (AINRC) Ministers joining 51 days after Chief Minister N Rangasamy assumed office on May 7.

The BJP contested 10 seats in the Assembly election. It won six seats, marking a historic victory for it was the first time the saffron party was opening its account in the Union Territory. The BJP is sharing power as a junior partner in the AINRC-led government.

After the swearing-in of Rangasamy as Chief Minister, he contracted Covid-19 and was admitted to a private hospital in Chennai. While the Chief Minister was in hospital, the BJP nominated three of its leaders as legislators thus taking the party tally

in the 33-member house to nine. In the 2021 polls, a record six independents won, and of this, three MLAs extended their support to the BJP. This led to several theories that BJP was trying to enter into a bargaining game with AINRC for getting more ministerial berths and if possible, garner the upper hand in the Cabinet. Rangasamy who was convalescing in the Chennai hospital maintained a studied silence and stopped conversing with the BJP leadership of Puducherry and even the party in charge of the Union Territory, Rajeev Chandrashekhra. The BJP central leadership had to do a lot of persuasion with Rangasamy to open the communication line with the BJP state leadership as well as with Chandrashekhra.

The Chief Minister reluctantly agreed and this broke the ice between the state BJP and Rangasamy.



# 'MANN KI BAAAT': PM URGES PEOPLE TO OVERCOME VACCINE HESITANCY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In his 78th edition of the monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' radio programme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday appealed to people to shun Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy and ensure jabs to them and their family members to protect themselves from the coronavirus.

Allaying fears among countrymen, the Prime Minister clarified that people should not follow the rumours being spread against Covid-19 vaccine, and that "don't believe in such rumours and make people aware of the benefit of the drive being run by the government to contain the spread of the deadly disease."

The Prime Minister said

that the aim should be that every citizen in every village of the country is administered Covid-19 vaccine.

Noting that India is now able to administer lakhs of vaccine doses everyday, the Prime Minister warned "avoiding vaccine jabs may be very dangerous and such act will not only push every individual's life in danger but that of the family members as well".

In a live telephonic conversation with some groups of people belonging to Madhya Pradesh's Betul district during 'Mann Ki Baat' programme, the Prime Minister advised them to shun the vaccine hesitancy and accept the shots offered to them by the government for their safety.

"Those who are spreading rumours on vaccines, let them be. We all will do



our work and ensure people around us get vaccinated. The threat of Covid-19 remains, and we have to focus on vaccination as well as follow Covid-19 protocols," the Prime Minister said.

The Prime Minister urged the countrymen to "trust" science and not

believe in negative rumours related to the vaccine.

"I urge you all-trust science. Trust our scientists. So many people have taken the vaccine. Let us never believe in negative rumours relating to the vaccine."

While appealing to people, the Prime Minister said he himself has received

Covid vaccine and his elderly mother too has taken the job.

"I have taken both doses. My mother is almost hundred years old; she has taken vaccine too. Please do not believe any negative rumours relating to vaccines," said the Prime Minister.

Modi further said that India's fight against Covid will continue and the next phase of the world's largest vaccination exercise began on June 21 when a record over 86 lakh people were administered shots.

India's Covid vaccination drive began on January 16 this year with Prime Minister himself taking the first dose of Covaxin -- India's indigenous vaccine being manufactured by Bharat Biotech.

More than 31.51 crore

(31,51,43,490) vaccine doses have been provided by the Central government to states and Union Territories (UTs) so far, through free of cost channel and through direct state procurement category.

Of this, the total consumption, including wastages is 30,35,97,466 doses, mentions Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) latest report received at 8 a.m. on Sunday.

More than 1.15 crore (1,15,46,024) balance and unutilized Covid vaccine doses are still available with the states and the UTs to be administered. Furthermore, more than 20,48,960 vaccine doses are in the pipeline and will be received by the states and the UTs within the next three days.

## WOMAN AMONG FIVE NEW MINISTERS INDUCTED IN PUDUCHERRY CABINET



Puducherry | Agencies

Five new ministers, including the first-ever woman, were sworn in Puducherry on Sunday as the N Rangaswamy cabinet was finally expanded.

Lt Governor Tamilisai Sounderarajan administered the oath of office and secrecy to A Namassivayam and Sai J Saravana Kumar (both BJP), and K Lakshminarayanan, C Djeacoumar and Chandira Priyanga from the AIINRC.

Priyanga is the first woman minister to be sworn in the four-decade history of the Union Territory.

This is the first time the

BJP is part of a ministry in Puducherry.

The Puducherry cabinet expansion has taken place 52 days after Chief Minister Rangaswamy assumed office on May 7, after the impasse in the BJP over berths was resolved. It is learned that the BJP would go for a rotational ministerial berth system for its nominees. Party MLA A. John Kumar's supporters had laid siege to the BJP state committee office and had destroyed chairs and tables demanding ministerial berth to their leader who had switched position to the BJP from the Congress just before the Assembly elections.

## Covid tally dips below 100, Delhi to open more from Monday

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The national capital on Sunday reported 89 new Covid-19 cases, staying below 100 cases for the straight second day, while the daily Covid positivity rate remained at 0.12 per cent, according to the health bulletin. With four more deaths reported on Sunday, Delhi's Covid toll rose to 24,965 since the pandemic started early last year. During the same time period, 285 people recovered from the disease, taking the national capital's total number of recoveries to 14,07,401 till date. Delhi presently has 1,568 active cases, with the number of patients under home isolation dropping to 478. A total of 74,198 Covid samples were tested in the last 24 hours, including 54,297 through RT-PCR and 19,901



through the Rapid Antigen method. Delhi had reported 85 new Covid cases on Saturday - the lowest since April 19, 2020. There were nine deaths were reported in the national capital on Saturday, while daily positivity rate was at 0.12 per cent. This is the third time in the last one week that Delhi's single-day tally fell below the 100-mark after June 21, when the national capital had reported 89 cases. Delhi, which is under

phase wise unlock since last four weeks after the second wave of Covid pandemic slowed down, will witness more crowds in public places from Monday as gymnasiums, yoga centres, hotels etc. will be allowed to open from Monday at 50 per cent capacity. However, cinema theatres, spas, schools, colleges and educational institutes, swimming pools, and amusement parks will remain shut.

## BJP WORKING TO BALANCE SOCIAL EQUATION IN UP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ahead of next year's Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP is working on to balance the social equation in its favour by reaching out to all the castes and communities in the state.

The saffron camp believes that it will clear the air about the false narrative that the BJP is ignoring some communities or favouring some and so social equation will play an important role in next year's Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls to repeat the party's 2017 performance.

Apart from some major caste groups, there are many who have influences in different parts of the state.

"There are many sub-castes or communities having influence in few districts like big one having presence across the state. These small groups will be playing a crucial role deciding results in seats of their influence. Every caste and community is important and we



are trying to reach them," a senior Uttar Pradesh BJP leader said.

A party functionary said that the leadership is concerned about the social equation in the state where there has been an allegation that some caste and communities are ignored by the BJP and its government in Uttar Pradesh.

"The BJP government in Uttar Pradesh is working on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision

of 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas', but our political rival always tries to create a false narrative that a particular caste or community is neglected or ignored in current rule, which is not true. To dispel such false narrative, we are reaching these communities in coming days," a Uttar Pradesh BJP leader.

As per plan the BJP has decided to give prominence to leaders of these communities and castes in

the party, who will reach out to their respective communities. "Leaders of communities and castes in the party will be asked to start dialogue and establish connections with people to dispel the false narrative and explain that BJP is committed for inclusive growth and never ignored or sidelined anyone," a party insider said. Another Uttar Pradesh BJP leader claimed that the whole exercise to balance the social equations in the state will be completed in the next couple of months.

It was learnt that central leadership also believes that despite allegations of ignoring some caste groups, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is very popular among many small communities in the state.

A national office bearer said, "Forget major or few big castes, Adityanath is very popular among smaller ones across the state. No other leader from any political opponent can match his popularity."

## DMRC WINS JAPANESE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CIVIL ENGINEERING

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Metro's Phase I, II and III projects have been awarded the prestigious Japan Society of Civil Engineers (JSCE) 'Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement Award' for the year 2020.

The JSCE termed the Delhi Metro's project as 'High-Quality Infrastructure Development Project', said the DMRC in a statement on Sunday.

The JSCE in its award note mentioned that the Delhi Metro's projects have brought awareness of safety and efficiency at construction sites in India and provided residents with safe, secure and comfortable transportation.

This award is given to highly selective showcasing projects in the development of civil engineering technology across the world.

The Delhi Metro's civil engineering achievements in the past two decades have received global recognition and have been appreciated by prominent international

organizations.

Earlier, the Delhi Metro's implementation of Phase-I was rated 'Excellent' in a post evaluation study conducted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The study rated Delhi Metro's project execution capability at '3', which is the highest possible grade indicating that the performance of DMRC was excellent.

The Delhi Metro since its inception has been closely associated with Japan.

The JICA has supported Delhi Metro's all phases including the ongoing Phase -IV project by providing not only smoothest financial support but with excellent value-added activities such as knowledge assistance by introducing Japanese innovative technologies and mindset of safety and innovation, unique work culture, technical cooperation and capacity building of DMRC. The unstinted support from Japan, JICA including India Office has helped Delhi Metro in becoming a Shining Example globally in the field of urban mass transit.

## There's total anarchy, misgovernance in BJP-ruled Tripura, says Manik Sarkar

Agartala | Agencies

Despite assurance from the Governor and Chief Minister, a total lawlessness, anarchy and misgovernance have been prevailing in Tripura since the BJP came into power in March 2018 and kept the police as "wooden doll", former Chief Minister and CPI-M leader Manik Sarkar said on Sunday. Sarkar, a politburo member of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), said that during the past two years (since June 2019) at least 10 people were killed in nine incidents of lynching and several people escaped from the mob attacks while five people died in police custody. "BJP government's indifferent attitude and the puppet role of police led to the happening and rising of the attacks and atrocities on the opposition party workers, supporters and party offices," the Left leader told the media. He said that the Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb during the Assembly session in the third week of March had

assured to stop political violence against the Opposition parties. "But since the CM's statement in the house, over 200 incidents of physical attacks on the opposition party men, mostly on the CPI-M workers and supporters occurred. Besides, 152 attacks on shops and houses belonging to the Opposition parties took place and attacks on 17 party offices registered during this period," said Sarkar, who is now the Opposition Leader of the State Assembly. Referring that Tripura once was the number one state in the country in voluntary blood donation, the former Chief Minister said that BJP workers even attacked the Opposition party workers while they are organising blood donation camps. Sarkar, who was the Chief Minister for 20 years until the BJP came to power three years and three months ago, said that the BJP workers even attacked the People's Relief Volunteers (PRV) while they were carrying out various programmes against the prevention of the Covid-19 pandem-

ic. The PRV, a Left backed organisation, has been providing relief and healthcare services affected by the pandemic across the state. "We have approached the Governor Ramesh Bais and Chief Minister on a number of occasions to stop the attacks and atrocities against opposition leaders and workers, but these are going on unabated in the state. A total anarchy is prevailing in the BJP ruled state due to the misgovernance. When a delegation of Left parties met the governor on May 12, he assured that there would no more political violence but after that 70 attacks of various nature occurred in different parts of the state," the septuagenarian Marxist leader said. Late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared the state of emergency in the country in 1975, but the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government without formally declaring the emergency unleashed and conducting more than that was happened during the 21-month period from 1975 to 1977, the CPI-M politburo member said.

## Mayawati rules out alliance with AIMIM

Lucknow | Agencies

Bahujan Samaj Party President Mayawati has said that her party would contest the Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand alone. In a series of tweets on Sunday, she ruled out reports that the BSP would join hands with Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM in Uttar Pradesh. "This news is being circulated that the AIMIM and BSP will fight the upcoming assembly elections in UP together. This news is completely false, misleading and baseless. There is not even an iota of truth in this, and BSP vehemently denies it," she said. She further said that the BSP would like to clarify that, except for Punjab, the party will contest the Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand alone. The BSP and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) have allied to contest the 2022 Punjab Assembly elections. The BSP, which stormed to power in 2007 by winning 206 seats, was left

with just 80 seats in 2012. In 2014, Mayawati's party did not win a single Lok Sabha seat, and in the 2017 Uttar Assembly elections, it bagged only 19 seats.

With BSP's support base dwindling over the years, the BJP and the Samajwadi Party have been trying to woo the Dalit voters ahead of the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections in 2022.

In April, Akhilesh Yadav announced that Samajwadi Party (SP) will constitute a Baha Saheb Vahini named after Dalit icon Dr B.R. Ambedkar. The Baha Saheb Vahini aims to bring Dalits into the Samajwadi fold and assure them protection against social exploitation. The BJP has now announced that it will build a memorial in the name of Ambedkar. The SP and BSP were allies in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. However, immediately after the Lok Sabha elections, Mayawati snapped ties with the party announcing that her party would never ally with SP again.

## 'TRANSMISSION POTENTIAL OF DELTA PLUS VARIANT SEEMS LOW, NEEDS MORE RESEARCH'

*One more thing which is very clear about the Delta Plus variant is that it is very strong and it clings to the lungs. But it does not mean that transmission potential is very high."*

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The nature of subsequent Covid-19 outbreaks will depend on the new variants of the virus as one more strain called Delta Plus has emerged in a few states, said NK Arora, a member of the Indian Council of

Medical Research (ICMR). Briefing about the Delta Plus variant, Arora told IANS that it has emerged in several parts of the country and around 52 cases have been reported, including one in Faridabad. He, however, added that there was still very little knowledge about this new strain.

"One more thing which is very clear about the Delta Plus variant is that it is very strong and it clings to the lungs. But it does not mean that transmission potential is very high."

Arora told IANS that the first case of Delta Plus variant was detected in April this year and the research studies conducted on the strain so far has not suggested much on its effectiveness and



level of transmission.

"We need conduct more

research to have more concrete results to augment our medical

system for such patients. We have to understand that the emergence of new variants are not new things, variants will come with subsequent waves. What is more important to understand is the nature of the new variant, because its nature (transmission, effectiveness, etc) decides the overall situation of the Covid pandemic," he said.

According to the Union Health Ministry's report, cases of Delta Plus variant were detected in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Elaborating further on Delta Plus, he said there are three parameters to check the effectiveness of a new variant -- level of

transmission; how will it affect the pandemic; and how it will respond to vaccines.

Arora said that each of the Covid-19 variants detected so far have been highly transmissible; however, effectiveness was very low. He further explained that any virus which has more impact on pandemics and causes more deaths, dies soon.

"This is the natural fact that if a particular variant causes more deaths, then there is more possibility that it will end on its own. Because, it is a fight between the virus and the person and if the person died because of that particular virus, it cannot spread to other people and it will end on its own," he explained.

The first wave of the Covid-19

pandemic in India started in late January 2020 with a peak attained in mid-September. The first wave was relatively mild compared to the devastating second wave that started from mid-February 2021.

Arora further said that a major factor behind the deadly second wave was the emergence of more-infectious variants such as B.1.1.7 (Alpha variant) and B.1.617.2 (Delta variant), of which the latter has played a dominant role in recent months. He added that the Delta Plus variant has also been isolated and cultured at the ICMR-NIV and laboratory tests are also being conducted to check the efficacy of vaccines. Some more clarity will come on it by next one or two weeks, Arora noted.

CM expresses gratitude to Prime Minister Modi:

PM IS CLEARING MYTHS AND ALSO GETTING FREE VACCINES ADMINISTERED: CHOUHAN

- People of Dularia village got vaccinated enthusiastically after PM's advice
- PM Modi interacts with three people of MP through programme 'Mann Ki Baat'



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that our visionary and popular Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not only giving protection to every person above 18 from Corona by administering free vaccines, but is also removing confusion regarding vaccine from the minds of people in the country.

Chouhan said that there was confusion about vaccination in Dularia village of Betul district of Madhya Pradesh, people were scared. Prime Minister Shri Modi directly interacted with the people there through 'Mann Ki Baat' programme and explained to them in simple language. Ever since, people are getting vaccinated enthusiastically in the village. Chouhan has expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Prime Minister Modi for this.

Modi, interacted with two persons, Rajesh Hirawe and Kishori Lal

Durve of Dularia village in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh and Ramlotan Kushwaha of Satna, under the 'Mann Ki Baat' programme on Sunday.

During the discussion with Prime Minister Shri Modi, Shri Rajesh Hirawe and Shri Kishori Lal Durve said that there was a lot of confusion in their village regarding the vaccine that it causes fever and even death. Modi explained that the vaccine, which is completely safe has been made after the 24x7 hard work of many scientists of the world. Hence all must get vaccinated without any confusion.

Modi told in the conversation that he himself and his 100-year-old mother have taken both the doses of the vaccine. Slight fever after getting the vaccine is normal, and one recovers soon. The vaccine does not

cause any harm to the body. Vaccine is the Suraksha Chakra against Corona.

Modi told Rajesh and Kishorilal that "Tell the villagers by taking my name that I have been vaccinated and have told that the vaccine is completely safe and gives protection from corona, so all must get vaccinated."

After Prime Minister Modi's advice, the people of Dularia village said that now our confusion regarding the vaccine has been cleared, now we will also get the vaccine vaccinated and others will also be vaccinated.

Modi asked Rajesh and Kishorilal to inform him when vaccination is completed in Dularia village. I will wait for your letter, he said.

Modi said that Corona is a polymorphic disease, which comes in

different forms. There are two ways to avoid this disease. The first is to follow Covid protocol completely and the second to get vaccinated. Wearing a mask, keeping a distance, washing hands repeatedly with soap etc. under Corona protocol is must. We have to follow to protect ourselves, our family and all the countrymen.

Modi also interacted with Ramlotan Kushwaha of Satna district of Madhya Pradesh. Ramlotan has maintained a native museum in his house, with a collection of thousands of medicinal plants and seeds of plants etc. Prime Minister Modi appreciated this work of Ramlotan. He said that every plant around us has medicinal properties. Let us recognize them and inform others about it as well.

After Talking With PM, Man Gets Covid Vaccine Shot, Encourages Others

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to residents of Dulariya village in Betul district. The chat was aired on "Mann Ki Baat" on Sunday.

Team Absolute | Betul

Encouraged after a chat with Prime Minister Narendra Modi who urged people to shed hesitancy against the Covid vaccine, a villager from Betul district got inoculated along with his family members. Seeking to make people shed their reservations about vaccines against coronavirus, Prime Minister Modi spoke to residents of Dulariya village in Betul district. The chat was aired on the Prime Minister's "Mann Ki Baat" broadcast today.

The Prime Minister counselled them to take the vaccine. Rajesh Hirawe (43) was one of those who had a chat with the Prime Minister.

"After talking to the prime minister on Friday, I along with my family members got the vaccine shot for prevention from the coronavirus infection on Saturday," Hirawe said over the phone.

"I encouraged others also, following which 127 people from the village got vaccinated," he said. He said he is encouraging others to get the



job. "I am very happy to talk to the Prime Minister. I have no words to express my happiness," he said.

The Prime Minister also spoke to another 60-year-old village resident Kishorilal Durve, who also later got vaccinated.

"My father has got vaccinated and is now encouraging others to get the vaccine job," Durve's son Ravindra said. Hirawe, while speaking to the Prime Minister, said people were hesitating to get

inoculated due to misconceptions being spread about it on WhatsApp.

While speaking to Hirawe and Durve, the Prime Minister said he and his nearly 100-year-old mother have taken both doses of the vaccine, and asked people not to believe in rumours and trust science and scientists. "The threat of COVID-19 remains and we have to focus on vaccination as well as follow COVID-19 protocols," the Prime Minister said.

Retired IPS officers write to PM Modi, praise J&K initiatives

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with the leaders of Jammu & Kashmir at his New Delhi residence, 15 retired IPS officers of Madhya Pradesh have "appreciated" the initiatives of the Union government.

"In the past seven years, we have noticed your government's painstaking, courageous and decisive efforts at attempting to resolve the complex Kashmir issue," they said in an open letter addressed to. "The momentous decision to annul Article 35A and, was efficiently implemented, with all necessary precautions to prevent the loss of life and property. The complete integration of Kashmir with the Union of India was a long-pending unfinished task since India adopted the Constitution in 1950. Now, a citizen of Kashmir can proudly call himself or herself Indian and receive all benefits that the Indian state bestows on its citizens," the retired IPS officers wrote. The retired officers include A K Singh, Badri Prasad Singh, Geeta Johri, K



Aravinda Rao, KB Singh, M Nageswara Rao, PP Pandey, Prakash Mishra, RKS Rathore, Shivanand Jha, SK Rout, SP Vaid, and Vivek Dube. One of the signatories, Rout said, "A colleague of mine took the initiative and I found it to be correct."

Ashamed That Maneka Gandhi MP From My Party: Vishnoi

■ Ajay Vishnoi, a former Madhya Pradesh minister and BJP legislator, condemned Maneka Gandhi's alleged spat with a vet in Agra over a call, progress of Mother Bharati as his karma and religion, can never be forgotten

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Caught in a storm over an abusive call she allegedly made to a veterinarian in Uttar Pradesh's Agra this week, BJP MP Maneka

Gandhi has now come under attack from a leader of her own party.

Former Madhya Pradesh minister and BJP legislator Ajay Vishnoi on Saturday said he was "ashamed" that Gandhi was an MP from his party.

"The words used by BJP MP Maneka Gandhi to talk to veterinary doctor Vikas Sharma don't prove that Veterinary College Jabalpur is bad but instead prove how poor a woman she is. I am ashamed she is a party MP (not a leader)," he said in a tweet in Hindi. Vishnoi's remark came after veterinary doctors and students from the Nanaji Deshmukh Veterinary Science University in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur held a protest against Maneka Gandhi. The Indian Veterinary Association also condemned the language allegedly used

by the former union minister against the Agra veterinarian. A purported audio clip of a telephonic conversation between Ms Gandhi and the veterinary doctor had gone viral on social media this week where the female voice can be heard abusing and threatening the doctor, blaming him for an alleged botched surgery on a dog. Maneka Gandhi is also purportedly heard asking vet NL Gupta to return the money he has taken from a client after performing the surgery and threatening to have his license cancelled. The former Union Minister has not commented on the controversy yet. The voice in the audio clip could not be independently confirmed but the vet alleged that he got a call from the Sitapur MP. During the course of the purported conversation,

Maneka Gandhi is allegedly heard using expletives in Hindi against the doctor who addresses her as "ma'am". "I got a call from Member of Parliament Maneka Gandhi on June 21 regarding the surgery of the dog. I was shocked when she asked me to pay a compensation of ₹ 70,000 to the owner of the dog or else she would get my license cancelled," Dr Gupta said. "Besides, she insulted my profession, my father and my eligibility and used abusive language," he alleged. Dr Gupta said he had informed the dog owner about the post-operative care, but the animal was not looked after properly. "Due to mismanagement in post-operative care by the owner and improper antibiotics treatment, the stitches came undone," he said.

CM PLANTS RUDRAKSHA SAPLING



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a sapling of Rudraksha in Smart City Park on Sunday as part of his resolve to plant one sapling every day and performed Jalabhishek. Rudraksha is a symbol of faith and is considered a sacred tree. Garlands of its fruit are also worn. It is widely believed that Rudraksha originated from the water drops in the eyes of Lord Shankar. Rudraksha is the boon of Shiva, which was revealed by Lord Shankar to overcome the

physical sorrows of the world. Wearing Rudraksha gives positive energy. Rudraksha is also put on for chanting mantras. Its seeds are mainly used as ornaments and garlands in India and Nepal. Rudraksha is mainly found in the Himalayan regions. Rudraksha is also found in sufficient quantity in the forests of Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Arunachal Pradesh, Bengal, Haridwar, Garhwal and Dehradun. Rudraksha is also found in Gangotri and Yamunotri regions. Besides, Rudraksha trees can be seen in Nilgiris and Mysore in South India and also in Karnataka and Rameshwaram.

MAN WHO CROSSED INTO PAKISTAN RETURNS HOME

Damoh: Bareilal Adivasi, a resident of Pati Shishpur village, was arrested at Bahawalpur in Pakistan on November 14, 2019, for unlawful entry. A 40-year-old mentally unstable man, who inadvertently crossed into Pakistan in 2019, has returned to his village in Madhya Pradesh's Damoh district, local police said. Bareilal Adivasi, a resident of Pati Shishpur village, was arrested at Bahawalpur in Pakistan on November 14, 2019, for unlawful entry. On Saturday, he returned to his native place, located around 20 km from the district headquarters, Damoh Superintendent of Police D R Teniwar told reporters. It was not known how he landed in the neighbouring country, officials said.

Following talks between the Pakistan government and the Ministry of External Affairs, Bareilal Adivasi was released and he returned to India via the Attari border in Punjab, DR Teniwar said. A family member received him at Amritsar and brought him back, he said.

Sarang reiterates his commitment to build memorial gas tragedy site

■ Bhopal gas tragedy had left an estimated 15,000 people dead more than a quarter century ago.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

State medical education minister Vishvas Sarang on Sunday reiterated his commitment for construction of memorial at site of Union Carbide India Limited plant by

removing dumped chemicals waste. Memorial will generate employment, DME minister added. Bhopal gas tragedy had left an estimated 15,000 people dead more than a quarter century ago. Gas victims and NGOs have raised concern over issue of employment vis-à-vis construction of memorial.

Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA)'s Rachna Dingra said, "State government floated tender in April-May 2021 for removal of 337 metric tons of chemical waste. Several metric tons of chemicals lie buried at UCIL plant site. It is an eye wash to construct memorial." Earlier, Supreme Court had order to destroy chemicals in incinerator at Pithampur and trial was also conducted.

In 2012, Supreme Court had ordered disposal of toxic waste at Pithampur waste treatment storage and disposal facility (TSDF) in Dhar district. The order passed on April 4, 2012, directed the authorities to first carry out trial runs and then incinerate the waste.

Government is realizing the concept of public welfare state: Mishra

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The government of Madhya Pradesh has stood with the people at every step. The government took all measures to provide relief to the public in the Corona epidemic. Continuous development works are also being done. Home Minister Narottam Mishra said this while addressing the inauguration and foundation stone laying ceremony of development works costing about 1.5 crore rupees in village Satari during his stay in Datia.

Mishra inaugurated development and construction works worth 95 lakh 78 thousand and laid the foundation stone of works costing 47



laks in Satari village. Mishra inaugurated the Gau-shala built at a cost of 27 lakh 78 thousand in village Satari by feeding fodder to the mother. In his address on the occasion, he said that there would be no let up in the development of the area. Mishra said that in the next two months, 11 other construction and development works costing 75

lakh 29 thousand would be started in the area. Mishra, while interacting directly with the villagers, inquired about the benefits being received from the schemes of the government. He said that if there is any problem in getting the benefits of the schemes run by the government, then they should be informed.

MP became a leader in vaccination with the inspiration and cooperation of PM Modi: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that Madhya Pradesh has become a leader in vaccination with the inspiration and cooperation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. On June 21, more than 86 lakh people got the vaccine in the country simultaneously. On the same day in Madhya Pradesh also more than 16 lakh people were vaccinated. Madhya Pradesh had about 20 percent participation in vaccination as compared to other states. This is the result of the determination of the people of the state and the efficiency of the frontline workers. Chouhan said that the pace of vaccination is increasing continuously in the entire country due to the resolute leadership and constant encouragement of PM Modi.

Chouhan said that the nation is blessed to have PM Modi who is dedicated and determined to achieve the goal. His inspiration has

created a healthy competition-like environment for vaccination in all the states. Due to the inspiration given by PM in kind and simple words, 126 people of village Dularia in Betul district have got the vaccine. Along with this, other people of the village have also agreed to get the vaccine. The process of vaccination is being done by the local administration and the health department. Chouhan said that the result of faith and enthusiasm shown by the people of the state towards the vaccine in the vaccination campaign is that the record of vaccination has been set every day in the campaign. On the first day of the mega campaign, 16 lakh 95 thousand people in Madhya Pradesh, on the second day more than 11 lakh, on the third day more than 7 lakh and on the fourth day of the campaign, 10 lakh people got

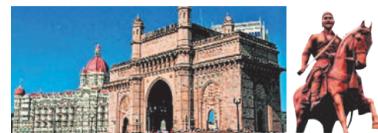


the vaccine for protection from corona. Chief Minister said that the public's confidence in the vaccine has increased in the state. Those people who came forward with self-motivation and played the role of motivator for public awareness also played an

important role in this achievement. Chouhan has thanked all the sections who have become partners in the vaccination mega campaign.

Chouhan said that till now about 1.75 crore population of the state has been provided with a shield of protection from corona by applying vaccine. Of these among healthcare workers and frontline workers, 10 lakh 24 thousand have received the first dose and 67 thousand 30 have received the second dose in. Similarly, in the youth of 18 to 44 years, 83 lakh 30 thousand

have received the first dose and 13 lakh 95 thousand have received the second dose. In the third category of people above the age of 45 years, 80 lakh 90 thousand have received the first dose and 15 lakh 44 thousand have received the second dose of the vaccine. Vaccination work will continue in the state. To make the vaccination campaign a success, a positive environment was created in the entire state. Public participation was also ensured in this. While ensuring proper arrangements at the centres set up for vaccination, care was also taken that the people coming to the centre should not face any problem. A woman who came to the vaccination center in Bhopal to get the vaccine said that keeping in mind the safety of myself and my daughter, I have got the vaccine. Kumari Shweta Srivastava, a resident of Dhawari in Satna district, says that in the vaccination campaign, I have got the first dose of the vaccine.



Maharashtra alert on Delta Plus variant:

# LOCKDOWN NORMS TIGHTENED IN PUNE AGAIN; CURFEW AFTER 5 PM

Meanwhile, the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation on Saturday also re-imposed restrictions in view of the Delta Plus variant of Covid-19, and issued directives similar to the ones given by the PMC.

Team Absolute | Pune

After the Maharashtra government sounded an alert over the Delta Plus strain of Covid-19 and urged all districts not to relax lockdown norms further, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) on Saturday decided to re-impose the curfew in the city from 5 pm and issued directions to stall all permitted activities by 4 pm from Monday.

In a revised order, Municipal Commissioner Vikram Kumar said, "The lockdown norms have been issued based on the average positivity rate and percentage of occupancy of oxygen beds..."

"Prohibitory orders will be in place to prevent more than five people from coming together till 5 pm, while there will be complete restriction on free movement of public after 5 pm except for emergency purposes," he said, adding that the order will also be applicable to Pune



Cantonment Board and Kirkee Cantonment Board areas.

Earlier, the civic body had relaxed lockdown norms by allowing most activities till 7 pm and restaurants to be open till 10 pm for dine-in facility. The PMC decision comes after the state government raised an alert on the Delta Plus variant of Covid-19, after some cases and one death due to the new strain was reported in the state.

From Monday, essential category stores will be open on all days till 4 pm. Non-

essential shops will be allowed to operate till 4 pm only on weekdays and will be completely closed on weekends.

Restaurants, bars, food courts can have dine-in facility only on weekdays till 4 pm with 50 per cent sitting capacity. Home delivery and parcel services are allowed till 11 pm on all days of the week. E-commerce services for all products will continue as usual.

Gardens and grounds have been allowed to be open for walks and cycling while out-

door sports will be permitted only from 5 am to 9 am. The earlier order granting permission for such activities in the evening has been cancelled.

Gyms, salons, beauty parlours and wellness centres are allowed to operate on weekdays till 4 pm with 50 per cent sitting capacity. All private offices in the exemption category are allowed to function with 50 per cent attendance and till 4 pm on working days, while the same will be applicable for all government offices not under emergency service of Covid-related work. Government offices and emergency services required for Covid-19 management are allowed to operate with 100 per cent capacity.

Social, religious and entertainment functions can be held only on weekdays till 4 pm, with maximum attendance of 50 persons. The programme should not be longer than three hours. There will be complete ban on eating food at the function and violation of any Covid-appropriate behaviour will lead to ban on activities at the location till the end of the pandemic.

Marriages can take place with maximum attendance of 50 people while 20 people are allowed for the last rites of deceased kin.

PMPML services will be allowed with 50 per cent sitting capacity and no standing passengers.

## 'Fake news': FinMin on reported resumption of DA/DR from July

The government has clarified that it has issued no directive on resumption of Dearness Allowance for Central government employees and Dearness Relief for Central government pensioners from next month.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Citing a picture of an "office memorandum" which has been doing the rounds on social media and confirmed the resumption of DA and DR from next month, the Finance Ministry tweeted: "A document is doing rounds on social media claiming resumption of DA to Central Government employees & Dearness Relief to Central Government pensioners from July 2021. This OM is #FAKE. No such OM has been issued by GOI."

Last year, the ministry announced a freeze on the hike in DA and DR till July 2021. On Saturday, the Congress accused the Union government of adopting a malevolent approach towards scores of Central government employees, Army staff and pensioners with regard to the payment of dearness allowance (DA) and demanded immediate repayment of arrears.



Addressing a press conference here, Congress spokesperson Abhishek Manu Singhvi had said that on April 23, 2020, the government had kicked the people's stomachs by cutting Rs 37,500 crore, which was admittedly payable as DA by the 7th Pay Commission to 115 lakh army staff, pensioners from the armed forces, and serving employees and pensioners of the Central government.

Sources said that Government may soon take a call whether to resume DA, and DR from next month or extend the moratorium on payment by another six months.

## Admissions to non professional courses after 12th results: Samant

Admission process for non-professional courses will begin after Class 12 results are out in Maharashtra, state Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday Samant said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The admission process for non-professional courses will start after Class 12 results are declared in Maharashtra, state Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday Samant said on Sunday. He said there were options of either con-

ducting CET for admissions to non-technical courses or conduct the admission process based on Class 12 marks. "Class XII board exams have been canceled, and only after the results are declared, we will decide on having CET or not," he added. Samant, who interacted with teachers' outfits that have been protesting seeking recruitment in universities, said the state government had decided to fill 4,074 posts, and the process for 1,600 had already been completed. The process for the remaining posts were on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic but the file has been processed, and following approval by deputy chief minister and Finance

Minister Ajit Pawar, a government resolution would be issued soon, he said.

He said the process to fill 700-750 more vacant posts had also begun, while a survey will be undertaken to identify vacant teaching posts as on 2020. "The remuneration per hour for teachers on clock hour basis in undergraduate programmes has been increased from ₹500 to ₹615, and from ₹150 to ₹250 for practicals. For postgraduate courses (PG), it has been increased to ₹750 from ₹600, while it would be ₹300 in place of ₹250 for those conducting practicals. The government will also fill up 121 vacant librarian posts soon," Samant said.

The delegation also urged the Governor to ensure that an investigation is launched into the activities of Osho International Foundation, a charitable trust.

Team Absolute | Pune

A delegation of Osho disciples earlier this week met Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari and submitted a memorandum, urging him to ensure that an investigation is launched into the activities of Osho International Foundation, a charitable trust. They also sought his intervention to stop the bid to sell two plots of the Osho Ashram at Koregaon Park in Pune.

The delegation comprised Kunika Arti Razdan, Kiran Dubey, Zia Nath, Sunil Mirpuri and Hemant Malik.

Malik said, "We met the Governor in Mumbai on Thursday and submitted our memorandum of demands. We urged him to launch an investigation against the foundation. We also urged him to use his good offices to stop the attempts being made to sale part of the Osho Ashram."

He added, "The Governor asked us to why we didn't approach the Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and



Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier. He said he will do whatever is possible from his side. He also said he had read Osho's books and was in awe of the guru."

Citing "financial distress" caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Zurich-based Osho International Foundation, which owns the sprawling Osho Commune in the Koregaon Park area of the city, has sought to sell two plots in the resort for Rs 107 crore. It has filed an application before the Charity Commissioner's Office, seeking permission for selling the land. The matter is still pending.

The Foundation decided to sell the two plots, each about 1.5 acres, and which currently include a swimming pool and a tennis court, to Rajiv Bajaj, MD and CEO of Bajaj Auto, who lives on an adjacent plot.

In the memorandum submitted to the Governor, the Osho disciples said, "For the last 30 years, we have been lucky to be Osho sanyasins. We come from all walks of life, all parts of the world and represent multiple professions and businesses. What is common to all of us is that Osho transformed our spiritual and material life as He did for millions of peo-

ple everywhere. In early 2021, it was a shock to learn that part of Osho's iconic Ashram in Pune had been put up for sale without informing thousands of Osho sanyasins in India and all over the world. Osho's spoken word is his primary legacy and recorded in audio, video, paper and digital formats. His words are published in 650 titles and have been translated in 65 languages around the world. As per records, it is estimated that on average 2 books of Osho are being published somewhere in the world every day. His words span 9000 hours of audio and 1850 hours of video recordings."

It added, "His legacy also includes his Ashram in Pune where He developed thousands of methods for meditation and human transformation. This Ashram in Koregaon Park also houses his Samadhi which is a precious space for his disciples to sit in meditation. Even today, thousands of his disciples in India and all over the world hold this place in the highest regard and would like to have easier access to their Guru's gift to them and mankind."

Stating that Osho's legacy is the heritage of India and is special for Pune, the disciples alleged that his legacy is being destroyed and in part siphoned out of India on the basis of a "forged will."

## 2 VILLAS RAIDED IN MAHARASHTRA, 22 ARRESTED, DRUGS SEIZED: COPS

Mumbai: The raids were conducted on two villas in Igatpuri, some 120 kilometres from Mumbai, on the basis of a tip-off, Nashik Rural Superintendent of Police Sachin Patil said. Two villas in Nashik in Maharashtra were raided in the early hours of Sunday and 22 people, including some connected to the entertainment industry, were held, while drugs and hookah were seized, police said. The raids were conducted on two villas in Igatpuri, some 120 kilometres from Mumbai, on the basis of a tip-off, Nashik Rural Superintendent of Police Sachin Patil said. "We have held 12 women and 10 men in the raids. One of the women is a Bigg Boss contestant, while some others are connected to the film industry. They have all been sent for medical examination. We are also looking for people who assisted in organising this get-together, where many came in high-end cars," he said. They have been charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and further probe into the network is underway, the SP added.

# Maharashtra's 'Temple Trooper Trupti' plays Cupid for poor girls

Team Absolute | Pune

Once dreaded by the managements of temples, mausoleums and other places of worship for storming their sanctum sanctorum to give equal rights of worship to women, Maharashtra's aggressive gender activist Trupti Desai has now donned a new, gentle role.

This time, she's virtually playing 'Cupid' for lovelorn but poor girls, barred by financial constraints from getting married, especially during the havoc wreaked by Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown of the past 16 months.

"When my teams were moving around helping deprived families all over Maharashtra during the pandemic, we learnt of many poor families facing problems of getting their daughters married," Desai, 36, who is President of the Bhumata Foundation, Pune, told IANS in a freewheeling chat.

One case from Gadchiroli was particularly disturbing, a 26-year-old girl with a minor eye defect, unable to get wedded, her parents were simple tribals and farm labourers earning barely Rs 80 daily, with a debt of Rs 10,000 on the family, with no help from any quarters in the Maoist-infested region. After identifying her problems and similar others, Desai approached a Pune realtor, Yuvraj Dhamale Corp's leading lights - Yuvraj S. Dhamale and his wife Vaishnavi Dhamale.

"The Dhamales readily agreed to team up with



Bhumata Foundation in this genuine social cause - the company would sponsor the basic wedding costs of the couples weaned through our huge network of field activists," Desai smiled.

Since January, the Bhumata Foundation & Yuvraj Dhamale Corp carefully picked around 10 such girls from Nanded, Parbhani, Latur, Amravati, Satara, Kolhapur and Gadchiroli, and provided them Rs 15,000 to cover the basic costs for an unostentatious marriage. "We aim to help the really needy enter into wedlock with a simple ceremony, with a few invitees as per the pandemic norms, yet make it a memorable affair for all," Dhamale added, as they prepare for another 10 weddings over the next two to three weeks. Instead of going

around shopping for the wedding necessities for the beneficiaries, Desai and the Dhamales simply deposit Rs 15,000 into the families' bank accounts and leave them undisturbed to make their own purchases, preparations and the nuptials.

"For the Gadchiroli girl, we went a step ahead. We provided her Rs 15,000 for the wedding and also another Rs 10,000 to clear the family's loans... Their joy knew no bounds and now they lead a happy life, free of the debt burden," Desai said.

Among the pairs married off so far include one handicapped girl, one with the defective eye, four Muslim couples, and one orphan, for whom the local Bhumata Foundation office-bearers happily performed the auspicious 'Kanya Daan'.

To a question on what she liked to do more - storming places of worship or arranging marriages for girls from the most deprived sections of society - the stormy petrel pauses before replying.

"The agitation in temples or mausoleums was for equal worship rights for women, which was denied to them for centuries. However, helping these economically weak girls to get married to boys of their choice is probably a higher kind of 'punya' (divine service)... But we shall continue to work on both fronts," she said softly.

Adored and blessed by the poor families who approach her for the marital bliss of their children now, the same Desai was considered a veritable vamp by managements of places of worship, priests, clerics and power-wielders in other fields.

## Bhim Army warns of state-wide stir if reservation in promotion not implemented

Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad said his party will gherao the house of chief minister Uddhav Thackeray and may even call for a Maharashtra Bandh.

Team Absolute | Pune

Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad alias Ravan on Saturday warned of a state-wide agitation if reservation in promotions was not granted to those employed in government jobs through quota for Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Vimukt Jati and Nomadic Tribes (VNNT) and Special Backward Class (SBC) categories.

Speaking to media persons during his visit to Pune on the occasion of birth anniversary of noted social reformer Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Azad said reservation in promotions was needed, adding his party would protest if the benefits were not extended to people. Azad said his party will gherao the house of chief minister Uddhav Thackeray and may even call for a Maharashtra Bandh.

A Maharashtra government resolution (GR) on May 7 had scrapped 33 per cent reservation in promotions for SC, ST, VNNT and SBC categories. The decision came two days after the Supreme Court quashed quota for the Maratha community.

"We had no hopes from the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP). But now there is a government in power, which claims to be following the ideals of Shahu Maharaj, the pioneer of reservation for deprived classes in India. However, this government is also working against the rights

of the deprived classes. We demand the chief minister of the state to consider our demand for reservations in promotions seriously. Or else we will protest," said Azad.

Petitions pertaining to GR scrapping reservations in promotions are being heard by the Bombay High Court. The government, through an affidavit in the HC, stated that the GR was in accordance with the law prevailing in the state and was subject to the outcome of further orders of the Supreme Court, which is hearing the special leave petitions (SLPs) filed after the Bombay HC, in 2017, struck down the 2004 GR that introduced reservation in promotion. The state said that since the apex court is already seized of the matters challenging the May 7 GR, the "HC should not interfere in petitions which are devoid of merit." During his day-long visit in Pune, Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad also visited the Ambil Odha area and extended support to the people residing in shanties that were being removed during an anti-encroachment drive by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC). The drive was eventually suspended after a local court issued a stay order, and even the Maharashtra government intervened and directed the civic body to immediately stop it.

Abhijit Gaikwad, who heads the Pune unit of Azad Samaj Party, said that Azad visited Ambil Odha and spoke to the residents. "We are against the inhuman action of removing the shanties," he said.





EDITOR'S SPECS

Covid virus is vaccine proof?

Single mutation gives SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, the ability to enter cells through another route, opening up the possibility of evading Covid antibodies or vaccines, finds a study. Early in the Covid-19 pandemic, scientists identified how SARS-CoV-2 gets inside cells to cause infection. All current Covid-19 vaccines and antibody-based therapeutics were thus designed to disrupt this route into cells, which requires a receptor called ACE2. But, the new study led by researchers at Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis showed that Covid virus has the ability to enter cells via an alternative pathway -- one that does not require ACE2. The study is published in the journal Cell Reports. "This mutation occurred at one of the spots that changes a lot as the virus circulates in the human population," said Sebla Kutluay, Assistant Professor of Molecular Microbiology at the varsity. "Most of the time, alternative receptors and attachment factors simply enhance ACE2-dependent entry. But in this case, we have discovered an alternative way to infect a key cell type -- a human lung cell -- and that the virus acquired this ability via a mutation that we know arises in the population. This is something we definitely need to know more about," Kutluay added. For the study, the team screened a panel of 10 lung and head-and-neck cell lines to find relevant cells capable of growing SARS-CoV-2. The team discovered that the virus they were using for experiments had picked up a mutation. The virus had originally been obtained from a person in Washington state with Covid-19, but as it was grown over time in the laboratory, it had acquired a mutation that led to a change of a single amino acid at position 484 in the virus's spike protein.

INFIGHTING IN POLL BOUND STATES MAJOR CONCERN FOR BJP

Shashi Bhushan

Infighting and discontent in the poll bound state units are turning out to be a major concern for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) than the opposition parties. Assembly elections are scheduled in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Goa and Uttarakhand early next year. Senior national party leaders are trying to resolve the differences within the party units in these states.

A senior leader said that this infighting and discontentment in local units especially in the poll bound Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Punjab need to be addressed at the earliest as it might affect party's poll prospects and preparations.

BJP central leadership and RSS have already intervened and tried to resolve differences in Uttar Pradesh. "On June 22, chief minister Yogi Adityanath and deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya met over lunch in presence of national general secretary, organisation, B.L. Santhosh and RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale and Krishna Gopal to resolve the differences," a party insider said.

In Goa, last month BJP chief J.P. Nadda had directed chief minister Pramod Sawant and health minister Vishwajit Rane to keep their differences aside and focus on controlling Covid in the state.

Another leader pointed out that local issues must be addressed so that everyone should put a united effort in fighting the opposition parties instead of fighting against each other.

Party leadership in Delhi also found that infighting and discontentment have spread in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Delhi and Tripura -- irrespective of whether the saffron party is in power or not.

Another senior party functionary explained, "Infighting and differences among leadership and cadres need immediate attention of the central leadership and in some cases state units have already apprised them about it."

In Rajasthan, former chief minister Vasundhara Raje is not on the same page with the state leadership. While Raje's supporters are running a parallel

"Next year's polls in Uttar Pradesh and other states will set the momentum for the next general elections in 2024. Party's performance in Uttar Pradesh and other states is crucial for 2024 rerun, so everyone will be brought to the same page ahead of state assembly polls. Party is concerned and taking measures to address the infighting or differences in all the local units," he said.



organization by launching 'Vasundhara RajeSamarthakManch, Rajasthan', on the other hand the state unit has removed her photo from poster and hoardings.

Rajasthan BJP chief Satish Poonia told correspondent, "Central leadership has been apprised of what's happening in the state for appropriate action."

In Karnataka, despite state in-charge and national general secretary Arun Singh's repeated warning, voices were raised, albeit a few, in public against chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa.

In Punjab, former minister Anil Joshi blamed BJP state leadership for mishandling of farmers' issue and said that the party would have to pay the price for the situation.

In Delhi, some spokespersons of the party were removed from the party WhatsApp group on the direction of state unit chief Adesh Gupta while one spokesperson left it saying his seniority was not taken care of.

On Gupta's direction Delhi BJP office secretary Hukam Singh ordered removal of spokesperson Tajinder Pal Singh Bagga and Neha Shalini Dua from the party's WhatsApp group. While Harish khurana, son of former Delhi chief min-

ister Madan Lal Khurana, left the group saying his seniority has been ignored.

Some of the spokespersons in Delhi BJP Unit have been recently appointed office bearers in the national team of party's different morchas. Sources said that while state leadership asked them to resign, they are not willing to quit the post.

In Kerala, there is a lot of opposition against state unit chief K. Surendran after he was named in an FIR in an alleged poll bribery case. Allegations were denied by the Kerala BJP chief but many in the party believe that he should be replaced till the time his name is cleared. Earlier this month, amid the speculation that some BJP MLAs and leaders in Tripura may follow the example of its former national vice president Mukul Roy who returned to the Trinamool Congress (TMC), three senior central leaders reached Agartala to meet state leaders.

A senior party leader, however, denied any fresh political development in the saffron camp in the northeastern state. B.L. Santhosh and others reached Agartala to discuss party affairs with the state leaders, legislators, ministers and other party functionaries.

SETBACK FOR RAJE CAMP AS CENTRAL LEADERSHIP CLIPS ITS WINGS

Archana Sharma

It's official. The flight of fancy of former CM Vasundhara Raje and her followers seems to be making a sudden landing as the central leadership of the saffron brigade is busy clipping the wings of her camp in the desert state.

The story started with the removal of her posters during by-poll campaigning in three states; then her posters were removed from the state party headquarters. Recently, a former minister from her camp, Rohitashv Sharma, was issued a show-cause notice for speaking against the party's working. He has been warned to reply within 15 days or else disciplinary proceedings will be initiated against him.

Raje, for months, has been maintaining a distance from the party headquarters after the elevation of Satish Poonia, a RSS man, as the BJP state president. Since then, the party workers from her camp were speaking against the party and were running a parallel unit to the state BJP organisation. Recently, this camp claimed that "Raje is BJP and BJP is Raje" in Rajasthan. The statement did not go down well with the party leaders of the state and then started a two-way war. Poonia and Leader of Opposition Gulabchand Kataria hit back saying no leader is higher than the party and party discipline comes first.

However, Raje's followers did not stop and continued firing fresh salvos due to which central leaders had to rush to Jaipur to intervene. State party in-charge Arun Singh came to Jaipur and openly warned the rebel leaders to follow party discipline or be prepared to face the music.

"The party leaders should stay in discipline and should think twice before issuing a statement whether it will help the party to rise or dent its prospects," he said adding, "All party workers should follow constitutional norms of the party and stay in discipline or else disciplinary proceedings will be taken against them." Soon after this warning, the state party leadership issued a show-cause notice to senior BJP leader Rohitashv Sharma from the Raje camp.

Sharma, in a meeting held in Alwar, had told the media that the BJP workers are not working on the ground but are limited to their offices due to which it lost two by-polls.

However, Poonia countered his claim and said, "600 workers of BJP lost their lives working on ground during Covid pandemic. Such statements show disrespect to those workers who sacrificed their lives on the ground."

Meanwhile Sharma did not seem to be following the party discipline and claimed that Raje remains his leader and the party is his mother and no one can separate a son from his mother. I will fight my battle in Delhi and shall stage a hunger strike, he added. So, there seems to be no let-up in the war but the party has warned again that more action will be taken against those violating the party line.

Lord Krishna pardoned 99 mistakes of Shishupal but his 100th mistake was not forgiven, so the 100th mistake will not be forgiven here too, he added, with reference to the Mahabharata in the ongoing war of the saffron party in the desert state.

international

NO EVIDENCE THAT COVID VACCINE BOOSTER A MUST: CDC

Washington | Agencies

There is currently no data to support that a Covid-19 vaccine booster shot is needed for the general population, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But, an extra dose may be needed for more-vulnerable groups, such as older adults or organ transplant patients.

However, public health officials will continue to monitor the virus to determine if additional shots are warranted in the future, said the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunisation Practices, CNBC news reported.

"Boosters may be required for a broad population. However, it could also be that the need for boosters of Covid vaccine may only be demonstrated in some populations," Sarah Oliver, co-lead of the working group and a medical epidemiologist with the CDC's National Center for Immunisation and Respiratory Diseases, was quoted as saying.

According to the committee, rising cases of Covid infections in fully vaccinated individuals may be a clear indicator to decide whether boosters are needed, NBC news reported.



But if certain surrogate measures -- like waning antibody or T cell levels -- could be identified, boosters could potentially be given to prevent a rise in cases.

It is still unclear what those cutoff levels, called correlates of protection, might be, Sharon Frey, clinical director of the Center for Vaccine Development at Saint Louis University Medical School, was quoted as saying.

"I think the only thing we can do at this moment is, if we start to see an uptick in reinfection in people, or new infections in people who have been vaccinated, that's our clue that we need to move quickly," Frey said. Both Pfizer and Moderna are investigating a third dose of Covid vaccine, while Johnson & Johnson is studying the need for a second dose to raise protection against the virus, the report said.

The US NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, or NIAID, is also conducting a clinical trial to understand whether a third shot of a Moderna vaccine could be given after a person initially received two shots of Pfizer, or one shot of Johnson & Johnson, the report added.

Palestine calls for int'l sanctions against Israel

"Israel doesn't care about reports issued by credible international organizations like Amnesty International, which considers Israeli practices the most heinous forms of racial discrimination against the Palestinians," the Ministry statement said. ty to pay dues.

Ramallah | Agencies

Palestine has called for imposing international sanctions against Israel to stop its policies against the Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Saturday that it supports an Amnesty International report issued on June 24 saying Israeli security forces committed violations against the Palestinians, reports Xinhua news agency.

"Israel doesn't care about reports issued by credible international organizations like Amnesty International, which considers



Israel practices the most heinous forms of racial discrimination against the Palestinians," the Ministry statement said.

The statement also slammed the US and the European Union for not exerting serious pressure on the Israeli government to stop its practices against the Palestinians.

On June 24, the Amnesty International report said that Israeli police carried out "a catalogue of violations against Palestinians across Israel and occupied East Jerusalem".

The report said the violations included "unlawful force against peaceful protesters, sweeping mass arrest and subjecting detainees to torture and other ill-treatment".

There has been no immediate response from Israeli police to the Amnesty International report.

Pakistan terror network abroad overlooked by FATF

Mirpur-PoJK | Agencies

A decision to maintain Pakistan's status in the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was taken on June 25 in Paris. A dissatisfied panel comprising China, among other things questioned why there is a seemingly unnecessary delay in the court proceedings of the 1373 UN designated terrorists imprisoned in the country. Pakistan was told to do more with regards to tracking and cracking down money laundering which they believe is a means to supply dosh for carrying out acts of terror.

One aspect that comes to mind that might thus far has been ignored by the FATF team is perhaps Pakistan terror financing operations involving their foreign missions. It would be interesting to note that recent news articles published in international print media manifest Pakistani Diplomats not only of indulging in antisocial and but even criminal behaviour and acts that are of terrorist nature.

Is it not true that individuals chosen to serve their countries in alien lands are carefully selected and trained? As a matter of fact, two Pakistani diplomats were recently caught stealing a hat worth \$10.70 and chocolate worth \$1.7 in Yongsan, South Korea, this April.



the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi in 2020 who were accused of espionage.

An isolated incident may reflect an individual act, but regular and repeated offences tell a different story about Pakistani diplomats.

It is common knowledge that Pakistan's foreign policy is controlled by the army at GHQ in Rawalpindi. The Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) personnel are routinely deputed to Pakistani missions abroad. They have been caught red-handed on several occasions while pursuing terrorism-related activities.

For instance, in 2001, Mohammad Arshad Cheema, First Secretary at the Pakistani high commission in Kathmandu, was arrested for possessing 16 kg of RDX. Five years back in 2014 Pakistani Defense Attache (and ISI representative) in Colombo, Colonel Shahryar Butt, was repatriated because he kept on 'checking' into the High Commission's affairs.

The key to understanding the above phenomena lies in recognizing that ISI cells are present in almost all Pakistani Embassies. Perhaps, Pakistan has different standards for when it comes to diplomatic responsibilities. No wonder during the period between May 2018-19 the US had restricted the movement of Pakistani diplomats to a few square miles within Washington.

RUSSIA MONITORS US DESTROYER IN BLACK SEA

Moscow: The Russian Defence Ministry said that its Black Sea Fleet was tracking the US guided-missile destroyer Ross, which entered the waters for a multinational exercise with Ukraine. The Arleigh Burke-class destroyer will join 31 other ships to participate in the maritime portion of Exercise Sea Breeze 2021 starting next week, the US Navy 6th Fleet said on Saturday. Ross' participation in this year's drills is "a tangible demonstration of US support for Ukraine" and part of the enduring commitment made by Washington and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to enhance maritime security in the Black Sea, Xinhua news agency quoted Charge d'Affaires Kristina Kvien at the American Embassy in Ukraine as saying.

Iran rules out endless negotiations over n-deal revival

Tehran | Agencies

Iran will not negotiate endlessly over the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, a top official said here, while also urging the US to abandon the "failed legacy" of former President Donald Trump.

The remarks were made on Saturday for Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh in a tweet, reports Xinhua news agency.

Iran has actively participated in the Vienna talks aimed at the revival of the nuclear agreement, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which the US tried to "destroy," Khatibzadeh added.

Since April 6, Washington and Tehran have had six rounds of indirect negotiations in Austria's capital Vienna aimed at reviving the nuclear deal. A US State Department official said last



week that the two countries still have serious differences "over a host of issues, whether it's the nuclear steps that Iran needs to take, the sanctions relief that the US would be offering or the sequence of steps that both sides will be taking."

The official suggested that a deal between the two sides remains possible, saying the US team would attend the seventh round of talks "some time in the not too distant future." The US government withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 and unilaterally re-imposed sanctions on Iran. In response, Iran gradually suspended parts of its JCPOA commitments from May 2019.



**Quentin Tarantino talks plans for final movie before retirement**

Los Angeles | Agencies

**H**ollywood maverick Quentin Tarantino has opened up about the plans for making his final movie before he retires. Tarantino was asked about his decision during an appearance on "Real Time With Bill Maher" and confirmed he's still bowing out to focus on writing, reports

aceshowbiz.com.

He said, "I know film history and from here on in, filmmakers do not get better. Don Siegel - if he had quit his career in 1979, when he did 'Escape from Alcatraz', what a final film! What a mic drop. But he dribbles away with two more other ones."

Tarantino told the host he had considered making his swansong a sequel of his first film, "Reservoir Dogs".

He said, "That's kind of a 'capture time in a moment' kind of thing," Tarantino said. "I won't do it, internet. But I considered it."

He has also been thinking about making his adopted Israel the backdrop for his last film.

"If you make a movie in Jerusalem, there's nowhere you can point the camera where you're not capturing something fantastic," he added.

**PARIS HILTON:**

**DIDN'T KNOW THAT I'D BECOME HIGHEST-PAID FEMALE DJ IN THE WORLD**

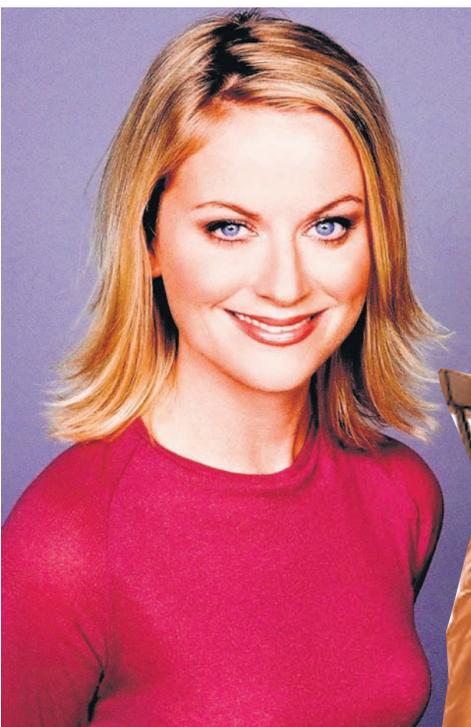
Los Angeles | Agencies

**S**ocialite and entrepreneur Paris Hilton has talked about her love for DJing. She says she simply followed her passion and that playing music and performing has always been her superpower.

Paris posted a picture of her playing music in a club on Instagram late Saturday night, according to India time. She looks drop-dead-gorgeous in an electric blue outfit paired with sunglasses and bejeweled ear-phones.

"When I first decided to learn to DJ, I simply followed my passion, my love for music and the joy I felt being able to light up a room and share that energy with others. Playing music and performing has always been my superpower," Paris wrote alongside the image. She says she did not know she would become the highest paid female DJ in the world.

"I didn't know that I would become the highest-paid female DJ in the world or have residencies DJ'ing across the world. With every set I perform, I love to leave my heart on the stage," she wrote.



**Amy Poehler enjoyed her surprise visit to 'tired' sex club**

Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**ctress and funnywoman Amy Poehler revealed that she once accidentally visited a tired sex club but found it was her kind of scene.

The actress started her career with the Second City improvisational comedy troupe in Chicago, when the cast members were once on tour in Texas, they "stumbled" on an unusual night spot, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"I love Texas, I love Texans, because they tell it like it is and they like to party and they like to have a good time. We just stumbled across a weird place one night, and when I say stumbled, I have no memory of how we got there or who told us about it," Poehler shared on "The Kelly

Clarkson Show". The actress said that the club was "tired".

"It was an S&M (sadism and masochism) club but everyone was a little tired. So there was a really nice lady, older lady, smoking a cigarette, kind of very lazily hitting some guy with a whip," he added. After she got over the initial shock of finding herself at a raunchy venue, the actress felt that the place wasn't so bad. She quipped: "It was my kind of scene. Everybody looked like they had had a long day but they were so nice." The actress's latest movie is a comedy drama called "Moxie".

**YouTube star KSI reveals he has SHRINE dedicated to Lorraine Kelly**

Los Angeles | Agencies

**Y**ouTube star KSI revealed he has a SHRINE dedicated to Lorraine Kelly during a BBC interview with Vernon Kay. The online entertainer hailed the ITV sofa queen as a "star" and admitted he has a picture of her in his bedroom. KSI - whose real name is Ollijade Olatunji - baffled host Vernon with the revelation. He told how his photo of Lorraine sits next to two of his coveted diamond plaques - an award for reaching 10million subscribes on YouTube. KSI also claimed that the breakfast TV host is one of the "best people" he's ever met as he sang her phrases. He said: "I've got three diamond plaques.

Obviously I'm a major Arsenal fan, and I have one in my box - I have an Arsenal box where I have just left one there, I also have two just in my bedroom, right next to Lorraine Kelly. Interrupting, Vernon asked: "Hang on - Lorraine Kelly's in your bedroom?" A laughing KSI replied: "No, a picture of her. She's literally like the best person that I know. I thought I'd create a shrine for her."



**OLLY ALEXANDER SET TO BE NEW DOCTOR WHO AS FIRST GAY ACTOR TO PLAY TIME LORD**

Los Angeles | Agencies

**I**t's A Sin star Olly Alexander is set to be the new Doctor Who - becoming the first gay actor to play the Time Lord. Olly, 30, is thrashing out final details with BBC bosses to replace Jodie Whittaker and become the 14th Doctor. It was reported earlier this year that

Jodie, 39 - the first female Time Lord - will step aside after two specials in 2022.

And actor and musician Olly, who first found fame as the frontman of band Years and Years, is in prime position to take over after pay negotiations with

BBC chiefs reached an "advanced stage".

It comes after he won rave reviews playing Ritchie Tozer in Russell T Davies' Channel 4 drama It's A Sin, about the 1980s Aids crisis. Russell, a former writer and producer on Doctor Who, championed Olly for the BBC sci-fi role.



**"I will reunite One Direction": Simon Cowell**

London | Agencies

**O**ne Direction were Britain's most successful boyband since The Beatles and now Simon Cowell has hinted at a One Direction reunion.

The music guru, who hand-picked the five lads himself on his ITV show The X Factor 11 years ago, just needs to get them all in a room together, he reckons. The talent show head

honcho said: "I think it will happen. If they got together, whether it is making records again or touring, it would be the most amazing thing. I'd love it to happen."

"Maybe I could persuade them. But I think they should do it, definitely. The fans, of course, would love it."

Harry Styles, Liam Payne, Niall Horan, Zayn Malik and Louis Tomlinson have all embarked on successful solo

careers, but Simon remained schtum on which member was holding out on a 1D comeback, insisting: "I don't know to be honest."

The boyband, who have sold over 70 million records worldwide and raked in over £200,000-a-day with their five albums and tours, have been on indefinite hiatus since 2016.

**ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY**



**Chiara Ferragni**



## ARCHERY WORLD CUP: DAS, DEEPIKA WIN MIXED RECURVE TEAM GOLD

Paris | Agencies

India's husband-wife duo Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari won gold medal in the mixed recurve team event at the archery World Cup Stage 3 here on Sunday.

Das and Deepika combined well to score a 5-3 win over the Netherlands to win India's second gold medal of the day. The Netherlands settled for silver.

In the semis, Indian team beat Spain 5-3 and their victim in the quarterfinals was the USA team who they handed a 6-0 defeat.

India also won a gold medal in the recurve women's team event. The team, comprising Deepika, Komalika Bari and Ankita Bhakat, defeated Mexico 5-1 to clinch gold.

On Saturday, India's Abhishek Verma defeated Kris Schaff of the USA to win the gold medal in the men's compound event. By virtue of



winning the title on Saturday, Verma has also qualified for the year-end World Cup final. India's compound

archery team missed the season opening World Cup in Guatemala City as one of the Indian team

members tested positive for Covid-19 before departure and the entire team was grounded.

## England women beat India by 8 wkts in first ODI

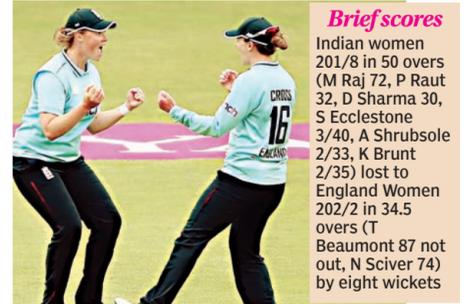
Bristol | Agencies

England Women spoiled Mithali Raj's joy of becoming only the second cricketer after Sachin Tendulkar to complete 22 years in ODI cricket, by romping to an eight-wicket win in the first ODI against India here on Sunday.

Mithali's 72, that took India Women to 201/8 in 50 overs, went in vain as home batters Tammy Beaumont (87 off 87) and Natalie Sciver (74 off 74) took England to a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Both Tammy and Natalie added 117 for the third wicket against an insipid Indian bowling attack. While opener Tammy hammered 12 fours and a six, Natalie hit 10 fours and one six as Indians struggled to make breakthroughs after an early wicket within the first five overs.

Earlier, the 38-year-old



Brief scores

Indian women 201/8 in 50 overs (M Raj 72, P Raut 32, D Sharma 30, S Ecclestone 3/40, A Shrubsole 2/33, K Brunt 2/35) lost to England Women 202/2 in 34.5 overs (T Beaumont 87 not out, N Sciver 74) by eight wickets

senior Indian pro's 108-ball knock had helped save India the blushes.

After England had won the toss and elected to bowl, Indian women lost dashing openers Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana early. India were 27 for two in the 10th over. Mithali stitched a 56-run partnership with Punam Raut (32 off 61 balls) for the third wicket and a 65-run

partnership with Deepti Sharma (30 off 46 balls) for the fifth wicket.

Harmanpreet Kaur could make only one.

For England women, pacers Katherine Brunt and Anya Shrubsole took two wickets each while left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone was the most successful bowler with three wickets for 40 runs.

## Stricter Covid-19 protocols for Indian contingent for Olympics



Tokyo | Agencies

India is among six South Asian countries whose athletes, coaches and officials will have to take Covid-19 tests every day for seven days prior to their departure for Japan for the Olympic Games.

Japan's state broadcaster NHK said on Sunday that athletes and all other members of

delegations from India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan will face stricter countermeasures because of the spreading Delta variant, which was first identified in India, reports Xinhua. NHK added that the measures would take effect on July 1. Participants from these countries have already been told to get vaccinated for seven consecutive days before entering Japan, which is not a pre-condition for athletes from other countries. All overseas teams should have members tested twice within four days prior to departure, and every day in principle after arriving in Japan. Participants from Egypt, Vietnam, Malaysia, Britain and Bangladesh are also required to be tested every day for three days prior to departure.

## I-LEAGUE TO COMMENCE IN KOLKATA IN MID-DEC: AIFF

New Delhi: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) is planning to organise the Hero I-League this season in Kolkata with the scheduled start tentatively fixed in mid-December.



"We are looking at a tentative date of mid-December onwards for kicking-off the Hero I-League. We are in talks with the Indian Football Association (Bengal), and also the Government of West Bengal to organise the League in Kolkata and its suburbs like the last edition," I-League CEO Sunando Dhar said during the AIFF League Committee's meeting held virtually on Saturday. Dhar said the I-League this season will be a 13-team affair, with the number of matches to go up from the previous edition's 80 to 114. The format of the League will be the same as the last edition with all teams playing each other once, and then divided into two groups. While the top half vying for the Championship will comprise seven teams, the bottom half which will be battling it out for the relegation will have six teams," Dhar said, adding: "The number of matches will also be more in this edition -- a rise from 80 to 114." The committee said in a statement that "under the circumstances, and considering the possibility of a third wave, this is the best option".

## Czech Republic Deliver Knockout Blow To 10-Man Netherlands, Qualify For Quarterfinals

Budapest | Agencies

Czech Republic defeated Netherlands 2-0 to seal a place in the quarterfinals of the ongoing Euro 2020 on Sunday.

Tomas Holes and Patrik Schick scored as Czech Republic delivered a knockout blow to 10-man Netherlands in their Euro 2020 Round of 16 clash.

After an excellent, free-flowing first half that ended 0-0, the second half provided top-notch entertainment. First, the Dutch were reduced to 10 men after Matthijs de Ligt was shown a red.

The central defender was sent off for a handball in the 55th minute when under pressure from Schick. The red card was given following a video review. Holes scored with a powerful close-range header in the 68th minute and then broke into the left of the penalty area and set up Schick for his fourth goal of the tournament in the 80th. With the win, the Czech booked



their place in the quarter-finals where they will face Denmark.

Saturday's knockout fixtures saw Denmark eliminate Wales before Italy defeated Austria in extra time. Of greater interest to Netherlands and the Czech Republic will be the outcome of the first of those two fixtures, with victors Denmark awaiting the winners of this tie in the quarter-finals.

## ONLY AN ODD PLAYER OR TWO FOR THE T20 WORLD CUP SQUAD: DRAVID

Mumbai | Rahul Dravid, who is coach of the Indian limited-overs team that will travel to Sri Lanka, said that next month's white-ball tour of the island nation will throw up only an odd player or two for the T20 World Cup squad, which would have been roughly finalised by the team management by now. Dravid added that he will speak to the Indian team management in England over the next couple of weeks and discuss their requirements for the T20 World Cup, which is likely to be held in the United Arab Emirates. "These are the only three [T20] games before the T20 World Cup. I am sure the selectors and management would have a fair idea by now as to what kind of squad they are looking for T20 World Cup... Can't read too much into it (the Sri Lanka series)."

## ENGLAND HUMBLE SRI LANKA AGAIN, CLINCH T20I SERIES 3-0

Southampton | Agencies

Sri Lanka suffered an 89-run defeat in the last T20I game as England made a clean sweep of the three-match series, with 31-year-old left-arm pace bowler David Willey (3/27) wrecking the top order after Dawid Malan (76) and Jonny Bairstow (51) had struck quick half centuries for the hosts. Bairstow's 43-ball 51 and Malan's 48-ball 76 laid the foundation for England's 180/6 in the allotted 20 overs after Sri Lanka won the toss and elected to bowl on Saturday. The Kusal Perera-led Sri Lanka, who have been below-par in the series losing the first two

T20Is by big margins, once again came up with an insipid display, getting bundled out for 91 runs in 18.5 overs to lose by 89 runs. This was the fourth-biggest defeat for Sri Lanka by runs in a T20I match and could affect their morale when they take on the hosts in the three-match One-day International series starting June 29. Opener Danushka Gunathilka was run out in only the second ball of the Sri Lanka innings, while skipper Kusal Perera departed soon after for 3. Seven Sri Lankan batsmen were out with single-digit scores, with the likes of Kusal Mendis and Dasun Shanaka scoring six and seven respectively.



## TN announces Rs 3 cr for athletes who win gold in Tokyo Olympics

Chennai | Agencies

Tamil Nadu chief minister, M.K. Stalin has announced a cash prize of Rs 3 crore for those athletes who win gold in the Tokyo Olympics which is starting from July 23.

The chief minister made the announcement at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on Saturday while addressing athletes and sports persons at a special Covid vaccination camp held for them.

The silver medal winners will be provided Rs 2 crore as cash prize and the bronze medal winners Rs 1 crore, he said.

Nethra Kumanan, Varun Thakkar and K.C. Ganapathy (sailing), G. Sathian and A. Sarath Kamal (table tennis), C.A. Bhavani Devi (fencing) and Paralympian T. Mariappan have qualified for the Olympics from Tamil Nadu. Stalin reminisced his days as a sportsperson in his younger days and said that sports is a major connector and said that iconic athletes like Sachin Tendulkar, Karnam Malleswari, M.S. Dhoni, P.T. Usha and Milkha Singh will always be an inspiration to the generations of youngsters of the nation.



The Tamil Nadu chief minister said that the DMK in its election manifesto had promised that an Olympic Academy will be established in four zones of the state and added that the promise made in the election manifesto would be fulfilled. Stalin said, "If a Dhoni hit a sixer or a Ronaldo scores a goal, the audience in the stadium and those watching on television feel it as a personal achievement." He further said, "A sportsperson can inspire a generation and you all should keep that in mind and be assured that the Tamil Nadu government will support you in your welfare and well-being".

## Angelique ready for Wimbledon after triumph on home soil

Frankfurt | Agencies

Former world No. 1, Germany's Angelique Kerber, won the inaugural Bad Homburg Open title with a 6-3, 6-2 victory over world No. 76 Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic to clinch her 13th WTA career singles title here.

This was also the world No. 26 player's maiden title since she triumphed on grass to win the third of her three Grand Slam titles at 2018 Wimbledon.

"You play for these moments, being on court, playing in front of your fans, family, crowd. This is something really special. I'm really happy that I won this tournament, a special tournament at home. It means a lot to me, and after all the months which we've gone



through, standing here with this trophy, it's something great," she said on Saturday.

"Everyone knows I love to play on grass, and I really feel well," Angelique, who was also a Wimbledon finalist in 2016, told wtatennis.com.

"Of course, to play the final here, with this atmosphere and these fans, it's great. I love to play on this surface, let's see and hope if I can continue this next week (at Wimbledon)."

In her first final in two years, Kerber was in commanding form as she swept to victory over the unseeded Czech in 1 hour and 25 minutes. It is her third time taking home a trophy on home soil, following back-to-back titles in Stuttgart in 2015 and 2016.

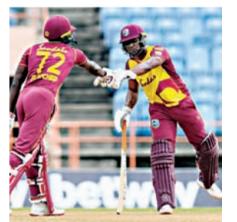
## Evin Lewis guides West Indies to big T20I win over South Africa

St George's Grenada | Agencies

Evin Lewis went on a six-hitting spree as West Indies scored a morale-boosting eight-wicket win against South Africa in the opening T20 International here.

After the disappointment of losing both the Test matches to the Proteas by big margins at St. Lucia, the gloom in the home team camp was partially lifted when Lewis smashed seven sixes and four boundaries in his 71-run knock to upend South Africa's total of 160/6 in the allotted 20 overs for the loss of just two wickets and with five overs to spare.

Lewis led the charge, taking just 35 deliveries to reach his 71. His opening partnership of 85 with Andre Fletcher (30) laid the foundation for the big win for the two-time T20 world champi-



ons on Saturday.

After the openers fell, Andre Russell and Chris Gayle took the home side to victory with an unbroken partnership of 37 in three overs. Playing his 50th T20I for West Indies, Russell smashed his first ball for a six into the stands and ended the match with another maximum as the West Indies sped to 161/2 off 15 overs. He ended on 23 not out, while Gayle made 32 not out. Lewis was named Player of the Match.



## Raveena Tandon concerned about animals dying while crossing roads

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**B**ollywood actress Raveena Tandon took to social media on Sunday to express her concern for animals that die while trying to cross the roads. The actress shared photographs and videos of a tiger named 'Bajrang' which she spotted during a safari tour inside the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh. In one of the videos, Bajrang can be seen crossing a road to travel to the other part of the jungle.

"And great days are made of these!! Off on a late start, but got lucky as we were entering the park through the #magadhighate. Saw the magnificent #bajrangtiger leaping over and crossing

the road into the other part of the jungle," Raveena wrote in an Instagram post.

"Luckily these truck drivers were decent enough to respect and give him his space for a safe crossing, a lot of our wildlife isn't that lucky, we lose a lot of our beautiful wildlife in roadkills, need of the hour for our state governments to lessen traffic movement on these roads stop cutting through forests and make more overhead wildlife crossings. #bandhavgarh," added the actress expressing her concern. Raveena checked into the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve earlier this week along with her family.

Sharing photographs of herself on Instagram, the actress wrote: "When you follow your passion, you start living your dream..."



## ANKITA ON BIGG BOSS: THE RUMOURS OF MY PARTICIPATION ARE BASELESS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctress Ankita Lokhande took to social media on Sunday to put an end to speculations about her possible participation in the upcoming season of the reality show Bigg Boss.

Ankita issued a statement on Twitter denying the possibility of her participation in the show, calling such rumours "baseless".

"It has come to my notice that certain sections of the media have been speculating that I will be participating in Bigg Boss this year. I would like them and everyone at large to know and make a note that I am not going to be a part of the show. The rumours of my participation are baseless. People have been too quick to send me their hatred for something I am not even a part of," reads Ankita's statement.

The actress' statement comes just a few days after speculative reports emerged claiming Ankita might take part in the next season of the controversial reality show along with actress Rhea Chakraborty, both the actresses being ex-girlfriends of late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, who passed away in June last year.

Armaan Malik:

## It's a miracle that we are able to function during these times

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**S**inger and youth icon Armaan Malik took to social media on Sunday to share his take on the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The singer expressed that the pandemic has been mentally and physically exhausting.

"It's a miracle that we are able to function during these times. The pandemic has been mentally and physically exhausting. I am so damn proud of you, me & everybody here," Armaan tweeted on Sunday.

Talking about how he has been affected by the ongoing pandemic, Armaan recently said in an interview: "For the world, I am this super positive person but I've not been my best lately. Music has been my sole saviour in times of distress. However, there's no button I can switch 'on' and become instantly creative. I am trying to keep my calm and praying for better times. There's nothing more I can do."

On the work front, Armaan is celebrating the success of his single titled "Echo" for which he collaborated with Korean-American singer-songwriter Eric Nam and international music producer KSHMR.

Taking to Twitter on Sunday, the singer thanked fans for showering their love on the single.

"20 MILLION VIEWS ON #Echo! This is my first-ever international collaboration and to see it get the kinda love it's getting from around the world is unreal! Congrats guys @EricNamOfficial @KSHMRmusic," Armaan tweeted.

Wakhra swag' singer Navvinder drops new song 'Dilsohniye'



## 'Wakhra swag' singer Navvinder drops new song 'Dilsohniye'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

**S**inger Navvinder, who belted out the superhit "Wakhra swag" in 2015 and also reprised the song in the 2019 film "Judgemental Hai Kya", dropped his latest number "Dilsohniye" on Saturday. The Punjabi song is written by Prince the artist Singh and composed by Dhruv G. The video featuring Navvinder with Ruth Lawrence has managed 2,17,155 views within hours of release.

"My very first reaction to the song was it's a very peppy cute love number. The vibe is something I could instantly connect with and imagined myself featuring in this beautiful song. I am super excited for the release of the song and expect it to be superhit!" said Ruth, an actress model who owns a marketing and events management firm.

"Dilsohniye" song is positioned as an upbeat number with a relaxed lounge vibe, shot across exotic beach locales.



Alia Bhatt: I walk out of 'GangubaiKathiawadi' set a different person today

Mumbai: Actress Alia Bhatt has wrapped up shooting for filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali's upcoming directorial "GangubaiKathiawadi". She says working with the director had been a dream all her life and it has also been a "gigantic life changing experience".

Alia posted a string of pictures from the film's set. In one image, she is seen posing with Bhansali. She even shared some behind-the-camera shots on Instagram.

Alongside the pictures, she wrote: "We started shooting Gangubai on the 8th of December 2019.. and we wrapped the film now 2 years later! This film and set has been through two lockdowns.. two cyclones.. director and actor getting covid during the making!!! the troubles the set has faced is another film all together!"

"But through all that and more.. what I take away is the gigantic life changing experience! Being directed by sir has been a dream all my life, but I don't think anything would have prepared me for the journey I was on for these two years."

Alia feels evolved as she walks out of the set. "I walk out of this set a diff person today!" she shared.

## B'wood remembers legendary musician R D Burman on his birth anniversary



Team Absolute | Mumbai

**B**ollywood celebrities -- actors, musicians and filmmakers took to social media on Sunday to remember legendary music composer Rahul Dev Burman aka R D Burman on his birth anniversary. Taking to Twitter, playback legend Lata Mangeshkar wrote in Hindi, "R D

Burmankokaunnahijaanta. Wo janam se rajputrahaursangeetka wo raja tha. Aajuskijayantihai. Main uskiyaadkoauruskesangeetkovinamraabhivadankartihun. (Who does not know R D Burman. He was a prince by birth and the king of music. Today is his birth anniversary. I pay my humble tribute to his memories and music.)"

Poet-lyricist-screenwriter Javed Akhtar wrote, "Today on June 27 it is R D Burman's birth anniversary. Time is always kind to genuinely great people, it keeps enlarging the image of a genius more and more. No surprise that his popularity among the gen next and the young musicians is increasing by the day." Singer Shilpa Rao tweeted, "Happy Birthday Pancham Da. May we keep learning from you to feed our child like outlook towards life. Here's to the genius." Director Sujoy Ghosh wrote, "Happy birthday R D Burman. Your music makes happiness. Thank you for all the happiness."

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Aahana Kumra