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'CHRONOLOGICAL PEEPING TARGETS'

A database of over 300 verified Indian mobile telephone numbers, includes over 40 journalists, three major opposition figures, one constitutional authority, two serving ministers in the Narendra Modi government, current and former heads and officials of security organisations and scores of businesspersons, The Wire has reported.

- ▶ THE WIRE'S ANALYSIS OF THE DATA SHOWS THAT MOST OF THE NAMES WERE TARGETED BETWEEN 2018 AND 2019, IN THE RUN-UP TO THE 2019 LOK SABHA GENERAL ELECTIONS BUT THERE WAS NOT ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST ALL PHONES HAD BEEN HACKED.
- ▶ THE ISRAELI COMPANY, NSO GROUP, WHICH SELLS PEGASUS, HAS DENIED THE SNOOPING ALLEGATIONS, CLAIMED THAT IT ONLY OFFERS ITS SPYWARE TO "VETTED GOVERNMENTS" AND SAID IT WAS "CONSIDERING A DEFAMATION LAWSUIT".
- ▶ ACCORDING TO THE WIRE, FORENSIC TESTS CONDUCTED ON SOME PHONES ASSOCIATED WITH THE TARGET NUMBERS REVEALED CLEAR SIGNS OF TARGETING BY PEGASUS SPYWARE
- ▶ A REVIEW OF THE LEAKED DATABASE BY THE WIRE AND PARTNER NEWS ORGANISATIONS SHOWS THAT AT LEAST NINE NUMBERS BELONGED TO EIGHT ACTIVISTS, LAWYERS AND ACADEMICS ARRESTED BETWEEN JUNE 2018 AND OCTOBER 2020 FOR THEIR SUPPOSED ROLE IN THE ELGAR PARISHAD CASE.



Mexico, Morocco, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, The Wire reported when he met Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi in Delhi. In fact, a hack of Kishor's phone occurred even on the date that The Wire met him and AI helped conduct forensic analysis on it. In addition, the mobile number of key strategist Abhishek

Banerjee, the powerful Trinamool Congress MLA who is also the nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, was also selected as a potential target for surveillance by a government client of NSO Group, an investigation of leaked data by The Wire and its media partners on the Pegasus Project has shown. Also on the list is Banerjee's personal secretary.

Rahul Gandhi was potential spyware target
At least two mobile phone accounts used by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi were among 300 verified Indian numbers listed as potential targets by an official Indian client of the Israeli surveillance technology vendor, NSO Group, The Wire reported. Such was the apparent interest in Gandhi that the numbers of five of his social friends and acquaintances were also placed on the list of potential targets. None of the five plays any role in politics or public affairs. Gandhi's numbers, which he has since given up, are part of a large database of leaked numbers believed to be drawn up by NSO Group clients and accessed by the French media non-profit Forbidden Stories and shared with 16 news organisations, including The Wire, The Guardian, Washington Post, Le Monde, and Haaretz.

Ashok Lavasa placed in list as Election Commissioner
Ashok Lavasa, the only member of the 3-person Election Commission to rule that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had violated the Model Code of Conduct while campaigning for the 2019 general election, was selected as a potential candidate for surveillance just weeks after his dissent, according to leaked records of phone numbers that The Wire has seen. The phone number used by Lavasa during 2019 is a part of this list, The Wire can confirm. When The Wire approached the former EC member, he refused to comment.

SC staffer who accused CJ Gogoi of sexual harassment

Three phone numbers belonging to the Supreme Court staffer, who had accused former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi of sexual harassment in April 2019, were selected as potential targets, The Wire reported. The staffer, whose name is being withheld, was dismissed from service in December 2018, weeks after she said she rebuffed the judge's advances.

All told, a total of 11 numbers associated with the complainant and her family were selected, making them among the largest cluster of associated phone numbers in the India-leg of the Pegasus Project, a special investigation coordinated by Forbidden Stories and 16 international media partners with the assistance of Amnesty International's technical team.

'Baseless', IT minister rubbishes reports of Pegasus project

New Delhi: A day after media reports of alleged spying of journalists and other personalities of the country with Pegasus spyware surfaced, the Union Information and Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, while replying on behalf of the government to the questions of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, rubbished the reports of espionage. The Union Minister said, "NSO has also said that the report is false and baseless. Any kind of illegal surveillance is not possible in our system. This media report coming a day before Parliament session is not a coincidence."

Congress demands sacking of HM

New Delhi: Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Randeep Singh Surjewala held a press conference here on Monday and held the Narendra Modi government guilty of "treason", claiming that the "Centre's spyware has dismantled national security", after it emerged former party President Rahul Gandhi, among others, was one of the potential targets of snooping using the Pegasus spyware developed by Israel's NSO Group. "Rule of law", 'fundamental right to privacy' and 'Constitutional duties' have been murdered in broad day light by the Modi government," the Congress leaders said.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, election strategist Prashant Kishor and Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw are the big names revealed as potential targets of Israeli spyware 'Pegasus' in the second set of explosive revelations by The Wire. Apart from opposition leaders like Rahul Gandhi and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee, the latest reveal, according to The Wire, includes two current Union Ministers, Prahlad Patel and Ashwini Vaishnaw. Vaishnaw, who joined Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet recently, is IT Minister. He was an MP at the time when the names were targeted - 2018 and 2019. The report into the spying scandal is based on a leaked database accessed by Paris-based media non-profit Forbidden Stories and Amnesty International that was shared with a host of publications around the world for a collaborative investigation. Most of the numbers identified in the list were geographically concentrated in 10 country clusters: India, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Hungary, Kazakhstan,

Prashant Kishor, Mamata's nephew also targeted

Kishor's current or one-time role as a key political advisor and strategist for a range of opposition parties, including the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Congress in Punjab, besides the Trinamool, means the agency targeting him is also interested in gathering information about the government's political opponents in different parts of the country. The forensic examination of his current phone also shows that what appear to be unsuccessful attempts to initiate a Pegasus attack were made on Kishor's phone in 2018, just months prior to the general elections of 2019. Traces of Pegasus on Kishor's phone were also detected in 14 days in June 2021 and 12 days in July 2021, including July 13, the day when he met Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi in Delhi. In fact, a hack of Kishor's phone occurred even on the date that The Wire met him and AI helped conduct forensic analysis on it. In addition, the mobile number of key strategist Abhishek Banerjee, the powerful Trinamool Congress MLA who is also the nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, was also selected as a potential target for surveillance by a government client of NSO Group, an investigation of leaked data by The Wire and its media partners on the Pegasus Project has shown. Also on the list is Banerjee's personal secretary.

50,000 phone numbers worldwide on list linked to Israeli spyware Pegasus: Reports

- ▶ The Post said the numbers on the list were unattributed, but other media outlets participating in the project were able to identify more than 1,000 people in more than 50 countries.
- ▶ They included several members of Arab royal families, at least 65 business executives, 85 human rights activists, 189 journalists and more than 600 politicians and government officials -- including heads of state, prime ministers and cabinet ministers.



according to reports. The NSO Group and its Pegasus malware -- capable of switching on a phone's camera or microphone, and harvesting its data -- have been in the headlines since 2016, when researchers accused it of helping spy on a dissident in the United Arab Emirates. Sunday's revelations -- part of a collaborative investigation by The Washington Post, The Guardian, Le Monde and other media outlets -- raise privacy concerns and reveal the far-reaching extent to which the private firm's software could be misused. The leak consists of more than 50,000

smartphone numbers believed to have been identified as connected to people of interest by NSO clients since 2016, the news organizations said, although it was unclear how many devices were actually targeted or surveilled.

The Post said a forensic analysis of 37 of the smartphones on the list showed there had been "attempted and successful" hacks of the devices, including those of two women close to Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered in 2018 by a Saudi hit squad.

What is Pegasus spyware?

Pegasus is a highly invasive tool that can switch on a target's phone camera and microphone, as well as e device, effectively turning a phone into a pocket spy. In some cases, it can be installed without the need to trick access data on the user into initiating a download.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday observed that hospitals have become large industries thriving on human distress, and it is better they are closed. The top court added state governments can provide better hospitals, instead of permitting private hospitals to operate from small residential buildings. A bench comprising Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and M.R. Shah pulled up the Gujarat government for extending the deadline for hospitals in connection with building use emissions. The



bench cited that one patient had recovered from Covid and had to be released the next day, but he died due to fire, and also two nurses were burnt alive. In December last year, the court had directed the Centre to submit data from all states on fire

safety audits carried out in hospitals. The court noted that although different states and union territories have taken measures and conducted inspections, further audits were required and asked the state government to constitute a committee to carry out a fire audit of each Covid hospital at least once in a month, in each district. The bench listed the matter for further hearing after two weeks. The Court was hearing a suo motu case concerning fire tragedies in Covid-19 hospitals across the country following incidents in Rajkot and Ahmedabad.

Activist, held for FB post, freed after SC order

Imphal: Authorities in Manipur on Monday released activist Erendro Leichombam on the Supreme Court's orders, two months after he was detained under the National Security Act (NSA) for his Facebook post criticising BJP leaders for advocating cow dung and cow urine as cure for Covid-19. Leichombam was released from the Central Jail on Monday afternoon as a division bench earlier on Monday ordered his release on or before 5 p.m.

Raj Kundra arrested for 'making', 'publishing' porn content

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a major swoop, the Mumbai Police late on Monday arrested businessman Raj Kundra -- the husband of Bollywood actor and model Shilpa Shetty -- for allegedly making pornographic content and publishing them through mobile applications. The shocking action was based on a case registered by the police in February this year, Mumbai Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale said in a late night statement. Thereafter, Kundra, a British-Indian businessman, was being investigated by the Crime Branch-CID of Mumbai



Police. "A case was registered with the Crime Branch about the creation of pornographic films and publishing them through some apps. We've arrested Raj Kundra in this case as he appears to be the key conspirator," said Nagrale. "We have sufficient evidences regarding this. Further investigation is in progress," he added.

Rains claim 9 more lives in Mumbai-MMR, including 5 of family, toll 42

Team Absolute | Mumbai

At least 9 people were killed, including five of a single family, as heavy rains continued to lash large parts of Mumbai and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region for the third day, taking the toll in the past two days to 42, up from 33 on Sunday, officials said here on Monday. In yet another landslide, a five-member family was wiped out and three others rescued when a portion of the Gholainagar hillock in the Parsik hills locality caved in and crushed several hutments in Kalwa suburb of Thane. The incident occurred this afternoon when loose rocks and soil from the hillock suddenly started moving and falling onto the huts below, catching many of the victims unawares. While the locals managed to rescue three persons, teams of the SDRM, Thane DRF, Fire Brigade and others later



retrieved the bodies of five members of a single family living in a tenement which was one of the two that bore the brunt of the mudslide. Another seven persons are still feared trapped under the mounds of wet mud and efforts continue to search for them. In other casualties, a 9-year-old boy fell and disappeared in an open drain in Mira Road, two men were drowned in different incidents in Thane, while a youth was washed away by flood waters in a local river in Palghar. Three persons had a miraculous escape when their car was trapped in flood waters in Belapur town and pushed into a lake nearby, but they were later saved by rescue teams and the car fished out with a crane. Several areas in the urban localities were inundated and villages in the coastal Konkan belt flooded in the incessant rains that pounded different areas.



'Aap Chronology Samajhiye..':

AMIT SHAH ON TIMING OF SNOOPING REPORT

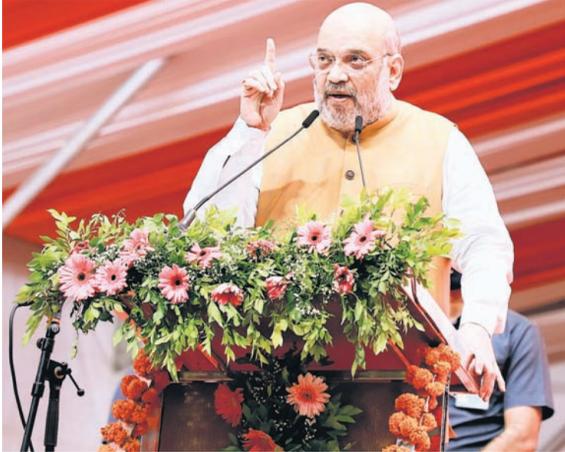
Team Absolute | New Delhi

Under attack by the opposition over reports of snooping of prominent citizens using Israeli Pegasus spyware, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday claimed that "disruptors and obstructers" will not be able to derail India's development trajectory through their "conspiracies".

In a statement, Shah said: "People have often associated this phrase with me in a lighter vein but today I want to seriously say - the timing of the selective leaks, the disruptions... 'Aap Chronology Samajhiye' (understand the chronology). This is a report by the disrupters for the obstructers."

"Disrupters are global organisations which do not like India to progress. Obstructers are political players in India who do not want India to progress. People of India are very good at understanding this chronology and connection," he contended.

The Home Minister stated that "disruptors and obstructers will not be



able to derail India's development trajectory through their conspiracies and monsoon session will bear new fruits of progress". Referring to timing of the reports'

last evening, we saw a report which has been amplified by a few sections with only one aim - to do whatever is possible and humiliate India at the world stage, peddle the same old narratives about our nation and derail India's development trajectory."

"The people of India have high hopes from the current Monsoon Session. Key bills for the welfare of farmers, youngsters, women and the backward sections of society are lined up for debate and discussion. No less than the Prime Minister said that the Government is ready to discuss all topics," he said.

Attacking the Congress, he said: "To see the rudderless Congress jump on to this bandwagon is not unexpected. They have good past experience in trampling over democracy and with their own house not in order, they are now trying to derail anything progressive that comes up in Parliament."

"And, I want to assure the people of India that the Modi gov't priority is clear - 'National Welfare' and we will keep working to achieve that no matter what happens," he said.

'Allegedly 0.04%', says Justice Nariman on UP's Covid positivity rate

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday during the hearing of an intervention application, against Kerala government's decision to relax Covid lockdown restrictions for three days in view of Bakrid amid high infection rate of 10.9 per cent, remarked that Uttar Pradesh Covid positivity rate is "allegedly 0.04 per cent".

The application was moved by one PKD Nambiar, a Delhi resident, in the suo motu case already initiated by the Supreme Court in connection with Uttar Pradesh government's decision on Kanwar Yatra. Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for Nambiar, argued positivity rate in Kerala is 10.9 per cent, while in UP it was only 0.042 per cent, when this court intervened in the Kanwar Yatra matter and expressed its discontent with the UP government's decision to allow the yatra. Singh said the positivity



rate in Delhi is merely 0.08 per cent and added that a positivity rate of over 5 per cent is certainly not good.

At this juncture, the bench headed by Justice R.F. Nariman said, "allegedly 0.04%". Singh contended these statistics are put out by respective state governments and pointed out the grim situation of COVID-19 in Kerala. He urged the court to pass an order in the matter.

The application submitted that despite discontent shown by the top court over the yatra, the Kerala government is acting in a

casual manner by relaxing Covid norms. "To the utter dismay of India's citizens, the Kerala government announced a 3-day relaxation of lockdown restrictions on July 18, 19 and 20 keeping in view the upcoming Bakrid festival," said the plea.

Kerala government counsel submitted that it has only opened few shops for the festival and otherwise all norms for Covid are strictly followed. The top court asked Kerala government to file response by evening and agreed to take up the issue on Tuesday.

Gurugram man drowns in pedestrian underpass after heavy rain

Gurugram | Agencies

A man aged between 25 to 30 died, allegedly due to drowning in a waterlogged pedestrian underpass in Gurugram on Monday.

The underpass leads from Sohna Road towards Naharpur Rupa at Rajiv Chowk in Gurugram. The incident followed a heavy downpour in the city on Monday morning, police said.

The deceased's identity is yet to be ascertained. The police said whether the man was trying to cross the underpass on foot or in a vehicle will be clear once the rainwater is flushed out. His body has been shifted to a mortuary wherein it will be handed over to his family after post-mortem.

"We received a call through '112' that a man had drowned in a waterlogged pedestrian underpass at Rajiv Chowk. The rescue teams took 1.30



hours to flush out the body," said R.N. Yadav, a fire department official.

Police said that the victim is suspected to have died due to drowning since no external injury marks were found on his body. Inquest proceedings have been initiated in this regard, they said. Gurugram received its first spell of heavy rains, which led to waterlogging in multiple locations and brought traffic to a standstill at key stretches in the city.

BJP District President caught on camera consuming liquor in Bihar

Patna | Agencies

Liquor ban in Bihar is a milestone decision as claimed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with complete support from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). However, a BJP District President has made a mockery of the law after he was caught on camera consuming liquor in the Madhubani district. Siyaram Shah, the Jhunjharpur BJP District President, had thrown a liquor party inside the party office in Jhunjharpur. An alleged video of the party went viral on social media. The video shows Shah smoking cigarettes and glasses filled with liquor and starters (chips packet) placed on a table right in front of him with background music. Two more persons accompanied the BJP leader, however their faces are not visible in the video. Shah seems to be suggest-



ing that they had organised the party inside the BJP district office near Jhunjharpur sub-divisional hospital. Absolute India has not confirmed the authenticity of this alleged video and photos circulated on social media platforms. On contacting him, Siyaram Shah said, "The alleged video is not authentic. Someone has conspired against me. The video is doctored and someone has shown my face in the video to defame me." Chandramani, the Jhunjharpur police station House

Officer said, "We have received the video and sent it to the lab to verify its authenticity. The matter is under investigation. Action will be taken on the basis of the investigation report. We are also making efforts to identify those persons whose faces are not visible in the video." After the alleged video went viral on social media, Rohini Acharya, the daughter of Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) Chief Lalu Prasad, posted a series of tweets and slammed CM Nitish Kumar. "When will you send the BJP District President to jail? Is the liquor prohibition act made only for poor people and Dalits?" Acharya asked. "What is happening under the government of 'mis-governance' babu (Nitish Kumar). Liquor trade is going on under the protection of the ruling Bihar government. They are making illegal money in the name of liquor ban," she said.

Safeguarding OFB employees' interests post corporatisation: Government

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As defence employee bodies reject its decision to corporatise the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), the government has ensured safeguarding the interests of the OFB employees post the move, the Parliament was told on Monday. In a written reply to CPI member Binoy Viswam in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt said that it has been decided that all the employees of OFB (Group A, B & C), belonging to the production units and also the non-production units being handed over to the new DPSUs (to be formed) would be transferred to these DPSUs on terms of foreign service without any deputation allowance (deemed deputation), initially for a period of two years

from the appointed date. "All the employees of OFB Head Quarters, OFB New Delhi Office, OF Schools and OF Hospitals, would be transferred to the Directorate of Ordnance Factories (to be formed) under the Department of Defence Production, initially for a period of two years from the appointed date," he added. Till such time the employees remain on deemed deputation to the new entities, they shall continue to be subject to all rules and regulations as are applicable to the Central Government servants, Bhatt said, adding that their pay scales, allowances, leave, medical facilities, career progression and other service conditions will also continue to be governed by existing rules, regulations and orders, as applicable to the Central government servants.

TOP LASHKAR COMMANDER AMONG TWO TERRORISTS KILLED IN SHOPIAN ENCOUNTER

Srinagar | Agencies

Top Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) commander was among the two terrorists killed during an encounter with the security forces at the Check Sadiq area in South Kashmir's Shopian district, officials said on Monday.

Police said acting on a specific information generated by the Shopian police at the presence of terrorists at village Check-i-Sidique Khan area, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by the police, Army's 34 RR and 178 BN of the CRPF in the said area.



During the search operation, as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given repeated opportunities to surrender, however, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which retaliated leading to an encounter.

They have been identified as Ishaq Ahmad Dar, a resident of Halshirmal in Shopian and was a top LeT commander active since 2017. The other terrorist was Majid Iqbal Bhat, a resident of Melibagh Imamsahab, Shopian.

7 KILLED IN ROAD ACCIDENT IN UP

Sambhal: Seven persons were killed and eight others injured in a collision between two buses on the Agra-Chandausi Highway in the early hours of Monday. The accident occurred near the Laharavan village when a bus carrying a marriage party was parked on the roadside due to a punctured tyre and it was hit by another bus. Superintendent of Police, Chakresh Mishra, said, "Those killed have been identified as Virpal, 60, Happy, 35, Chhote, 40, Rakesh, 30, Abhay, 18, Vineet, 30, and Bhure, 25. They were returning from a wedding when the accident took place. The injured were admitted to a hospital while the bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination, the SP said. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed grief over the incident and has directed officials to ensure all relief to the victims.

Portion of Brindvan Garden wall collapses, triggers panic near KRS dam

Mandya | Agencies

Amid allegations over illegal mining causing damage to iconic Krishna Raja Sagara Dam, a portion of the wall beneath the stairs connecting Brindavan Garden to the area where the idol of Goddess Cauvery is installed near the dam, collapsed late on Sunday, triggering panic among those residing in the vicinity. The ornamental, terraced Brindavan Garden is located nine kms from Mysuru where the dam is situated. Swirling musical fountains with soft music



and colourful lights transform it into a veritable fairy land in the evenings, attracting thousands of

visitors. According to authorities, around 30 stones supporting the stairs had fallen off, result-

ing in the collapse of a portion of the wall. "This could have happened due to the incessant rains in the last few days as the mortar, used in construction works those days, may have turned weak in the recent years," an officer told reporters. Following the incident, Srirangapatna MLA Ravindra Srikantiah visited the spot along with Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Superintending Engineer Vijay Kumar. Both of them denied any threat to the safety of the dam, claiming that the portion which collapsed is not connected to the core part of the dam.

SOME CAN'T DIGEST DALITS, WOMEN, SC/ST AS MINISTERS: PM

New Delhi: Due to the ruckus created by opposition parties in both houses of parliament, Prime Minister could not introduce his recently inducted Council of Ministers on Monday but he launched scathing attack on opposition members and alleged that some people can't digest Dalits, Women, SC/ST and OBC made ministers. "I thought that there would be enthusiasm in the Parliament as so many women, Dalits, tribals have become Ministers. This time our colleagues from agricultural and rural background, OBC community, have been given a berth in Council of Ministers," the Prime Minister said while he introduced his new Ministers in the lower House. Taking cognisance of huge pandemonium created by the Opposition on different issues, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla adjourned the House for the day.

Security at Delhi borders, Red Fort area tightened ahead of I-Day

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Security has been beefed up in the national capital, including near its three borders in Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur, in view of the Monsoon Session of the Parliament that commenced on Monday and the Independence Day next month, the Delhi Police said.

Apart from reviewing the security arrangements in the national capital, the Delhi Police have also strengthened the security in and around the Red Fort ahead of the Independence Day. Delhi Police Commissioner Balaji Srivastava conducted a citywide patrol on Sunday night with over 30,000 police personnel.

To ensure elaborate security arrangements in the national capital in view of the ongoing Monsoon Session of the Parliament and in the run up to the Independence Day, Srivastava, who took charge as Delhi Police chief on June 30, visited the borders areas where thousands of farmers are sitting on protest against the three Central farm laws for the last several months.



Man having affair with woman constable killed in Bihar

Patna: A man having an affair with a woman constable of Bihar police was gunned down in Vaishali district on Monday.

The deceased was identified as Munna Rai, a native of Mani Bhakurgarh village under Sarai police station. His wife alleged that a woman constable of the village was behind his murder. She had threatened him and his family a month ago. "Initially, my husband (Munna Rai) was in a relationship with the woman constable of the village. After some time, she extorted money from him. She recently threatened him and the entire family with dire consequences after my husband refused to give money. I suspect that she was behind the murder of my husband," the deceased's wife said. Raghav Dayal, DSP (Sadar) of Vaishali district said, "Initially, it came to notice that purchase of a Mahindra Bolero was the reason for the dispute. Now, there is another angle of love affair in the investigation." "We have detained two men and two women in this case. Their interrogation is currently underway," Dayal said.



8 killed in road accident in Badwani

Team Absolute | Bhopal

At least eight people have died and 15 others injured when a jeep in which they were travelling fell into a deep gorge in Badwani district, close to the Maharashtra border.

Governor Mangubhai Patel and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan have expressed grief over this accident.

Police said, "Some people of Barwani district were returning from Maharashtra's Toranmal on Sunday night, when their jeep went out of control and fell into a deep gorge. So far the death toll has gone up to eight. Most of the people who died are residents of Pati police station area of Barwani

district who had gone to pay obeisance at Shiv Mandir. The operation is on to search survivors at the accident site."

Governor Mangubhai Patel while expressing deep condolences over the accident, prayed to God for peace to



the departed souls and strength to their families to bear the grief, and speedy recovery of the injured.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said, "Sad news has been received about the death of eight people in a road accident in Badwani. Praying to God to give peace to the departed souls. Give strength to bear the grief to family members and recovery to the injured soon."

CM TRANSFERRED RS 16.40 LAKH IN ACCOUNTS OF 328 CHILD BENEFICIARIES

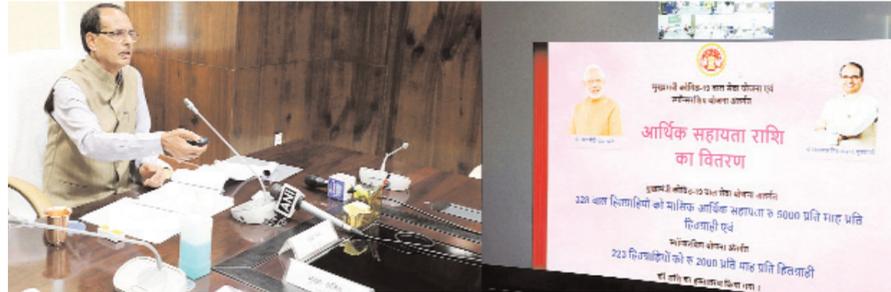
- How can someone be an orphan in a living society: Chief Minister
- Instructions given to appoint foster officers in each district

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Chouhan on Monday transferred an amount of Rs 16 lakh 40 thousand to the accounts of 328 child beneficiaries under the Covid-19 Child Service Scheme with a single click. He said that how can one remain an orphan while living in a living and aware society. Chouhan said that the state government would bear Rs 5000 per month to the beneficiaries of the scheme, ration for food, education anywhere in India.

Chouhan held virtual discussions with 13 children and parents of Indore, Rajgarh, Seoni, Betul, Mandasaur, Satna and Gwalior under child service scheme, sponsorship and foster care. He said that in the child service scheme, due to the death of the parents or the earning member of the household due to corona, their dependent children will be given Rs. 5 thousand per month, ration and all the responsibilities related to their education will be borne by the state government. Talking to the children, he said that apart from this, if there is any other requirement, the collectors will take care of them. He said that a foster officer should be appointed in every district to look after the children.

Chouhan said that how can one become an orphan in a living society, he said that I am not saying like this, many examples are in front of us in the world, who had lost their



parents in their childhood but they never gave up. They went ahead and went so far as to become the guides of the society. There are many examples in front of us including Goswami Tulsidas, Vivekananda, former US President George Washington etc. Guru Shankaracharya, Milkha Singh, Nelson Mandela, Steve Jobs, who showed direction to the world in their respective fields.

It was brought to the notice of Chouhan by Collector Indore Manish Singh that in one case, the grandmother of the children of the children of the child service scheme had sold the house of their parents, which cost about one crore, at a throwaway price of Rs 40 lakh. The matter came up. Action was taken in the matter after intervention by the administration. Chief Minister Chouhan immediately directed all the collectors to take immediate action when such cases come to the fore and protect the property of the beneficiaries. Make sure that the property of the parents is in the

name of their children only. He described the initiative of Collector Indore as exemplary.

Chouhan informed that under the sponsorship scheme, an amount of Rs.4 lakh 46 thousand was transferred to 223 beneficiaries as Rs.2,000 per month. The Government of India's sponsorship scheme has been simplified to provide the benefit of this scheme to the beneficiaries whose parents died before March 1, 2021, their financial condition is not good.

Chouhan discussed with Vibha Aneja and Jyoti Bhavna of Gwalior. Vibha, being her own children, took 2 girls on foster care. After this a girl child, who was suffering from PCOS, was taken on foster care. Along with education, education and vocational training are being provided to the girls. Apart from this, 8 girls have been taken in foster care by Jyoti Bhavna's non-government organization, who are being provided assistance of Rs.2000 per month.

CM reviewed rainfall situation in state; plants Saptaparni sapling

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the Department of Agriculture should remain in constant contact with the scientists of the Indian Meteorological Department. On the basis of rainfall conditions and related forecasts in the state, the farmers should be given advice in relation to the Kharif crop. If there is a possibility of less rain, then farmers should be motivated to sow alternate crops that need less water.

Chouhan was addressing a meeting organized in the Mantralaya on the weather forecast. Farmer Welfare Minister Kamal Patel joined virtually. The officers of the



Meteorological Department were present along with Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains, Agricultural Production Commissioner KK Singh.

Information was given in the meeting that 44 percent rainfall has been recorded in the Chambal area. Sowing

over 16 percent area has been done. Area under soybean cultivation has declined by 10 lakh hectares. Maize sowing is normal.

Officials of the Meteorological Department informed that in the last week of July there is a possibility of rainfall in the state. Normal rainfall has occurred in 16 districts of the state, while in 33 districts the rainfall is less than the average. More than normal rainfall has been recorded only in Singrauli district.

Chief Minister Chouhan planted Saptaparni sapling in Smart Park. Chouhan plants a sapling every day in fulfillment of his resolve.

Saptaparni, an evergreen medicinal tree, has great importance in Ayurveda.

CM releases annual magazine of Model School

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan released the annual magazine "Prastuti 2020-21" of Model School Bhopal at his residence today. Chouhan also felicitated the students of Model School, by presenting cheque to Karthik Sharma, Harshita Makwana, Rajneesh Singraule, Veeru Raja Rajput and Ilma Khan who have figured in the state level merit list. While congratulating these students, Chief Minister Chouhan said that the destination is yet to come. Be enthusiastic and work hard continuously to achieve your goal.

Principal Rekha Sharma informed that the magazine published on the theme of Corona has been divided into



three parts under the titles Disaster, Opportunities and Challenges. High School Principal Poonam Awasthi is the editor of the magazine. Bhargavi Shukla, Diksha Yadav, Deepshiksha Yadav and Prashant Sahu are stu-

dent editors of the magazine.

Model School TT Nagar is run by Board of Secondary Education. It was established in 1964. The students who have come out of the school are making their valuable contributions to the society.

MP CONG CONCERNED ABOUT KAMAL NATH'S ENTRY INTO NATIONAL POLITICS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Talks of former Madhya Pradesh chief minister and senior Congress leader Kamal Nath's entry at the national level and entrusting him with a major responsibility by the party has left Congress leaders in the state in a tizzy. The state Congress leaders fear that Nath's foray into national politics will lead to re-emergence of factionalism within the party in the state.

The political developments taking place in the Congress inner circles for the past one month have indicated that Kamal Nath's political presence is being felt at the national level. This is because he is a leader considered close to the Gandhi family and has no affiliation with any faction within the party. This is the reason why the party high command has taken his help whether it is resolving the political crisis in Rajasthan or Punjab.

Kamal Nath's influence is growing in Delhi and he has met the party's Interim President Sonia Gandhi as well as party General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Speculation is rife that in the coming days Kamal Nath can be entrusted with a major responsibility by the party at the national level. It is being speculated that he can even be appointed the party's working president. The ongoing discussion about Kamal Nath's entry into national politics has left the Congress leaders in the state worried. Former cabinet minister Sajjan Singh Verma has expressed concern about a possible split in the party, if this happens. He says, "Kamal Nath is such a leader who has been successful in keeping every Congressman united, so the state needs him the most. Even if he enters national politics, he should remain active in the politics of Madhya Pradesh, this is our demand from the party high command."

Echoing similar views of the state party leaders, even other Congress leaders completely agree to this. The Congress leaders say that when Kamal Nath took over charge as party state president, there were several factions in the state. Gradually factionalism ended and today the entire Congress is united. If Kamal Nath leaves Madhya Pradesh, the party is likely to split into factions and will not be able to come back to power during the 2023 state Assembly election.

Political analyst Saji Thomas says, "The Congress appears to be united after quite a long time. The main reason for it is that there no longer exist factions within the party. The primary reason for this is Kamal Nath's political experience and his seniority. In such circumstances, if Kamal Nath forays into national politics, there will be a possibility of disintegration within the Congress in Madhya Pradesh, so it is natural for Congress leaders to be worried. Congress was once synonymous with factions within the party which no longer exists now. If Kamal Nath enters national politics, Congress will have to face tough challenges in the state."

CM pays tribute to Shaheed Mangal Pandey

■ Today is the 194th birth anniversary of Amar Shaheed Mangal Pandey, who first blew the bugle of the freedom struggle in the country.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan remembered Martyr Mangal Pandey on Monday by paying homage to him on his anniversary. Chouhan garlanded the portrait of Shaheed Mangal Pandey at his residence. Today is the 194th anniversary of Amar Shaheed Mangal Pandey, who first blew the bugle of the freedom struggle in the country. He was born on July 19, 1827 in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh. He was a soldier of the 34th Bengal Infantry of the East India Company. He is respected as a hero of the freedom struggle. The British feared that the spark of rebellion that Mangal Pandey had lit could become a flame across the country. Therefore, 10 days before the fixed date, Mangal Pandey was hanged on 8 April 1857. In 1984, a postage stamp was released in his honour by the Government of India for his important role in India's freedom struggle.



40% COVID-recovered Patients are having Post-COVID Symptoms, AIG Survey finds

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In India, as we clocked over 3 crore COVID recoveries, the incidence of Post-COVID symptoms is noticeably increasing across the country. AIG Hospitals, recently carried out a PAN India online survey to understand the true picture of such Post-COVID illnesses. The most important result was that over 40% of COVID recovered patients said that they are still having symptoms, out of which weakness/fatigue was reported the maximum.

Many patients also reported newer symptoms like Insomnia, Neuropsychiatric issues among others. "We were seeing many such Post-COVID patients in our hospital, but this survey gave us the true picture of this Post-COVID Syndrome.

If this is an indication to go by then we are looking at over 1 crore people in India who have recovered from COVID-19 but are still having certain symp-

ptoms," said Dr. D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman, AIG Hospitals.

Dr. Reddy further added that "We also asked in our survey about the usage of steroids in these patients during their COVID-19 treatment and found out that 74% hospitalized patients received steroids but 34% required oxygen. We believe there is some correlation between irrational use of steroids and Post COVID complications because as per the guidelines we are supposed to give steroids in COVID patients only to those who require Oxygen. Further research will be required to ascertain the steroids."

Present during the occasion, Chief Guest, Narsing Rao, Principal Secretary to the CM of Telangana said, "It is a growing challenge and needs to be addressed immediately from all relevant stakeholders.

We are keeping a close eye on this situation as it unfolds. It is commendable on part of AIG Hospitals to come up

with such an initiative, a first-of-its-kind dedicated Post-COVID Care Clinic so early and showing the way ahead in managing these Post-COVID cases. It will be important to see what newer protocols will be required for these patients and it is our cumulative responsibility to help in this regard."

Looking at the urgent need to address this pertinent issue of Post-COVID complications, AIG Hospitals today announced the launch of India's first dedicated Post-COVID Care Clinic. The clinic will comprise of a multidisciplinary team with experts from Internal Medicine, Cardiology, Gastroenterology, Neurology, Nephrology, Rheumatology, Psychiatry, Orthopedics, among others providing comprehensive care. The objective is to evaluate and manage these patients from a holistic point of view. The finding of the AIG COVID Survey is now being published as a research report currently available as a pre-print.

"ANNAPAKSHI VILAKU" is third Exhibit of the Week at IGRMS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the Latest and popular online series of Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) entitled 'Exhibit of the Week' the ANNAPAKSHI VILAKU, A Big Brass Lamp collected from 1999 has been put on display from Monday. The Community of Rural People of Kollam, Kerala. It's Measurement Height - 217 cm., Width - 52 cm. displayed in the audience as The third Exhibit of the month of July, 2021 through official website, Facebook, Instagram and twitter page of the IGRMS.

In this regard Praveen Kumar Mishra, Director, IGRMS said that Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (National Museum of Mankind), Initially this series will focus on the masterpieces from its collection which are considered as unique for their contribution to the cultural history of a particular ethnic group or area. Annapakshi vilaku is a brass lamp. Annapakshi, literally means a bird resembling a swan which is said to be mythical, lives in the heaven, known for its purity, divinity and prosperity. Vilaku means lamp. This giant lamp is having a circular base, long stem and flaring bowl like oil container with wicks. The lamp is topped by an Annapakshi bird. Making of this marvellous lamp involves lost wax solid casting done by traditional metal workers. The lamp is casted in such a manner that it can be easily dismantled and reassembled.



"Annual Lecture of IGRMS"

The annual IGRMS lecture is being organized online by the museum on Tuesday, 20 July 2021, in which SB Ota, Tagore National Fellow, Ministry of Culture, Government of India and former Joint Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, will deliver a lecture on the topic "Inquiries Into Deep Human History: Investigations of Acheulian Sites around Tikoda and Damdangri District Raisen, Madhya Pradesh." Ota has been the Director of IGRMS (National Museum Of Mankind), Bhopal. He was the first director of the National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities launched by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India under the aegis of the Archaeological Survey of India. Dr. Ota was honored with "Young Scientist Award" from Indian Science Congress Association in 1987.

STATE BJP LEADERS WANT "UP LIKE POPULATION CONTROL LAW"

■ On July 11 - World Population Day - UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath triggered a row with the release of a new population policy for the state

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Uttar Pradesh government's controversial proposal for population control has generated attention in Madhya Pradesh, with ruling BJP members clamouring for a similar law in their state.

Some of those demanding such measures lashed out at the Muslim community for "marrying two, three times and producing 10 kids", but seemed to forget they have as many children themselves.

Ram Lallu Vaishya, a BJP MLA from Singrauli, seemed to hold Muslims responsible for India's massive population, declaring: "Our policy was 'We two and our two', but did it succeed? Hindus were asked to get a vasectomy, but other were left free. This should not happen."

Vaishya has nine children. The BJP's Mahendra Singh Sisodia called for a UP-like population control mechanism. "There are many laws to control population but Uniform Civil Code has to be implemented because Muslims marry two-three times and produce 10 children. There should be a limit on number of children produced irrespective of caste or religion," he said. Cabinet Minister Vishwas Sarang said it was his "firm belief" such a law should be passed.

The opposition Congress has slammed leaders of the ruling party for their demand.

"At Independence population was close to 40 crores (Muslims were 12 crores)... now it is 130 crores (Muslims are around 25 crores)... The reason for all this is not 'population control'... the real reason is the UP election," Arif Masood, a Congress MLA from Bhopal, said.

Masood has four children. Rameshwar Sharma, a MLA and former pro-term Speaker, wrote to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh

Chouhan, saying: "... humble request... making population control law will prove to be a milestone in the direction of all round development, security and good governance..." The big question is if Madhya Pradesh's political leaders walk the talk on population control.

The state has 227 sitting MLAs, of whom 125 are from the BJP. 49 of these MLAs have more than three children. 14 BJP MLAs have more than four and three MLAs have more than five.

The Congress has 95 MLAs, of whom 33 have three or more children. Of 31 ministers in Chief Minister Chouhan's cabinet, 13 have three or more children. Madhya Pradesh is India's sixth most populated state according to the 2011 census.

On July 11 - World Population Day - UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath released a new policy.

This was days after Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma made similar announcements; Mr Sarma, in fact, indicated the policy

was meant to check the growth of the Muslim population.

UP's bill - a draft version of which has been shared with the public for feedback - proposes that people with more than two children will be debarred from contesting local polls, applying for government jobs or receiving any subsidy. It also bars government employees from promotions.

Sources have said Madhya Pradesh MLAs (like BJP MPs in Parliament) are considering a private member's bill on population control and the Uniform Civil Code in the next Assembly session.

In 2000 the Congress government introduced a two-child norm for government employees and panchayat-level polls that was challenged in court and then withdrawn by a BJP government in 2005.

Last week a 2020 affidavit from the Union Health Ministry that had been filed before the Supreme Court said the government is "unequivocally against coercion in family planning".



Maharashtra MLC nominations: BOMBAY HIGH COURT RESERVES ORDER ON PLEA ON GOV'S DELAY

The bench was hearing a petition filed by Nashik-resident Ratan Soli Luth seeking a direction to the governor to decide on the 12 names recommended for MLC posts by the Maharashtra government in November last year

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Monday said the governor has a Constitutional duty to either accept or not accept the proposal sent by the chief minister nominating persons to the Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC), adding there was no escape from this duty. A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni asked that if a proposal has been forwarded by the chief minister with the aid and advice of the state council of ministers for nomination of persons to MLC posts, then was it not the duty of the governor to take a decision. The bench was hearing a petition filed by Nashik-resident Ratan Soli Luth seeking a direction to the governor to decide on the 12 names recommended for MLC posts by



the Maharashtra government in November last year. The HC, after hearing the petitioner, the state government and the Centre, reserved its order. The bench, on Monday, sought

to know from Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, appearing for the Union government, if the governor had a duty to act and speak. "The proposal has been sent and is pending since November, 2020. The governor may or may not accept it but does the governor not have a duty to speak or act? Is there any time provision in the Constitution that says that the governor may not act at all," Chief Justice Datta said. The HC bench said when there was a duty cast upon the governor under the Constitution to nominate persons to the post of MLCs on the aid and advice of the council of ministers, then it was the governor's duty to accept the proposal or not. "Once a proposal is sent, then it is the duty of the governor to accept it or send it back. Can the governor keep the seats (of MLCs) vacant?" the court said.

'Did Pegasus scandal happen in Maharashtra?' Congress seeks probe

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Congress on Monday sought to know if snooping and phone tapping took place in the state using the Israeli software Pegasus during the previous BJP-led state government. State Congress spokesman Sachin Sawant also demanded an inquiry into the issue. "Did the Pegasus scandal happen in Maharashtra?" asked Sawant, whose party shares power with the Shiv Sena and NCP in the state.

"With whose permission did officers of the DGIPR (Directorate General of Information and Public Relations) go to Israel? What training did they receive? Did they come back and report? Is it related to Pegasus?" he asked.



The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state should conduct a probe into it, he said in a statement. An international media consortium on Sunday reported that more than 300 verified mobile phone numbers, including of two serving ministers, over 40 journalists, three opposition leaders and one sitting judge besides scores of business persons and activists in India could have been targeted for hacking through the Israeli spyware sold only to government agencies. The central government, however, dismissed allegations of any kind of surveillance on its part on specif-

ic people, saying it "has no concrete basis or truth associated with it whatsoever". Sawant said in Maharashtra, a case of alleged "unauthorised phone-tapping" by (senior IPS officer) Rashmi Shukla during the previous Devendra Fadnavis-led government has already come to light. "But, there were also reports of the use of Pegasus software," he claimed. The Congress leader asked if any IPS officer in the state headquarters 'Mantralaya' (secretariat) was working on this. "With whose permission did officers of the DGIPR (Directorate General of Information and Public

Relations) go to Israel? What training did they receive? Did they come back and report? Is it related to Pegasus?" he asked. Sawant said it is "surprising and suspicious" that such tours took place during the election period (in 2019). He said the issue of phone tapping at the national level through Pegasus software and the "probable role of the Modi government in it is a very serious matter" in the country. All BJP-ruled states may have been instructed to work on this procedure, he claimed. "Phone tapping during the Fadnavis government in Maharashtra had the same intentions," he alleged.

Maha cops rescue 116 revelers stranded on hill after heavy rains

The rescue team of around 15 fire-brigade personnel deployed ladders and thick nylon ropes to create a human wall in the gushing stream barely a dozen metres wide, and helped the marooned people cross over, without any injuries.



and small waterfalls. According to Kharghar Police Station Senior Police Inspector S Mali, they managed to wade through a shallow stream in the morning. However, by afternoon, the shallow stream had swelled into a fast-moving river making it impossible for the picnickers to cross over to go home, he told media-persons. Panicking, they made frantic calls to the police and fire brigade which soon organized the two-hour long rescue operation late on Sunday. The rescue team of around 15 fire-brigade personnel deployed ladders and thick nylon ropes to create a human wall in the gushing stream barely a dozen metres wide, and helped the marooned people cross over, without any injuries.

Team Absolute | Thane

In a humanitarian gesture, the Navi Mumbai Police and Fire Brigade rushed to the rescue of at least 116 picnickers who were stranded on a hill on Sunday following heavy rains that cut off the return route, officials said here. The revelers, including at least 78 women and five kids had gone for a picnic in Kharghar's lush green hills streaming with several big

FADNAVIS CALLS ON MAHARASHTRA MINISTERS IN DELHI

Fadnavis had played a key role in the induction of Rane, Karad, Patil and Pawar in the union cabinet, and hopes they use their power and influence in securing new schemes and additional funds for Maharashtra.



Mumbai: In a whistle-stop tour of the national capital, former chief minister Devendra called on all the four newly inducted cabinet members from as well as the new labour minister Bhupendra Yadav, who was in-charge of Maharashtra during the, in his daylong trip to New Delhi. His first stop was the residence of BJP leader Narayan Rane, who has been inducted as a minister for micro, small and medium enterprise. He then visited former leader Bharti Pawar, who joined the BJP on the eve of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and has given charge of the department of health and family welfare. Fadnavis met Bhiwandi MP Kapil Patil, who has been given the Panchayat Raj portfolio. Newly inducted minister of state for finance, Bhagwat Karad, was pleasantly surprised to see Fadnavis at his doorstep. Fadnavis greeted Raosaheb Danve too, who has been given additional charge of department of railways. His last stop was the residence of labour minister, Yadav. Fadnavis had played a key role in the induction of Rane, Karad, Patil and Pawar in the union cabinet, and hopes they use their power and influence in securing new schemes and additional funds for Maharashtra.

Red Alert Issued For Mumbai 3 Feared Drowned As Heavy Rain Hits Maharashtra

Mumbai and its neighbouring districts of Thane, Palghar and Raigad have been witnessing heavy rains since the last couple of days. The torrential rains over the weekend claimed 30 lives in the metropolis.



region, predicting extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places over the next 24 hours. Mumbai and its neighbouring districts of Thane, Palghar and Raigad have been witnessing heavy rains since the last couple of days. The torrential rains over the weekend claimed 30 lives in the metropolis. On Monday, the Raigad disaster management department said three people were feared drowned at separate places in the district. It said one Suresh Koli (42)

Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts in the Konkan region and also for Pune, Satara and Kolhapur over the next 24 hours. It also sounded an "orange alert" for the above mentioned districts from July 20 to July 23. The IMD also issued an "orange alert" for Nashik on Monday, and said the rest of the state is expected to receive heavy rains at isolated places and also light to moderate showers on next five days. According to the IMD, the red alert indicates "extremely heavy rainfall is likely at isolated places in ghat areas". It said extremely heavy rainfall means a precipitation of more than 204.4 mm in 24 hours. An "orange alert" indicates "heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places", with precipitation between 64.5mm and 204.4 mm, the MeT office said.

Mumbai shocked as lawyer attacked with swords on road

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a horrific incident, a Mumbai lawyer was surrounded and attacked by over a dozen assailants with swords, iron rods, and knives on a road in full public view, officials said on Monday. The MBH Colony Police Station has arrested four persons and booked another seven absconding for the crime and launched a hunt to track them. The shocking incident happened on Sunday when the lawyer, Satyadev Joshi and his associate Ankit Tandon had gone to survey a land for a client in Dahisar suburb. Just then, a group of goons wielding swords, iron rods, and knives swooped on them and launched a murderous attack on Joshi, 38, and Tandon, 28, even as they screamed for help.



The bleeding duo, with sword and rod injuries in the shoulders and arms, was rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment and both are stated to be out of danger now. "I had gone to Kanderpada in Dahisar west to survey a property for

my client Tauquir Khan, who is the owner of the plot when the brutal attack occurred around 3 p.m. on Sunday," Joshi told IANS later. A resident of Goregaon, Joshi was called on Monday by the police to record his statement while a delegation of lawyers went to the police station to register their protest over the attack on a member of the legal fraternity and demanding security. Deputy Commissioner of Police Vishal Thakur visited the police station and listened to their grievances and assured necessary action in the matter, said Karan Mertia, one of the lawyers present there. Stunned by the broad daylight assault, the lawyers now plan to raise the matter with the government and Home Department through the respective city and state bar councils to ensure protection for advocates on duty.

ROAD, RAILWAY TRAFFIC DISRUPTED AFTER 2 LANDSLIDES IN KASARA

Mumbai: In two different incidents, the movement of vehicles at Nashik-Mumbai highway near Kasara Ghat and railway traffic on the Kasara railway line were affected due to landslide. On Sunday around 11pm, the Kasara police received information about a landslide in Kasara Ghat on the Mumbai-Nashik National Highway. The police, despite a lack of enough personnel at night, tried to manage the situation. "A team of officials managed traffic with the help of torches and shifted it to a single lane. Later the National Highways Authority sent a team to clear the road with the help of JCBs, which was completed at 5am," said Kasara highway police officers. Later, around 6am, a landslide took place near one of the lines at the Kasara railway track. A railway officer, requesting anonymity, said, "We have shifted traffic from down line to middle line and the up line is already running properly. Other lines are intact and railway service is running efficiently." A team of railway officials and villagers is trying to clear the area. In another incident, two houses in Kasara Shivaji Nagar collapsed on Monday morning; however, no injuries were reported and the families were given shelter at the zilla parishad school nearby.

Mumbai downpour: 100 students miss IPMAT entrance exams



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The torrential downpour in Mumbai in the past four days had an unexpected fallout - around 100 students missed the annual IPMAT entrance exams to get admission to IIM-Indore. The affected students are now running from pillar to post, with frantic messages to IIM-Indore Director, Professor Himanshu Rai, and even Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. "This year, the IPMAT was scheduled on July 16 at the Ion Digital Zone in Powai. But due to heavy rains, flooding and road blocks near the exam centre, many of us were forced to take a very long detour and could not reach on time," said Kunal N. Gupta, one of the dejected aspirants. Besides, many others like Abhinav Kale, Falak Shah, Jash Sheth and scores of other were also delayed by a few minutes but were not permitted to write the crucial exams, he said. Now, the students have launched an online campaign with hash-

tags like #PMMISSED AND #IPMAT to draw the attention of the authorities concerned. "We want them to consider the extraordinary circumstances that day we have prepared for very long for this prestigious exam, some have even taken a year's drop. We urge the government and the IIM-Indore to do the needful to save our future," Gupta said. Despite repeated attempts by IANS, the IIM-Indore Director and other authorities were not available for comments in the matter. Recounting the difficulties they encountered in the inclement weather conditions, Kale, Shah and Sheth said many of them abandoned their vehicles and tried to run in the heavy showers for almost a couple of kilometres, but were still delayed. The harried scholars have now formed a WhatsApp group to highlight their plight and have posted media clips, photos, videos of the students struggling to reach their exam centre and other things to justify their stand.

BJP to plans to connect with North Indians ahead of BMC polls

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The BJP has announced a state-wide outreach programme to connect with the north Indians across Maharashtra with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections early next year in mind. At its meeting to strategise the civic poll campaign, it was decided that BJP cannot afford to remain complacent on north Indian issues as the community constitutes a sizeable vote bank that determines the electoral outcome. The campaign called

'halchal yatra' driven by the BJP Maharashtra North Indian Morcha aims to reach out to the north Indian community and enquire about their wellbeing. The slogan for the campaign is 'North Indians are not outsiders, they are insiders.' BJP's north Indian leader Sanjay Pandey said they will start a statewide campaign to connect with north Indians living in the state. The BJP leaders have been given a strict warning not to take support from the north Indians for granted and ensure their loyalty to the party is consolidated.

No tender process needed for civic works worth up to Rs 10 lakh

In 2016, the state government issued the guidelines allowing civic works worth up to Rs 3 lakh to be allotted without a tender process and now that limit has been raised to Rs 10 lakh.

Team Absolute | Pune

In a significant decision, the Maharashtra government has increased the upper limit of the worth of

civic works which can be allotted to contractors without inviting tenders from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 10 lakh. Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) additional municipal commissioner Vikas Dhakane said small works like repair of potholes and maintenance of footpath and drainage lines were allotted to contractors based on quotations they submit. "These smaller works did not require floating of tenders. These are emergency works. They cannot wait for the entire tender process to be completed. If we resort to the tender process for such

emergency works, it will delay the completion of the required work," he said. It is still mandatory that all works of over Rs 10 lakh continue to be allotted through an e-tender process, Dhakane said. Civic officials said on December 1, 2016, the industry, energy and labour departments of the state government issued the guidelines allowing civic works worth up to Rs 3 lakh to be allotted without a tender process. "And now the industry, energy, labour and general administration departments of the state government have increased the

limit to Rs 10 lakh. The decision was taken last month and the directives have been received recently by PCMC," officials said, adding that the new guidelines will apply to all civic bodies in the state. Meanwhile, the PCMC has appointed architect firm Sunil Patil and Associates as consultants for the construction of the new administrative building of PCMC. The new 13-storey building, slated to come up near Auto Cluster in Chinchwad, is proposed to be constructed at Rs 550 crore. The current four-storey administrative building at Pimpri chowk came up in 1987.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Kids won't have impact in 3rd wave!

There is no scientific evidence to prove that the impending third wave of coronavirus disease will have a detrimental effect on children, said experts here on Friday, asking people to stay away from such misinformation, which has been on the rise since the outbreak of pandemic. It has been widely claimed that children will be infected the most during the third Covid-19 wave. While some kids were affected during the second wave, almost 90 per cent of the infections, so far, have been mild or asymptomatic. "The combination of misinformation and disinformation, which is called infodemic, has been happening since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the recent example of misinformation is that - the third wave of covid will impact children - this is complete misinformation as there is no scientific basis behind it," IPHA President and Professor, Department of Community Medicine, AIIMS, Sanjay Kumar Rai, said. This was also echoed by the Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) which noted that although children remain susceptible to infection, it was "highly unlikely that the third wave will predominantly or exclusively affect children". The experts further stated that the onset of Covid-19 also led to an overabundance of information, impacting the mental health of people. This was further exacerbated by the lockdowns and other restrictions. "There is fear and uncertainty associated with Covid-19, anxiety, and distress caused by lockdowns and social distancing, limited access to mental health services -- and this is all due to the misinformation and disinformation surfacing around," NIMHANS Professor said. Interestingly, the World Economic Forum cautions overabundance of information as digital wildfires, JNU's Centre of Social Medicine & Community Health Chairperson Dr. Rajib Das Gupta said.

SOUTH ASIA IN INDIA'S FOCUS

D.C. PATHAK

Developments in Afghanistan marking a steady rise of Taliban's hold on that country -- this resulted in the evacuation of staff from the Indian Consulate at Kandahar -- confirms many readings on how the Pak-Afghan belt would shape up in the aftermath of the withdrawal of American troops from the messy theatre, the scene of an unending 'war on terror' launched by the US in Afghanistan way back in the wake of 9/11. The date of withdrawal finally announced by President Biden had taken into account the fact of Taliban refusing to abide by its own part of the Doha agreement about eschewing violence during the run-up to the intra-Afghan dialogue that was meant to evolve the future set-up of the country. The US excessively relied on Pakistan as 'a friend in need' facilitating the interaction between the Taliban and the American Envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, and evidently ignored the deep-seated vested interest that Pakistan had in helping the Taliban to regain its stranglehold in Afghanistan. The US was also not bothered with the implications of the Sino-Pak military alliance providing a great advantage to Xi Jinping's China in a country that had always been a vital fulcrum of international politics in the historical past. That Afghanistan could throw up a global problem for the US in future may still be a distant story but for India the likely dominance of the Taliban there creates a challenge in South Asia nearer home where developments could help Pakistan to emerge as a stronger adversary. The US President primarily focused on the rise of China as a potential superpower representing the ideological rivalry between a democratic system and a one-party dictatorship, may not quite understand the reality of the Indian subcontinent -- of how a communally based partition accompanying the Independence of India had continued to poison the politics of South Asia enabling Pakistan to play the Muslim card against India

in the region on both external and internal issues. President Biden has gone by the 'comfort of distance' that the Doha Peace Agreement offered to the US against the terrorist threat from Islamic radicals -- India does not share any of it and has to plan for an enhanced danger of exposure to Pak-instigated militancy rooted in Islam. A combination of three factors seemed to be helping Pakistan to have its way in Afghanistan -- willingness of the US President to end the American military involvement in Afghanistan on the basis of a half-baked 'peace agreement' with the Taliban, implicit endorsement by the Imran regime of Afghan Taliban that derived strength from the bases it had in Khyber Pakhtunwa (KP), the historical birthplace of this anti-US radical force, and the geopolitical advantage that Pakistan had gained from the Sino-Pak military alliance. Correspondingly, India's presence and role in assisting Afghanistan has become less tenable because of growing instability in that country. The process of consultation between the major stake holders including US, Russia, Iran, India and the regional forces represented by the neighbouring countries did not catch up strongly enough to secure a place for India at the Afghan round table. As a consequence, the threat of faith-based terror emanating from the Pak-Afghan belt seemed to be deepening for India. India has to remain proactive about mobilising international opinion in favour of a democratic Afghanistan, prepared against a possible escalation of the threat of cross-border terrorism in Kashmir and elsewhere from an emboldened Pakistan and engaged in constantly building its capabilities of countering any aggressiveness of the two hostile neighbours on the borders. This is the time for India to assert its role as the predominant power in South Asia and work for the security of the region by consolidating its relationship with Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and the ASEAN on the one hand and actively supporting QUAD for the broad security of the Indian Ocean against any Chinese moves, on the other. Indo-US relations have



to be put on a solid strategic footing since the two democracies had the same global commons. The Biden Administration's emphasis on rebuilding the bonds with NATO in pursuing the policy of countering any threats 'jointly with its allies' suits India because among other things many European nations face the ire of Islamic radicals, like India does in this part of the world. These countries have denounced Pakistan in no uncertain terms for harbouring Islamic extremists and terrorists and their friendship is valuable for India for this alone, the shared values of democracy providing a basic link in addition. The Indian economy has been hit hard because of the pandemic -- this has been a global phenomenon -- but its 'revival from below' backed by Prime Minister Modi's perceptive policy of 'vocal for local' suits the genius of India and has already produced a visible impact. If even President Biden's Jobs Plan aims at executing a 'blue collar blueprint for building America' then India's emphasis on restoring the strength of 'the middle class' made a lot of sense. India had the advantage of having many leaders in business who had a global reach -- this would keep the top of India's economic pyramid strong while the local effort went into reviving its base. A steady shift of the global scene towards bipolarity between the US with its allies leading the democratic world on the one hand and China with its one-party dictatorship heading, on the other, the residual Communist empire left at the end of the Cold War, affects all geographies

but the play of Pakistan in this equation makes South Asia the region of prime concern for India. The strategic alliance between China and Pakistan representing the axis of a Communist dictatorship with a regime wedded to Islamic fundamentalism, adds to the security concerns of India that have to be meted out with a well-considered framework of strategic response. First is the challenge in Jammu and Kashmir, more so in Ladakh, on account of the Chinese grip on Pakistan that had become progressively strong because of the ambitious CPEC project built by China in POK on land ceded by Pakistan for that purpose. The threat of Sino-Pak combine has to be countered in Ladakh particularly after the build-up of PLA there and it is only natural for India to seek to make its military presence there strong enough with the help of aerial power, to provide a deterrent against the adversaries. China wants an opening into the Arabian Sea but it would be aware also of the vulnerability of its economic corridor to India's prowess. The second concern for India arises from the likely domination of Taliban in a future set-up in Afghanistan -- it could even be the restoration of the Afghan Emirate that Pakistan had installed at Kabul in 1996. Chinese support to Pakistan in Afghanistan would at least partly be in lieu of the Pak silence on the mistreatment of Muslim minorities in China. China's foreign ministry has in a fresh statement found fault

with the US for forcing a rule of its ideological choice in Afghanistan in the name of 'freedom and democracy'. India can clearly see that Imran Khan's Pakistan had become recalcitrant towards US and beyond posturing as a friend of America helping the peace dialogue between the US and Taliban in Afghanistan, it had no intention of drawing down on its 'all weather friendship' with China. India had to fight another battle with Pakistan, in Afghanistan. The pull-out of American troops from there, in a somewhat messy situation, leaves India only with the diplomatic turf to work on and nearer home with the only option of stepping up its effort to thwart an increased threat of Mujahideen violence in the Kashmir valley. And finally, India has to deal with the operational capability both Pakistan and China have of fishing in the troubled waters of India's domestic scene -- from Punjab to the North-East and even down South. Prime Minister Modi's foreign policy has largely rested on bilateral relations and some multilateral associations designed to serve the economic and security interests of all sides. This has served India well by taking national security out of the ideological packaging of the past and letting go of the baggage of the Cold War. India needs to have relations with Israel, Iran and the Gulf states and keep up its defence dealings with Russia to maintain the sovereignty of its own security without hurting its other strategic partners. Our diplomacy has been able to achieve this equilibrium and must be complimented for the same. Our national security doctrine has proved to be very effective, upfront and convincing -- the response of the international community to our stand on security-related issues like Kashmir, has confirmed it. These are the times requiring close monitoring of the external threats and an equally close attention to various facets of our internal security. (The writer is a former Director Intelligence Bureau)

international

Egypt slams violations by "Israeli extremists" against al-Aqsa Mosque

Cairo | Agencies

Egypt has condemned the "renewed violations by Israeli extremists" against the al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem. In a statement on Sunday, the Foreign Ministry affirmed Egypt's complete rejection of these violations, while repeating a warning against harming the al-Aqsa Mosque, which enjoys a great position among Muslims around the world, reports Xinhua news agency. "The mosque is a place of worship for Muslims and the Israeli authorities are responsible for providing protection for worshippers in order to maintain security and stability," said the statement. The Ministry demanded Israel refrain from taking any actions that will lead to escalation, while highlighting the



need to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process based on the related international resolutions within the framework of the two-state solution. Hundreds of Jews visited on Sunday the flash-point Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem to mark the Jewish holy day of Tisha B'Av, when the Jews mark the anniversary of the destruction of their biblical

temples in 586 BC and 70 AD. Early in the morning, Israeli police stormed the compound and clashed with Muslim worshippers. A statement issued by the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf that manages the site said five Palestinian have been arrested, while the Palestinian Red Crescent reported several injuries among the Palestinians.

APPROVAL RATE FOR JAPANESE CABINET DIPS TO ALL-TIME LOW

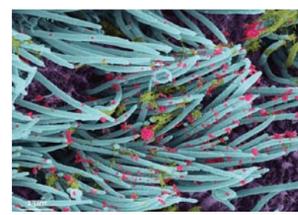
Tokyo: The support rate for Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's cabinet has decreased to 35.9 per cent, hitting an all-time low since he took office last year, a Kyodo News poll revealed.

The poll on Sunday showed signs of public discontent with the government's determination to hold the Tokyo Olympic Games amid the Covid-19 pandemic, reports Xinhua news agency. The disapproval rating rose to 49.8 per cent, the highest on record for the Suga administration. In the two-day survey over the weekend, 87.0 per cent of the surveyed expressed concern over Tokyo hosting the Olympics and Paralympics amid the health crisis. Meanwhile, 67.9 per cent of the respondents held doubt about the effectiveness of the latest state of emergency over the pandemic in the capital city.

Covid antibodies persist at least 9 months after infection: Study

London | Agencies

Antibody levels remain high nine months after infection from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic, researchers have found. Researchers from the University of Padua (Italy) and the Imperial College London tested more than 85 per cent of the 3,000 residents of Vo' in Italy, in February/March 2020 for infection with SARS-CoV-2 and tested them again in May and November 2020 for antibodies against the virus. The team found that 98.8 per cent of people infected in February/March showed detectable levels of antibodies in November, and there was no difference between people who had suffered symptoms of Covid-19 and those that had been symptom-free. The results are published in the journal Nature Communications. Further, while all antibody types showed some decline



between May and November, the rate of decay was different, depending on the test to track the antibody levels. The team also found cases of antibody levels increasing in some people, suggesting potential re-infections with the virus, providing a boost to the immune system. "We found no evidence that antibody levels between symptomatic and asymptomatic infections differ significantly, suggesting that the strength of the immune response does not depend on the symptoms and the severity of the infection," said lead

author Ilaria Dorigatti, from the MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis at Imperial. "However, our study does show that antibody levels vary, sometimes markedly, depending on the test used. This means that caution is needed when comparing estimates of infection levels in a population obtained in different parts of the world with different tests and at different times," Dorigatti added. The team also investigated the infection status of household members. They found a probability of about 1 in 4 that a person infected with SARS-CoV-2 passes the infection to a family member and that most transmission (79 per cent) is caused by 20 per cent of infections. This finding confirms that there are large differences in the number of secondary cases generated by infected people, with the majority of infections generating no further infections and a minority of the infections generating a large number of infections.

Majority of Australian Muslims face discrimination: Report

A new human rights report on Monday revealed that majority of Muslims in Australia have experienced discrimination.

Canberra | Agencies

According to the report published by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), 80 per cent of the Muslims in the country have faced prejudice or discrimination, reports Xinhua news agency. Half of 1,000 respondents to the survey said they were discriminated against by law enforcement and 48 per cent said they were targeted in workplaces or while looking for work. One in every four said they were too scared to speak up when they, or someone they knew, experienced discrimination. Zaahir Edries, a Sydney-based Islamic lawyer who migrated to Australia from South Africa at the age of five, said he noticed an increase in discrimination towards Muslim Australians in the wake of the 9/11



terror attacks. "Around September 11 things changed for me quite significantly," he was quoted by multicultural state broadcaster SBS on Monday. "Attitudes towards my faith and my identity changed in the pub-

lic sphere, so that made it difficult to interact the same way I did before. "As a young adult at the time, I struggled to reconcile my identity as a Muslim and also as someone who was being asked to explain the events

of some horrible criminals on the other side of the world, which wasn't something we'd experienced previously," he added. Despite the high level of Islamophobia uncovered by the survey, 63 per cent of participants said they believed Australia was a welcoming country and 74 per cent said they felt Australian. Chin Tan, Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner, said it was time for the federal government to establish an anti-racism framework. "We believe there is a strong and powerful need for us to have a coordinated national strategy that works on many fronts to actively counter racism and discrimination at the various levels that they occur and it brings me to this advocacy that we are now putting forward to the commission about implementing a national anti-racism framework," he said.

Iran to continue Vienna talks after Raisi takes office

Iran has announced its intention to continue the talks with its partners in the Joint Commission of the agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), reports Xinhua news agency.

Tehran | Agencies

Iran will continue to attend the Vienna talks to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement after President-elect Ebrahim Raisi and his cabinet take office in August, the Foreign Ministry said on Monday. The spokesman for the Ministry, Saeed Khatibzadeh, said during an online press conference that Iran has announced its intention to continue the talks with its partners in the Joint



Commission of the agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), reports Xinhua news agency. Iran's policy will not change under the new administration, he said, adding that the country will return to its commitments as soon as the US returns to its obligations and Tehran verifies it. Under the deal reached in 2015, Tehran agreed to roll back parts of its nuclear program in exchange for decreased economic sanctions. However, Iran gradually stopped implementing parts of its commitments in May 2019, a year

after the administration of former US President Donald Trump unilaterally abandoned the agreement and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran. Between April 6 and June 20, the JCPOA Joint Commission, attended by a US delegation indirectly, held talks in Vienna to discuss a possible return of Washington to the agreement and the way to ensure a full and effective implementation of the deal. After six rounds of talks, the parties recently said serious differences remained between Iran and the US over the revitalization of the deal.

NETFLIX'S BRIDGERTON DELAYED AGAIN AFTER ANOTHER COVID CASE

London | Agencies

Netflix are having 'an expensive headache' over delays on Bridgerton series 2 after another covid case is detected and filming is delayed again. Due to a previous case, shooting had only just resumed again - but a day after cast and crew returned to the period drama things are once again on ice. The likes of Phoebe Dynevor and Jonathan Bailey have had to cease work while various members of the production isolate.

"The demand for the second series is huge, so to stop filming again is a real headache. This could lead to proper delays and it will be extremely costly for them," a source told The Sun. "Filming was stopped - immediately as soon as the new positive case was detected but they had only just got back on set. They have a rigorous testing regime, so it's hoped the case was found quickly enough and that no one else on set got it. But a lot of people are now isolating."

The series had been shooting at Wrotham Hall in Hertfordshire when the news was delivered concerning the new covid case. The show is known for its glamorous ballroom and crowd scenes, as well as very intimate moments between the amorous characters.



KERRY KATONA'S DAUGHTER LILLY REJECTED LOVE ISLAND

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kerry Katona's daughter Lilly revealed she's rejected Love Island because she hates public displays of affection so much she can't even hold her boyfriend's hand. The 18-year-old is a fan of the show but it's last on the list of reality shows she'd be interested in doing. She told OK! Online: "It's not a bit of me - not in a rude way, it's a fun show - but if I was going to make a big TV debut, it would not be with Love Island."

The teen went on to explain that is "no disrespect" to the show, but she personally disliked "being romantic" or showing off her body.

She continued: "I hate PDAs. I had a boyfriend for two years and I would not let him touch me in public," Lilly added, explaining she would bat him off in the pub. For most people going in the villa, being surrounded by all those hunky men, it's a dream come true - for me, it'd be my worst nightmare," she said.

Kerry's lookalike daughter went on to joke it would "kill" her Irish grandmother if she had decided to take part in this year's antics.



Priyanka Chopra unveils new tattoo on her 39th birthday

London | Agencies

Priyanka Chopra slipped into a plunging swimsuit while spending her 39th birthday sunbathing in London and revealed her left upper arm inking to her Instagram followers.

Priyanka shared multiple photographs of herself enjoying the sunshine as included shots where she lay out with her arms above her head, leaving the new tattoo of a map on display. The Quantico star looked sensational in the tie-front swimwear, which featured eye-catching cut-out sections. The wife of Nick Jonas accessorised with a statement gold chain necklace and delicate earrings as she made the most of the UK heatwave.

And although Priyanka's gorgeous Husky Australian Shepard mix rescue Panda made an appearance in her photos, it was her new tattoo which was most notable. The former Miss World also had the words 'Daddy's Little Girl' inked on her right-hand wrist in her father Ashok's handwriting.

GAZ BEADLE AND EMMA MCVEY GOT MARRIED OVER THE WEEKEND

Los Angeles | Agencies

Reality show star Gaz Beadle has married Emma Mcvey in a stunning ceremony with their two "overwhelmed" children sobbing by their side. The reality TV star couple said "I Do" in front of 90 guests and their kids Chester, three, and Primrose, 18 months, in Cheshire. But their youngest - who was a newborn when lockdown hit last year - found the experience to be all too much. Emma explained: "The whole event was a bit overwhelming for Chester and Primrose. They've not been in an environment with so many adults before, especially with lockdown and everything." "They were supposed to walk down the aisle with my man of honour, Joe, but they were struggling with it, so in the end Prim was carried by my dad, who gave her to Gary, and I carried Chester, who was a little upset, up the aisle." Gary, 33, revealed the couple said their vows while holding their bewildered tots - but said they wouldn't have it any other way.



Samantha Giles quits social media over 'vitriolic' abuse

Los Angeles | Agencies

Emmerdale star Samantha Giles has quit Twitter after receiving "vitriolic" abuse. The actress - who plays Bernice Blackstock in the ITV soap - announced she is taking a break from the social network after being inundated with abusive messages.

She posted: "Having a wee break from the vitriolic place Twitter is today! It astounds me how nasty people are. See you in a while."

Samantha had been outspoken about the people she had seen not following the covid guidelines ahead of Freedom Day.

Hitting out at people not social distancing or wearing masks during her family trip to Blackpool, she posted: "Today we hit Blackpool for the youngest's upcoming birthday. God it was mental. And no social distancing, not many masks being worn. Are people mad???? No wonder cases are rising." While many fans thanked Samantha for raising awareness of the guidelines, others sent her vile abuse.

It was enough for Samantha to take a step back from social media for the time being. It comes as ITV bosses warned soap stars that the show's are in danger of shutting down due to the cases of covid in the cast and crew.

Strictly Come Dancing announce '4 new pro' dancers

Los Angeles | Agencies

Strictly Come Dancing has revealed four new stunning pro dancers ahead of the launch of this year's series. Kai Widdrington, Nikita Kuzmin, Cameron Lombard and Jowita Przystal will be appearing on the BBC dance hit when it returns. They will join the other pros this year, who include Oti Mabuse, Alja Škorjanc, Katya Jones, Amy Dowden and Dianne Buswell.

Giovanni Pernice, Gorka Marquez, Graziano Di Prima, Johannes Radebe, Karen Hauer, Luba Mushtuk, Nadiya Bychkova, Nancy Xu and Neil Jones will also appear.

Jowita, 26, won BBC show The Greatest Dancer in 2020 - mentored by Oti - and bagged the prize of performing on Strictly Come Dancing.

She said: "This is my biggest dream come true. No words can describe how I feel right now. I'm still pinching myself to check if this is real but I am beyond excited to be joining the Strictly Come Dancing family and I can't wait to give all of my heart and soul on that dance floor!"



Kai, 25, danced on Britain's Got Talent when he was 16 and 2012, making it to the final. He's been a professional dancer on Strictly's Irish spin-off since 2018. Ukrainian-born Nikita, 23, was a pro dancer on Let's Dance, Germany's version of Strictly Come Dancing. Cameron, 20, a finalist on South Africa's Got Talent, said: "Not only is this a dream come true but a challenge I am accepting with both hands. I am excited beyond imagination and looking forward to leaving my mark on the dance floor!" Strictly Come Dancing returns for its 19th series this autumn on BBC One.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Christin Quinn



IND VS SL

INDIA LOOK TO SEAL SERIES IN THE 2ND ODI



Colombo | Agencies

India's limited-overs team, which won the first ODI against Sri Lanka here on Sunday comprehensively by seven wickets, will look to seal the three-game series in the second ODI here on Tuesday.

While Shikhar Dhawan, who is leading the Indian team for the first time, was the star of the first match with an unbeaten 86 that took the team to victory, India had plenty of other positives from the match.

Prithvi Shaw, who is making a return to the Indian national side after he was axed following the Australian Test tour, provided India with a quick start, making 43 off 24 deliveries which tilted the balance in India's favour right

from the start of the innings.

Apart from that, young wicket-keeper-batsman Ishan Kishan, making his ODI debut, scored 59 runs from 42 balls and kept India on road for an easy win.

The impressive performances of Indian youngsters apart, India also managed to get the spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal up and running.

The two have not played for a long time and doubts began to emerge on their effectiveness in the absence of former India captain and wicketkeeper MS Dhoni.

Both of them took two wickets each -- Yadav taking two for 48 and Chahal two for 52. Yadav was responsible for picking two quick wickets at a time when the Sri Lankans looked set to put up a big total, at 85 for 1 in 16 overs.

The fact that the pitch is dry has ensured plenty of help to spinners and it looks likely that the two will find help and assistance from the surface.

"I feel because it is too hot and it is humid as well, so the wicket is dry and it spins a lot. If there are two matches on a pitch then definitely it will turn more in the second match," said Chinaman bowler Yadav.

"The way it is hot and humid, the spinners' ball will turn," added Yadav.

Skipper Dhawan credited the spinners for the win. "The way our spinners bowled from 10th over, they got us back straightaway."

Sri Lanka, on the other hand, are missing their top stars due to suspension and injuries. They will have their task cut out once again.

Seniors gave me confidence to play without fear: Manpreet



Tokyo | Agencies

Indian men's hockey team skipper Manpreet Singh has said that the confidence he gained while being with the seniors when he first became a part of the senior side has taught him to play without fear or anxiety.

Manpreet, who arrived in Tokyo for the Olympics on Sunday morning, said, "When I came into Team India for the first time, there were so many stalwarts like Ignace Turkey, Tushar Khandker, Shivendra Singh, Sardar Singh, Gurbaj Singh, Sarvanjit Singh and Sandeep Singh. All of these players gave me the confidence to play my own game without fear or anxiety. Even when I made some mistakes in the beginning, they gave me their full support and always encouraged me to express myself on the field without any fear. That was a great environment for a youngster like me to come into the national team."

A decade on from making his debut for the national side, Manpreet who came as a teenager, Manpreet has established himself as one of the core members of the team. He has been a part of the side that has won tournaments such as the 2014 Asian Games, 2011 and

2018 Asian Champions Trophy and two bronze medals in the FIH World League in 2015 and 2017.

Manpreet was named captain of the senior side for the first time in 2017, and the team has gone on to steadily rise in the FIH World Rankings under his captaincy. Speaking about his captaincy, manpreet said, "I have picked up a lot from the experienced players and team captains before me. We have a culture in this team where there is no distinction between senior players and junior players."

"Everyone in the team drives each other on to play without hesitation or fear. We support each other through on-field and off-field problems and always try to uplift the morale of the group. Even in this team, I always heed the advice and inputs of experienced players like PR Sreejesh, Rupinder Pal Singh and Birendra Lakra as everyone is keen to help in the growth of the team."

Apart from leading the side in Tokyo, Manpreet will also be the joint flag bearer for India in the Olympics opening ceremony. However, Manpreet says he still has goals he wishes to achieve in his career.

COVID WATCH:

US TENNIS STAR COCO GAUFF PULLS OUT OF TOKYO OLYMPICS



Tokyo | Agencies

Teenage American tennis star Coco Gauff, ranked 25th in the world, has tested positive for Covid-19 and will not be competing at the Tokyo Olympics, beginning July 23.

The 17-year-old, who has been among the top movers on the WTA rankings list this year after reaching the French Open quarterfinals and Wimbledon fourth round, posted a message on twitter late on Sunday that, she is disappointed at not being able to compete at the Olympics.

Coco was to compete in women's singles and partner Nicole Melichar in women's doubles at the Olympics. The mixed doubles team was to be named later in Tokyo.

"I am so disappointed to share the news that I have tested positive for COVID and won't be able to play in the Olympic Games in Tokyo. It has always been a dream of mine to represent the USA at the Olympics,

and I hope there will be many more chances for me to make this come true in the future," wrote Coco. Coco was scheduled to lead the 12-member US tennis team into the Olympics, which would have marked the first Olympics in 25 years without Serena and Venus Williams.

The other members in the US team include Jennifer Brady, Jessica Pegula and Alison Riske in women's singles, Tommy Paul, Frances Tiafoe, Tennys Sandgren and Marcos Giron in men's singles. The US has won 39 medals, a record 21 of them gold, in Olympic tennis, led by the Williams sisters, who each have four gold medals since making their Olympic debuts in 2000. They won three gold medals together, with Serena winning singles gold in 2012 and Venus winning singles gold in 2000 and mixed doubles silver with Ram in 2016. That makes Venus Williams the most decorated Olympic tennis player.

Life in bio-bubble without playing is tough: Kuldeep Yadav

Colombo | Agencies

Chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav, who took two top-order wickets for 48 runs in the first ODI against Sri Lanka on Sunday, has said that life in a bio-bubble without opportunities to play is tough and creates self-doubts.

The 26-year-old has played very little cricket over the last 16 months -- just one Test, three ODIs and no T20 International in the last 16 months.

"It is difficult in bio-bubble. If you are not playing, you get doubts in your mind," said Yadav after the

first ODI against Sri Lanka which India won by seven wickets.

"There are many people, who want to talk to you and help you but if you talk to too many people, you create doubt within yourself. This is a team sport. Some people get chances, some don't. We should wait for our own chances," he added during the virtual media inter-



tion. Both Yadav and leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal were playing after a long time. They took two wickets each on a pitch that helped the spinners a bit.

"I was varying my pace, because in the first innings, the

pitch was slow, dry and there was some help. I was trying to vary pace. I was sometimes giving flight and sometimes increasing pace. I was not giving enough time to batsmen to allow them to settle. That was my plan. I was very happy that the team performed well. The way we batted. I was very happy with it," added Yadav.

The Uttar Pradesh bowler, who also plays for Kolkata Knight Riders, said he was happy to play with Yuzvendra Chahal again. The two have helped India win multiple series, including the first-ever ODI series win in South Africa in 2018.

Chongatham moves into pre-quarters of Youth National Boxing

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Youth World Championships bronze medallist Bishwamitra Chongatham made it to the men's 51kg pre-quarterfinals of the Youth Men's and Womens National Boxing Championships, outshining Manipur's Jackson Pukhrabam 5-0 in the opening-round match on Monday.

Delhi boxers Himanshu Rawat and Lakshay also progressed into the next round with identical 5-0 victories in their respective categories at the championships being held at Delhi Public School in Sonipat.

Competing in the flyweight 51kg category, Rawat defeated Jharkhand's Bikas Sahis, while Lakshay (57kg) also made light work of Jharkhand's Ved Prakash Pandey to notch up a convincing victory at the championships, which is witnessing the participation of 300 men and 179 women boxers.

In the women's section, West Bengal's Monika Mallick and Maharashtra's Sandhya More registered 5-0 victories in their respective 50kg opening-round matches.

The second day of the championships witnessed 72 and 36 bouts in men's and women's sections respectively.

The championships will go on till July 23 while the third edition of Junior Boys' National Championships and the fourth edition of Junior Girls' National Championships are scheduled from July 26 to 31. The tournament will act as the selection tournament for the 2021 ASBC Youth & Junior Boxing Championships, scheduled in Dubai from August 17-31.



Fatima takes five as Pakistan Women defeat West Indies

St. John's (Antigua) | Agencies

Pakistan Women won the rain-shortened fifth and final One-day International against West Indies Women by 22 runs (D/L method) with Fatima Sana taking a five-wicket haul for the visitors.

West Indies Women, though, have won the series 3-2.

The match was reduced to 36 overs per side due to excess moisture on the pitch. The umpires deliberated and delayed the toss and start of the match allowing the pitch to dry. The game was then reduced by a further two overs to 34 overs per side as the rains came and forced a stop in play.

Pakistan women took advantage of some wayward bowling by the West Indies Women which allowed them to post 190/8, with wicketkeeper Muneeba Ali scoring 39 and middle-order batter Omaima Sohail notching up 34.

At the innings break, the umpires gave the West Indies Women a revised target of 194 runs from 34 overs. The West Indies Women struggled to maintain the required run-rate, leaving too many runs to get in the final overs with wickets falling consistently, managing 171.

West Indies Women's chief coach



Brief scores

Brief scores: Pakistan Women 190/8 in 34 overs (Muneeba Ali 39, Omaima Sohail 34; Chinelle Henry 2/37) beat West Indies Women 171 in 34 overs (Britney Cooper 40; Fatima Sana 5/39) by 22 runs DLS method.

Courtney Walsh said, "There's a fair amount of positives with the cricket upfront. We lacked consistency in the last two games, we didn't show that hunger. I wouldn't say it was complacency but we made some crucial mistakes that cost us right throughout.

"The results of both series wins were very good because we hadn't had a series for a while. Moving forward we have to look at where we are, we have the qualifiers coming up and World Cup after so we have to address a number of areas," added Walsh.

CARRENO BUSTA EARNS MAIDEN ATP 500 TROPHY IN HAMBURG

Hamburg | Agencies

Second seed Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain won his first ATP 500 trophy and sixth tour-level title, overcoming Filip Krajinovic of Serbia 6-2, 6-4 in the Hamburg European Open final. "It's an incredible feeling," Carreno Busta said in an on-court interview on Sunday evening. "I think that I worked very, very hard to finally win this title. It's my first ATP 500 title." The Spaniard, ranked 13th in the world, did not drop a set in Hamburg. He produced a dominant display in the championship match as he won 81 per cent of his first-service points and broke Krajinovic three times. Carreno Busta has now recorded 17 clay-court wins this season, having also enjoyed runs to the semifinals at the Barcelona Open, where he lost to Rafael Nadal, and the Mallorca Championships, where he was beaten by Daniil Medvedev of Russia.

This is the first time he has won two clay-court titles in a season. He has bounced back strongly this week after losing to Sam Querrey of the United States in the first round at Wimbledon last month.

"Maybe at the end of the match I was very nervous. But I served good, so [that] was very important to finish the match," said Carreno Busta.

Less than two years ago, Carreno Busta fell as low as No. 69 in the ATP Rankings due to a right shoulder injury. But the Spaniard, world No. 13 this week, is now closer to his career-high of world No. 10.



Subedar Arokia Rajiv gunning for Olympic medal

Tokyo | Agencies

During his school days, he used to have unlimited meals only after a race when the coach/manager took the boys to a hotel for lunch. "Otherwise, it was always 'pazhaya soru' (rice soaked in water). Idli will be only during festive days. Lunch will be the midday meals provided in the school. Even in the college hostel canteen, the food quantity was limited," said Tokyo-bound sprinter S. Arokia Rajiv.

It is a different matter now that the nutrient-rich 'pazhaya soru' finds a place on some restaurant menu cards. But it is still a poor man's food.

Hailing from Vazhudaiyur village near Tiruchirappalli, 30-year old Arokia discontinued his college studies in the middle of his first year BA (History) course to join the army.

But athletics runs in his blood as his father Y. Soundararajan was a district champion in 100m, 200m and long jump and had participated in state meets during his younger days.

Soundararajan was a college bus driver in Tiruchirappalli district while mother Lily Chandran was a daily wagger and the couple had



three children -- Rajiv, Daniel Ranjith and Elizabeth Rani. Rajiv has proved the old Tamil saying, 'Thai 8 di paainthaal, kutti 16 di paayum' (if the mother jumps eight feet, then its cub will jump 16 feet), right. Son of a district champion, Arokia has won the 400m bronze at the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, gold at the Asian Grand Prix held in Thailand and Sri Lanka and in several other international events, including silver in the World Military Games in 2015. In 2017, Arokia was honoured with the prestigious Arjuna Award. "I always used to look back at the path I had

come from. Our house was a small hut. Now life is better. But I haven't forgotten my roots."

Though he has won several medals, the 2014 Asian Games bronze has a special place in his heart. At that time, Arokia was recovering from a hamstring injury he had suffered a month earlier and people were saying his participation was a wasted chance. Proving his detractors wrong, he won bronze. In 2018, Arokia was part of the Indian team that won gold in 4x400m mixed relay and silver in the 4x400m men's relay at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta.

Arokia is part of India's 4x400m mixed relay team that will participate in the Tokyo Olympics. According to him, the Indian mixed relay team has good chances of getting into the final. He said the team is careful about not suffering any injuries during practice sessions. Arokia said he derives inspiration from Hungarian army man Karoly Takacs, who had won two Olympic medals in men's shooting with his left hand after his right hand got badly damaged.

After the Olympics, it will be the Asian Games in Hangzhou (China) and the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham for Arokia.

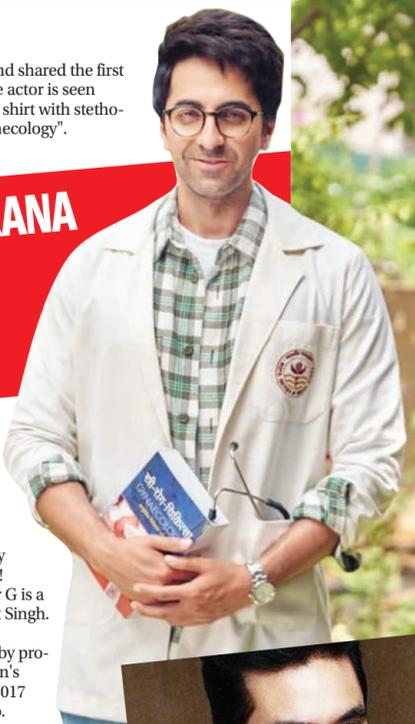
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ayushmann Khurrana took to social media and shared the first look from his upcoming film "DoctorG". The actor is seen dressed in a doctors white coat over a check shirt with stethoscope in his pocket and holding a book titled "Gynecology". Ayushmann plays the role of Dr Uday Gupta. Sharing his excitement, Ayushmann wrote on his

AYUSHMANN KHURRANA REVEALS 'DOCTORG' FIRST LOOK

Instagram, "DoctorG is ready to leave. Now the shooting will begin! #DoctorG FirstLook". Ayushmann is shooting for "DoctorG" in Bhopal.

Minutes after Ayushmann posted his first look, his Instagram flooded with comments from Bollywood. Ayushmann's wife Tahira Kashyap wrote, "Harry Potter". Musician Harshdeep Kaur posted, "Waah!! Looking forward to this one. Love the look! Doctor G is a campus comedy-drama that also stars Rakul Preet Singh. The film, directed by Anubhuti Kashyap, marks Ayushmann's first project with Rakul. It is backed by production house Jungle Pictures. This is Ayushmann's third project with the production house after the 2017 film Bareilly Ki Barfi and the 2018 film Badhaai Ho.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Neha Dhupia took to her social media on Monday to announce her second pregnancy. Neha uploaded a picture with actor-husband Angad Bedi and daughter Mehr.

Holding her baby bump in the picture, the actress captioned the image as: "Took us 2 days to come with a caption. The best one we could think of was, Thank you, God. #wahegurumehrkare."

Angad also posted the same picture on Instagram and captioned it as: "New Home production coming soon.. Waheguru mehr kare."

Angad and Neha are parents to two-year-old Mehr Dhupia Bedi. The couple got married in 2018 in Delhi.

Neha Dhupia, Angad Bedi announce second pregnancy



Madhuri Dixit celebrates 25 million Instafam

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Madhuri Dixit Nene took to social media on Monday to celebrate her Instagram family growing to 25 million. The actress shared a cartoon video of herself thanking her fans for the love. "25 Million strong. Thank you everyone for your love & support," Madhuri wrote.

Fans responded in the comment section with enthusiasm. "Back in the nineties, you were the heartthrob of the entire nation. This 25 million is nothing," commented a fan.

"Ma'am I'm a huge fan of yours and want to meet you," shared another fan. Remarking on the actress using a cartoon filter for herself, another fan wrote: "You naturally look like a princess you don't need a filter."

Madhuri currently features as a judge on the dance reality show "Dance Deewane 3". The actress is all set to make her OTT debut with the upcoming thriller series "Finding Anamika". The series also features Sanjay Kapoor and Manav Kaul.



Big B to shoot poetic title sequence for 'Chehre'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amitabh Bachchan, who has lent his baritone to the poetry of Sahir Ludhianvi and Javed Akhtar in classics like "Kabhi Kabhie" and "Silsila", will recite a poem written by director Rumi Jaffery for his upcoming film "Chehre". The actor will shoot for it on Monday. "Shekhar Ravjiani has composed the tune beautifully. And now Amit ji will lend his matchless voice and add another dimension altogether to the track. He is a perfectionist and everything he does, be it a small movement before the camera, an action sequence, a close-up, a song he has to hum, or just be silent, he gives the moment his all," said producer Anand Pandit. "And I am looking forward to seeing how he delivers the poem because it is going to be a once in a lifetime experience," he added. He also praised the music and said: "The film's theme, its

suspense and mysterious elements, all come together wonderfully in the score and now Amit ji will add his own magic to it."

"Chehre" is a mystery thriller directed by Rumi Jaffery and also stars Emraan Hashmi, Annu Kapoor, Krystle D'Souza, Dhritiman Chatterjee, Raghubir Yadav, Siddhanth Kapoor and Rhea Chakraborty.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Shweta Tiwari

Taapsee shares glimpse of 'Blurr' first day shoot

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Taapsee Pannu has shared a sneak-peek from the first day's shoot of her debut production "Blurr" on Monday. Taapsee shared a picture on Instagram. In the image, she is seen walking in a green area dressed in grey joggers, olive green long shrug and combat boots. In the image, she can be seen sporting a half bun.

"There is a certain calm about this place #Day1 #Blurr," Taapsee wrote as caption.

The actress recently announced her own production house, Outsider Film. She also shared pictures from their muburat shot where all the producers can be seen posing with the lead stars in Uttarakhand.

As they left for the shoot to Nainital, Taapsee was seen introducing us to her husband in Blurr, Gulshan Devaiah as she wrote on it, "Taking over the producer responsibility of revealing my star on board!"

The film will be helmed by director Ajay Bahl, best known for his 2019 release, "Section 375". Written by Pawan Sony and Ajay Bahl, Blurr is a psychological thriller with an intriguing social context.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Rajan Shahi's "Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai" is at a very crucial point right now. The show is going to take a major twist in the upcoming episodes where with Ranveer's death Karan Kundrra's stint in the show also comes to an end.

Currently, in the show, Ranveer is sick

and does not have much time to live. While he has told Karrik about it, he is just unable to gather up the courage to inform Sirat about his deteriorating condition. Well, in the upcoming episodes we will see that Sirat get to know about it when Ranveer is rushed to the hospital, and eventually, Ranveer dies.

Karan has already shot for his part in the upcoming episodes, and the cast

and crew of the show organised a warm send-off for him. Though producer Rajan Shahi was not in town, he wished him well over a call.

The team at Director's Kut Productions had organised a cake for him and also presented a bouquet to him. The cast of the show and director Romesh Kalra were present to bid adieu to Karan.

KARAN KUNDRRA BIDS ADIEU TO 'YEH RISHTA KYA KEHLATA HAI'