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4th serosurvey predicts that forty crore Indians are vulnerable to Covid

THE HORROR MAY RETURN

Around 40 crore are still at risk of infection, the government said, as it warned against laxity in following Covid-appropriate behaviour and urged eligible people to get vaccinated. Overall sero prevalence is 67.6% in the entire population. In people of 6-9 years age group, it was 57.2%; in 10-17 years, it was 61.6%; in 18-44 years, it was 66.7%; in 45-60 years, it was 77.6%.

- A survey of 36,227 people, including 7,252 healthcare workers, conducted across 70 districts in 21 states in June-July indicated 67.6 per cent of Indians over the age of six had COVID-19 antibodies.
- Over 50 per cent of all children between the age of six and 17 also had the antibodies. Among healthcare workers 85 per cent had the antibodies, and only a tenth were as yet unvaccinated.
- The 67.6 per cent figure is a steep increase from the results of the third serosurvey.



(during the first wave of infections) and per cent indications. The results of the fourth serosurvey suggest the virus has covered

around 67 per cent of India's population in a year - despite the centre imposing one of the world's strictest lockdowns and states following that with a slew of localised restrictions, some of which are still in place.

Medical experts and doctors have repeatedly warned of a third wave of infections and deaths, particularly since the second brought the country's healthcare system to its knees. Last month AIIMS (Delhi) chief Dr Randeep Guleria said that third wave was "inevitable", and that the main challenge now is vaccinating enough people to minimise the impact.

Concerns, however, have been raised over the slow pace of daily vaccinations, which dipped from a record high of over 80 lakh doses on June 21 to a seven-day average of 38.62 lakh on Monday. This morning India recorded 30,093 new cases in 24 hours - the lowest in four months.

INDIA'S PANDEMIC DEATH CAN BE 10-TIMES THE OFFICIAL TOLL: REPORT

India's excess deaths during the pandemic could be a staggering 10 times the official COVID-19 toll, likely making it modern India's worst human tragedy, according to the most comprehensive research yet on the ravages of the virus in the south Asian country. Most experts believe India's official toll of more than 414,000 dead is a vast undercount, but the government has dismissed those concerns as exaggerated and misleading. The report released Tuesday estimated excess deaths - the gap between those recorded and those that would have been expected - to be between 3 million to 4.7 million between January 2020 and June 2021. It said an accurate figure may "prove elusive" but the true death toll "is likely to be an order of magnitude greater than the official count." The report, published by Arvind Subramanian, the Indian government's former chief economic adviser, and two other researchers at the Center for Global Development and Harvard University, said the count could have missed deaths occurring in overwhelmed hospitals or while health care was delayed or disrupted, especially during the devastating peak surge earlier this year. "True deaths are likely to be in the several millions not hundreds of thousands, making this arguably India's worst human tragedy since Partition and independence," the report said.



NO DEATHS DUE TO LACK OF OXYGEN: GOVT

New Delhi: No deaths due to lack of oxygen have been specifically reported by any states or Union Territories during Covid-19's second wave, the Parliament was told on Tuesday.



In a reply to a question by Congress' Rajya Sabha member K.C. Venugopal, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Bharati Pravin Pawar, in a written reply, said that "All states/UTs report cases and deaths to Union Health Ministry on a regular basis. However, no deaths due to lack of oxygen have been specifically reported by states/UTs," she said.

Surveillance targets indicate attempt to keep tab on critics of govt policy

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The telephone numbers of several prominent activists are part of a leaked database accessed by the Pegasus Project, which include individuals confirmed to have been targeted with the Israel based NSO Group's spyware, The Wire reported.



The activists whose phone numbers appear in the leaked records include Ambedkarite activist Ashok Bharti; former Jawahar Lal Nehru University students Umar Khalid, Anirban Bhattacharya and Banijyotsna Lahiri; academic and chronicler of life in Naxal-dominated regions, Bela Bhatia; railway union leader Shiv Gopal Mishra; anti-coal mining activist Alok Shukla; Delhi University professor Saroj Giri; Bastar-based peace activist Shubhranshu Choudhary and Bihar-based activist Ipsa Shatakshi.

Without digital forensics, it is not possible to conclusively establish whether their phones were hacked or infected. But their appearance on the list suggests that they were persons of interest to an unidentified client of the NSO Group that was focused on India.

The NSO says it only sells its Pegasus spyware -- classified as military-grade surveillance technology by the Israeli ministry of defence -- to "vetted governments". The Narendra Modi government has consistently refused to declare whether it is a client of NSO. Ashok Bharti, who is the chairman of the All India Ambedkar Mahasabha, an umbrella association of Dalit rights' groups, had led the nation-wide Bharat Bandh on April 2, 2018 claimed 11 lives and left hundreds injured as the police took on the Dalit protesters.

In 2019, WhatsApp had stated that four of the activists mentioned above -- Saroj Giri, Bela Bhatia, Alok Shukla and Shubhranshu Choudhary -- were affected by a Pegasus attack that took place through a specific vulnerability in the company's security. Digital forensics conducted as part of the Pegasus Project have shed light on a wider range of attack vectors, including zero-click iMessage exploits.

AMAZON SHUTS DOWN NSO GROUP'S INFRASTRUCTURE

San Francisco: After the massive Pegasus spyware controversy, Amazon Web Services (AWS), which is the Cloud arm of Amazon, has shut down infrastructure and accounts linked to the Israeli surveillance company NSO Group. In a statement to Motherboard, an AWS spokesperson said that "When we learned of this activity, we acted quickly to shut down the relevant infrastructure and accounts". Reports have surfaced on military-grade Pegasus spyware from Israeli firm NSO Group being used by governments around the world to snoop on more than 50,000 people in 50 countries including in India.



'Best day ever': Bezos after first unpowered suborbital flight



Shepard rocket. The mission lasted 10 minutes and 10 seconds. He was accompanied by his brother Mark, 82-year-old female aviator Wally Funk and an 18-year-old physics student Oliver Daemen, from the Netherlands, on the first human flight of the New Shepard rocket, NS-16, which launched from Launch Site One in West Texas a little over 9 a.m. EDT (6.30 p.m. IST). "Best day ever," said Bezos after touchdown.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

World's richest man Jeff Bezos has landed back on Earth after successfully completing the first-ever unpowered suborbital flight that made history with the youngest and oldest person to space. Bezos flew beyond the Karman line -- 100 kms above the ground and the internationally recognised boundary of space -- on board his company Blue Origin's fully automated and reusable New

Bezos's flight follows Richard Branson's flight to the edge of space aboard his company Virgin Galactic's VSS Unity on July 11. Branson's flight, however, did not go beyond the Karman Line. It climbed nearly 86 kilometres above the Earth's surface. "Well done @blueorigin, @jeffbezos, Mark, Wally and Oliver. Impressive! Very best to all the crew from me and all the team at @virgin-galactic," Branson tweeted.

ORGANISERS DO NOT RULE OUT CANCELLATION OF TOKYO 2020 GAMES



Tokyo: Tokyo 2020 Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Toshiko Muto on Tuesday did not rule out a last-minute cancellation of the Games if the Covid-19 cases continue to rise. Tokyo reported 1,387 new Covid-19 cases on Tuesday, the city's second-highest daily increase of new cases since January 21, according to Tokyo Metropolitan Government's website. That resulted in Muto being questioned about their approach in case the numbers keep rising. Japan is currently under a Coronavirus emergency that continues past the Olympic Games, which will open on July 23 and close on August 8.

DA for Central govt employees hiked to 28%

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Dearness Allowance (DA) payable to Central government employees will be enhanced from the existing rate of 17 per cent to 28 per cent of basic pay with effect from July 1, 2021.

The Department of Expenditure under the Finance Ministry said in a circular that the increase subsumes the additional instalments arising on 01.01.2020, 01.07.2020 and 01.01.2021. The rate of DA for

the period from 01.01.2020 till 30.06.2021 shall remain at 17 per cent. The term 'basic pay' in the revised pay structure means the pay drawn in the prescribed level in the Pay Matrix as per the 7th CPC recommendations accepted by the government, but does not include any other type of pay like special pay etc.

The DA will continue to be a distinct element of remuneration and will not be treated as pay within the ambit of FR 9(21).

Oppn spreading lies about Covid and shortage of vaccine: PM

New Delhi: Hitting out at the opposition parties, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said political rivals are spreading lies about Covid-19 and shortage of vaccine. The Prime Minister Modi asked BJP MPs to counter lies spread by the opposition parties. Prime Minister Modi was speaking at the BJP's Parliamentary Party meeting. It is learnt that the Prime Minister said that Congress only believe in the politics of obstruction and don't want to debate and discuss. "The Prime Minister said that despite losing polls, Congress is not raising issues nor expanding its base.

India sees first bird flu death as boy succumbs in AIIMS

After the bird flu outbreaks, the Central government sounded an alert as cases were confirmed in Delhi also.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India on Tuesday reported its first bird flu death as an 11-year-old boy, who was undergoing treatment at AIIMS for it, succumbed to the disease.

A senior All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) official said that the boy, who was infected with avian influenza, has died, and the entire staff concerned has been placed in isolation as a preventive measure.

As per reports, bird flu outbreaks were reported across the country earlier this year, including in Haryana where the H5N8 subtype -- which is not known to infect humans -- was detected.

A sample collected from the Red Fort had tested positive for bird flu in January.



The Delhi government had then ordered the closure of the Ghazipur poultry market. More samples collected from the Delhi zoo had returned positive in February.

According to the World Health Organisation, human cases of bird flu occur "occasionally" but when they do happen, the mortality rate is about 60 per cent.

Raj Kundra, UK-based kin 'masterminded' global porn racket: Police

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

The Mumbai Police on Tuesday made a shocking revelation that arrested businessman Raj Kundra and his brother-in-law Pradeep Bakshi are the alleged masterminds of an international porn films racket perpetrated through their content production companies based in India and the United Kingdom.

The husband of Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty, Kundra is the owner of Viaan Industries Ltd, jointly promoted by the couple, while Bakshi -- a British citizen, who is married to Kundra's sister -- is the Chairman of Kenrin Ltd, London.

Mumbai's Joint Police Commissioner (Crime) Milind Bhamambe said that the two companies had a



SHILPA SHETTY NOT INVOLVED: POLICE

"We have not been able to any find any active role of Shilpa Shetty yet. We are investigating. We'll appeal to the victims to come forward and contact the Crime Branch Mumbai.

Milind Bhamambe, Joint Commissioner of Police, Mumbai.

mobile app called 'HotShots Digital Entertainment', developed by Kenrin Ltd.

The HotShots app is described as the "world's first 18+ app" showcasing some of the hottest models and celebs globally in exclusive photos, short films and hot videos -- implying soft-core porn. The police probe made the startling revelations of how new or aspiring actresses coming to Mumbai

from all over India were lured with work offers in short films, webseries and other movies. After making the content, the two companies -- Viaan and Kenrin -- made them available on mobile apps, offering subscriptions akin to the mainstream OTT platforms. At least 12 arrests have been made so far, including Kundra and his techie associate Ryan J. Tharpe.

IISER-Bhopal's model predicts climate anomalies in India

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Scientists at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Bhopal have developed a statistical model that can predict the temperature of the Indian summer season for the months of March-April-May and extended climate anomalies in India, using the weather data from the preceding winter.

The model has also helped in understanding the relationships among various weather parameters and how they have dynamically co-evolved over the past 69 years. The researchers have also shown that the summer temperature predictability is better for South India than North, due to the former's proximity to the ocean and the greater impact of

the sea surface temperature on summer heat in the subcontinent. Because of the effect of the sea surface temperature, South India has been found to be warmer during El-Nino years and cooler during La-Nina. The North Indian summer, on the other



hand, is affected by the high pressure and circulation systems at upper levels (around 5.5-12.5 km), which form a heat dome and lead to adiabatic heating, thereby pushing up the summer temperature irrespective of the El-Nino or La-Nina effect.

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STATES HAVE EXCLUSIVE POWER ON CO-OPS, CITIZENS CAN RAISE ISSUES: SC

NO SORRY, ORDERS MUST BE FOLLOWED': SC ON POLL HOPEFULS HIDING CRIMINAL PAST

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said its order should have been followed as it heard contempt petitions over non-compliance of its February 2020 directions for electoral candidates to disclose criminal antecedents through wide publication. The plea claimed these directions were not adhered during the Bihar Assembly election last year.

As counsel appearing for a political party tendered an unconditional apology, stating that this should not have happened and that there shouldn't be criminalisation of politics, a bench of Justices R.F. Nariman and B.R. Gavai said: "We don't buy this sorry; our orders have to be followed."

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday held that cooperative societies, as a subject matter, belong exclusively to the state legislatures, and when a citizen



zen challenges a constitutional amendment, it is the duty of the court to examine it on merits, even if state governments connected with the matter have not come forward on the issue.

The top court, in a majority judgment, declared that Part IXB of the 97th Amendment to the Constitution, which deals with the effective management of co-operative societies, is operative only for multi-state cooper-

ative societies, both within the various states and in the Union Territories.

Noting that there is no doubt the Constitution has been described as quasi-federal in that so far as legislative powers are concerned, it said: "Though there

is a tilt in favour of the Centre vis-avis the states given the federal supremacy principle outlined, yet within their own sphere, the states have exclusive power to legislate on topics reserved exclusively to them." Attorney General K.K. Venugopal had submitted that no state government has come forward to challenge the 97th Constitutional Amendment, therefore it does not take the matter any further.

'UNTOWARD SPREAD OF COVID, WILL TAKE ACTION': SC TO KERALA ON BAKRID RELAXATIONS

Coming down hard on the Kerala government for relaxing Covid restrictions for Bakrid, the Supreme Court on Tuesday said that the government's affidavit has disclosed a "sorry state of affairs", and pointed out relaxation for even one day in an area having critical spread of infection was "wholly uncalled for".

A bench of Justices R.F. Nariman and B.R. Gavai said: "We may only indicate that this affidavit discloses a sorry state of affairs as has been stated herein above, and does not in any real manner safeguard the Right to Life and Health guaranteed to all the citizens of India under Article 21 of the Constitution of India."

India to be first country to have DNA vaccine : Health Minister

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday said it is not correct to say that the third Covid wave will affect children as in the two waves till now children were relatively less infected. He said we will soon have vaccines for children and the clinical trials are ongoing.

Mandaviya said, "Zydus Cadila has applied for Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) for its Covid-19 vaccine and Hyderabad-based Biological E will enter the market with 7.5 crore doses of its Covid-19 vaccine by September-October."

The Drugs Controller General of India will soon give approval as per norms and "India will be the first country in the world whose scientists will have developed a DNA vaccine," he said.



Covid ex gratia scheme in works, need 4 weeks more: Centre

The Centre has moved the Supreme Court seeking an additional four weeks to frame an ex-gratia payment scheme for the kin of those who succumbed to Covid-19. On June 30, the top court had directed the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to frame appropriate guidelines within a period of six weeks. In an application seeking an extension, the Centre said: "Applicant respectfully submits that exercise to frame guidelines for payment of ex-gratia payment to the victims of Covid-19 disaster under Section 12 (iii) of the DMA (Disaster Management Act) is in active consideration of the NDMA and going on. It emphasised that this exercise, though at an advanced stage, requires a little more in-depth examination before it is finalised and implemented, as "any accelerated formulation, in the respectful submission of the applicant, may result into undesirable results".

Govt to bring out data policy for agriculture sector

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government is in the process of bringing out a data policy for the agriculture sector, the Parliament was informed on Tuesday. The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare has commenced work for creating 'Agristack', and for this, it is in the process of finalising the "India Digital Ecosystem of Agriculture (IDEA)" which will lay down the framework, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar told Lok Sabha members K. Kanimozhi and Brijendra Singh in a written reply.

The government had constituted a task force and in furtherance, a concept paper on IDEA has been prepared and comments were invited from subject experts, farmers, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and



general public.

Tomar also said: "The government has not entered into any agreement with private companies for establishing Agristack. However, based on data which is already available in the public domain pertaining to several schemes of Gol and linking them with land records data, a federated farmers' database is being prepared." Once completed, this would serve as the core of Agristack, he said.

Pegasus used to topple K'taka govt led by Kumaraswamy: Congress

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress on Tuesday alleged that the JD(S)-Congress coalition government in Karnataka was toppled in 2019 by snooping on important leaders of the coalition, including then Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy.

"The BJP had planned to topple the Karnataka government by horse-trading using the Pegasus spyware," Congress leader K.C. Venugopal said in a press conference here on Tuesday, which was also addressed by other senior party functionaries.

Congress leader and former Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramiah said, "I don't have a mobile phone, which means they tapped my personal secretary Venkatesh's number. He has been with me for 27 years. They also tapped the number of Satish,



who was Kumaraswamy's personal assistant."

According to a report published by

The Wire, in the run up to the toppling of the opposition-run state government in Karnataka in July 2019, the phone numbers of then Deputy Chief Minister G. Parameshwara and the personal secretaries of then Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy and former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah were selected as possible targets for surveillance.

Siddaramiah further said, "The government of India headed by Narendra Modi played this dirty game to topple the opposition government in Karnataka. That is why they tapped the numbers of Satish, Venkatesh and Parameshwara, who was the Deputy Chief Minister in the coalition government. It was a crime committed by the government of India. The matter must be probed and raised in both the Houses of Parliament."

WOMAN KILLS HUSBAND OVER DOMESTIC TIF IN BIHAR

Team Absolute | Patna

A woman in Bihar's Saran district killed her husband over a domestic dispute in the wee hours on Tuesday.

The incident happened in Ram Nagar Dhawri village under Sahajitpur police station. The deceased Pappu Kumar had wanted to send his wife Gayatri Devi to her maternal home.

Gayatri killed her husband using a spade when he was asleep on the roof of their house.

According to an investigating officer of Sahajitpur police station, Pappu got married to Gayatri two years ago. They used to indulge in verbal duels with each other over trivial issues.

SUVENDU ADHIKARI BOOKED FOR CALL DETAILS ACCESS CLAIMS

Srinagar | Kolkata

In the middle of the Pegasus snoogate row, BJP MLA and Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, has been booked by the police for his remark on the matter made during a rally in East Midnapore on Monday.

A suo moto case has been registered at the Tamluk police station for his remark against the SP of East Midnapore, Amarnath K.

The case has been registered under various provisions of the National Disaster Management Act and the Official Secrets Act.

Asking the IPS officer to treat with caution, Adhikari had said: "A young boy has come as SP here, Amarnath K. I know all that he is up to, I am a veteran player. I want to tell him that you are a central cadre officer so don't indulge in anything for which you may get posted in Anantnag or Baramulla in Kashmir."

"I've each and every call record, phone number of all those who call you from the



'nephew's' (Trinamool MP Abhishek Banerjee) office. If you have the state government with you, we have the Central government with us," Adhikari had said while addressing BJP workers near the SP's office in Tamluk on Monday. The remarks came at a time when the state government has opened up several cases against Adhikari, including an investigation into the mysterious death of his personal security guard in 2018 and his alleged involvement in a tarpaulin theft case.

30 KG IED DEFUSED BY SECURITY FORCES IN J&K'S SRINAGAR

Srinagar: A major tragedy was averted when the security forces recovered a 30 kg improvised explosive device (IED) in J&K's Srinagar district, police said on Tuesday.

Police sources said, "A major terror attack was averted by security forces as a 30 kg IED was detected close to Tangpura Bandh at the outskirts of Srinagar late yesterday evening."

"The timely recovery thwarted the nefarious design of terrorists and their few supporters to destabilize the security situation in the Valley."

"Based on the credible input of the Army, the search operation was launched by 24 RR and local police which led to the recovery of 30 kg of IED 700 metres away from the highway."

"The IED was safely destroyed in situ by the Army Bomb Squad today morning. Search operation in Tangpura is in progress," sources said.

Pvt coaching institutes not 'educational institutions', liable to pay GST

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Private Coaching Institute imparting education to students facilitating them to obtain qualifications like Chartered Accountancy (CA), Cost Accountancy, Company Secretary (CS) will have to pay 18 per cent GST for the services rendered as they have not been considered 'educational institutions' that get tax exemption. The Appellate Authority on Advance Ruling (AAAR), Kerala has upheld an earlier ruling by AAR that private institutes are not educational institutions that give degrees or or grant qualification. The services tendered by them to students to help them qualify for a degree from a professional body would not get tax exemption and would be liable to pay taxes. Also, it clarified that conduct of degree courses by colleges, universities or institutions which lead to grant of qualifications would be covered, and training given by private coaching institutes would not be covered, as such training does not lead to grant of recognized qualification. Further, appellant is not issuing any valid course completion certificate or any CA, CMS, CS, ICWA degree. Coaching in Appellant's institution is not a mandatory compliance for an aspirant in pursuing study and



obtaining certificates, it is also not mandatory on student's part to furnish any certification or nomination or forwarding of their application or registration through the Appellant to the concerned statutory body for awarding course certificate, and the training imparted by Appellant might be helping the aspirants to clear the test/examinations of ICAL, ICWA etc., but doesn't per se lead to grant of certificate or degree. Accordingly, private coaching centres or other unrecognized institutions, though self-styled as educational institutions, would not be treated as such under GST and thus cannot avail exemptions, AAR ruled.

Maha Covid-19 toll jumps by 3,500 on old deaths

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Reconciliation of earlier data resulted in Maharashtra's Covid-19 cumulative death toll shooting up by a staggering 3,509 with the day's fatalities standing at 147, though recoveries crossed 6 million, health officials said here on Tuesday. With this, the state's deaths have shot up sharply from 1,27,097 on Monday to 1,30,753 on Tuesday, and the new addition of 3,509 has overtaken the previous peak daily death toll declaration of 2,771 on June 13. The state's total infections have now touched 62,29,596, the highest in the country, with the daily cases having touched the top peak of 68,631 (April 18) even as the state remains on high alert for the possible 'third wave'.

The state's death rate has worsened from 2.04 per cent to 2.09 per cent while the number of active cases remained below 1 lakh and stands at 96,375 now. On the brighter side, as many as 7,510 fully recovered patients returned home - higher than the number of fresh infections 6,910 on Tuesday - and the total discharges crossed the 6-million-mark to touch 6,00,911, notching a



recovery rate of 96.33 per cent for the day.

The Mumbai circle - comprising Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and Raigad districts - recorded 1,034 new cases - compared with the peak of 19,953 (April 11) infections. With this, the MMR caseload has gone up to 16,28,554 and with 39

more deaths, the toll has touched 33,867 now, in view of reconciliation of the data.

Meanwhile, the number of people sent to home isolation decreased from 561,796 on Monday to 560,354 now - while those in institutional quarantine went down from 4,052 to 3,977 on Tuesday.

Red Fort to be shut from July 21 till I-Day: ASI



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi's iconic Red Fort will be shut for the public from July 21 till Independence Day celebrations on August 15 are over, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) said on Tuesday.

"In exercise of the powers conferred under Rule 6 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules, 1959,

the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India hereby direct that there shall be no entry inside the Red Fort from the morning of 21st July, 2021 to 15th August, 2021 till the Independence Day celebration is over," ASI order stated.

It came after the Delhi Police in a letter on July 12 had suggested that the Red Fort be shut from July 15 in view of the Covid pandemic and security reasons.



SHIVRAJ JUMPS IN PEGASUS CASE, SAID, WHY WOULD WE SPY RAHUL GANDHI WHO EXTRACTS 'GOLD FROM POTATOES'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

CM Shivraj Singh Chauhan has come to the fray to defend the central government in the Pegasus case. In Bhopal, Shivraj called the media to his residence to talk over the issue. The CM said that foreign powers and Congress friends are unable to digest India's strength.



The matter brought up a day before the Monsoon Session of Parliament hampered discussion on the 17 Bills for the development of the country. Shivraj said that even the introduction of new ministers in the house was not allowed by the Congress. We believe in the politics of purity. Nation is first for us but family is first in Congress.

Chouhan said that Congress's power has become zero, what will we do by spying on it. Rahul Gandhi himself is also politically void. He said that what will we do by getting the phone tapped of the person who makes gold from potatoes. Congress itself is a party full of spies. Congress has a history of spying on its people. Their main leaders living in Delhi have always been surrounded by spies. Shivraj Singh Chauhan said that because of this the Congress itself has been weakening and weakening the country. CM said that Rahul and Priyanka are busy in settling G-23. This is the history of Congress. He said that Congress is no longer a party, it has become a swamp. He asked who has done the work of settling Kamal Nath in MP. Digvijay Singh has done the work of settling Kamal Nath. Keep a moment's report. Digvijay Singh himself used to run the government from behind. CM Shivraj has presented some more examples of Congress

in espionage case. Shivraj said that Rahul Gandhi secretly goes to the Embassy of China at night. Many leaders in the UPA government had made allegations of phone tapping. Shivraj said that Manmohan Singh had said that the phone tapping was done by a private agency, not by the government. The CM said that all the allegations against the central government are baseless. At the same time, Kamal Nath said that we have the list of espionage, will soon bring it in front of the media. On this Shivraj said that from where do they bring all these things. If they have, why not release them?

Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Chouhan

MP first state in the country to restore water storage capacity of reservoirs

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A meeting of the Council of Ministers was held in Mantralaya on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. In the meeting, while taking a policy decision for the restoration of water storage capacity of the reservoirs of the state, the tender process, base price, criteria of tender eligibility and other conditions were approved. After the amendment of the policy, Madhya Pradesh will be the first state in the country in which tender will be held to remove silt from four reservoirs in the first phase. With this 5 lakh hectare irrigation potential will be restored. The productivity of the land will increase. The life span of dams will increase. Sand can be utilised. Local people will get employment and revenue of about Rs.300 crore will be generated.



The cabinet approved the up-gradation of CCTV system of 859 police stations already established in the state and installation of new CCTV surveillance system in 258 police stations, 500 police outposts and 42 women police stations and for monitoring at district level in 52 district headquarters and Rs. 66 crore 18 lakh 95 thousand 175 for installation of CCTV control system in SRP offices in the financial year 2021-22 and service

of Project Management Consultant in the year 2022-26 and including 5 years warranty / AMC and other recurring Expenditure amount of Rs.28 crore, thus sanctioned total project cost of Rs.94 crore 18 lakh 95 thousand 175. The Council of Ministers has decided to remove the word "bus stand" only from the lands mentioned in the MP Nazul Bhoomi Nivartan Nirdeh 2020, on which there is regular income from making plans and construction - such as market, complex, bus stand etc. and replacing it after "for the public use such as road, garden, playground, filter plant, trenching ground, hospital, school, office."

The cabinet gave permission for land use change for setting up of 550 MW capacity solar power project by NTPC or its wholly owned company under Ultra Mega Renewal Energy Power Project mode and CPSU scheme on the land acquired/allocat-

ed for thermal power project. MP Power Management Company will have the first right to purchase the solar energy produced from the proposed project at the rate of Rs 2.45 per unit for 25 years.

A thermal power project of 3960 MW capacity was proposed by NTPC Limited, a Central Government Undertaking at Barethi in Chhatarpur district. NTPC has 1148.192 hectares of land available for this project. Due to non-receipt of environmental clearance and coal linkage for thermal power project, NTPC has sought land use change permission from the state government for solar power project of 550 MW capacity on available land.

The cabinet has approved new government ITI under the Department of Technical Education, Skill Development and Employment in the development block Buxwaha of Chhatarpur assembly constituency.

As many as 18 crore 43 lakh will be spent for establishment, operation and upgradation of ITI. Approval has been given to create 30 posts for new ITI. Keeping in view the facilities of the citizens in the state, with the aim of promoting telecommunication internet services in the state, the Council of Ministers has approved to amend the Policy 2019 and Guidelines-2019 keeping in view the needs of development of telecom/internet services in the present scenario. Approval was given by the Council of Ministers to the highest tender bid price of Rs 7 crore 67 lakh 36 thousand mentioned by the H-1 tenderer for the disposal of the asset of Plot No. 151-B, Scheme No. 59, Sector A-2, Amitesh Nagar, Bilawali Zone, District Indore of Madhya Pradesh State Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Bank Maryadit obtained on lease from Indore Development Authority, on depositing 100 percent of the tender price amount mentioned by the tenderer and after this the liquidator of Madhya Pradesh State Co-operative Agriculture and Rural Development Bank Limited, joint commissioner of Cooperatives has decided to execute the registered contract of sale of leased assets by June 11, 2021 and transfer in favour of H-1 tenderer in the property register by Indore Development Authority.

Teachers should give values of service to students through their conduct: Governor

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that the teachers should impart education to students keeping their ideals of conduct and values afore. Give place to both cosmic and transcendental subjects in the syllabus. He has said that students are the asset of our country. They are the nation builders who will take the country on the path of development. Therefore, our behaviour with them should be such that there should be no dissatisfaction in their mind. It is the responsibility of the teachers to inculcate a sense of service in them. This spirit will be awakened in the students only when we all diligently fulfil our responsibilities. Patel was giving a virtual address on the 54th Foundation Day celebrations of Awadhesh Pratap Singh University from Raj Bhavan, Bhopal today.



Patel has asked all the teachers to make talented students realize their full potential, enrich their skills, knowledge and motivate them to contribute to the society. He told the students to ponder upon what they are doing and what they can do for the development of our society, state and country. He has said that our country is the country of Buddha, Gandhi and Vivekananda, with its foundation based on Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, where in every person's heart there is compas-

sion, non-violence, tolerance. Our country is known as the Vishwa Guru due to these qualities. He has said that the aim of education should be to make students self-dependent and stand on their feet. Education should not be just to acquire a job. Education should help in developing the physical, mental, spiritual and character of the student, only bookish knowledge is not adequate. Education should be such that there is a sense of responsibility to perform duties along with rights. Patel said that the future of the nation depends only on the active contribution of the students in the work of upliftment of the country and society. In every era and time, there is a challenge before the youth to deal with problems, it will continue to be so. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the teachers to incul-

Governor, CM greets citizens on Eid-ul-Zuha

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan have extended his greetings and best wishes to the people of the state on the occasion of Eid-ul-Zuha.

Governor Patel has wished for the happiness and prosperity of the people and development of the state on the occasion of Eid-ul-Zuha.

Patel has said in his message that the festival of Eid-ul-Zuha shows the importance of sacrifice and renunciation. This festival is a symbol of love and humanity which teaches compassion and brotherhood. The Governor has appealed to the people of the state to celebrate the

festival as per the glorious tradition of brotherhood with peace, harmony and unity. In view of the corona infection, he has asked to take care of their own safety and of family from infection by following the guidelines of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has congratulated and extended best wishes to the people of the state on Eid-ul-Zuha.

Chouhan has said that the festival of Eid-ul-Zuha gives a message of sacrifice and mutual trust. This festival is a symbol of mutual brotherhood. Chouhan urged people of the state to celebrate the festival of Eid-ul-Zuha on July 21 as per the tradition with peace, amiability and harmony while following the Corona protocol.

Industry representatives met Chief Minister Textile project of 300 crore to be set up in Burhanpur

Burhanpur Textiles Ltd. gave investment proposal to Madhya Pradesh government to set up a textile project in Burhanpur Madhya Pradesh with an investment of about Rs 300 crore.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Representatives of Burhanpur Textile Private Limited Company, a Burhanpur based textile manufacturing company, met Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at Mantralaya on Tuesday. During this, they handed over the investment proposal to Chief Minister Chouhan to set up a textile project in Burhanpur Madhya Pradesh with an investment of about Rs 300 crore. Industry represen-

tatives included Omprakash Mittal, Ravi Poddar, Vedant Mittal, Sudhir Pate and Sunil Mor. M/s Burhanpur Textile Limited was established in the year 1956. The company has 9 units working in Burhanpur. The company has a turnover of more than Rs 221 crore in the financial year 2020-21. The operation of the project will provide employment to about 1000 persons. Out of this, direct employment will be available to 200 persons and self-employment to about 800 persons.

Our earliest stone age cultural remains go back to 1.5 million years: Ota

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On the occasion of the 16th annual IGRMS lecture, a lecture of Dr. SB Ota was organised on "Inquiries Into Deep Human History: Investigations of Acheulian Sites around Tikoda and Damdongri District Raisen, Madhya Pradesh." via Google Meet and Facebook live. The lecture was chaired by Director IGRMS Praveen Kumar Mishra.

At the beginning of the program Mishra honored Ota by presenting him Shriphal and Shawl. Introducing Ota, Surya Kumar Pandey said that he was Tagore National Fellow, Ministry of Culture, Government of India and former Joint Director General, Archaeological Survey of India. 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. Ota was honored with "Young Scientist Award" from Indian Science Congress Association in 1987. Ota while addressing the 16th IGRMS Annual Lecture online, said that in last two decades there is headway in prehistoric research particularly to understand the earliest Stone Age cultural remains i.e. Acheulian



cultural remains of the Indian subcontinent. It is now well established that our earliest stone age cultural remains go back to 1.5 million years. One such pocket is in Central India which is being investigated in district Raisen for last couple of years. This comprehensive study to understand the early human behaviour is being collaboration with Deccan College, Pune. Systematic explorations and

excavations of Acheulian sites in village jurisdiction of Tikoda and Damdongri in district Raisen have helped us understanding the various aspects of human behaviour of early Hominin in this part of the sub-continent. Investigations have shown that the area was extremely rich in Acheulian occupations in the form of large scatters of stone artefacts. It has been noticed that almost all varieties of stones available in the area were utilised for manufacturing tools, but certainly there was a preference for selection of suitable materials for its fabrication. Besides, the early habitations in the form of large number of artefact clusters in the area suggest that these prehistoric hunter-gatherers had a band society with repeated occupations with a wide mobility within the valley. Such densities of lithic landscape indicates long term continuous occupation by early hominin due to availability of suitable raw material, rich plant and animal food, water sources etc. Detail multi-disciplinary study of such sites will certainly help in decoding the prehistoric hunter-gatherer human behaviour in respect of settlement and subsistence pattern, man-land relationship, movement strategies etc. Ota answered the questions of the audience.

CM launches UNESCO's 'Historic Urban Landscape' project for Gwalior and Orchha

Gwalior and Orchha will be developed by improving it historically and culturally

UNESCO PROJECT IMPORTANT FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE CULTURE AND HERITAGE OF HISTORIC CITIES

Chouhan said that Gwalior and Orchha cities have been selected by UNESCO in this project and they will be jointly developed by UNESCO, Government of India and Madhya Pradesh by focusing on their historical and cultural improve-

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that UNESCO's 'Historic Urban Landscape Project', which was started in the year 2011, for the inclusive and well-planned development of fast-growing historical cities while preserving the culture and heritage is very crucial.

Chouhan said that Gwalior and Orchha cities have been selected by UNESCO in this project and they will be jointly developed by UNESCO, Government of India and Madhya Pradesh by focusing on their historical and cultural improvement. Chouhan on Tuesday virtual launched UNESCO's 'Historic Urban Landscape' project for Gwalior and Orchha cities of the state through video conferencing at Mantralaya. Tourism and Culture Minister Usha Thakur, Principal



Secretary Tourism Culture Shiv Shekhar Shukla etc. were present. Eric Falt Delhi, Junhi Han, Neha Dewan, Nishant Upadhyay from UNESCO, New Delhi and Rand Eppich from US joined through VC. Chouhan said that six cities of South Asia, including Ajmer and Varanasi in India are already involved in this project. Orchha and Gwalior have been included as the 7th and 8th cities. The development and management plan of these cities will be prepared by UNESCO. All aspects including history, culture, food, lifestyle, economic development, community development will be included in it. Chouhan said that this project of UNESCO will help MP tourism get a new dimension. Development projects of other cities will also be

made according to the development project of Orchha and Gwalior to be made by UNESCO. Additional employment opportunities will also be created along with the development of tourism. Chouhan said that many schemes are being operated for the development of tourism in Madhya Pradesh, like 'Responsible Tourism', 'Rural Tourism', 'Safe Tourism for Women', Buffer mein Safar, Night Safari, 'Wellness and Mindful Tourism', 'Youth Adventure Tourism' etc.

Eric Falt of UNESCO said that Orchha and Gwalior cities will be developed keeping in mind their historical and cultural importance through the project. Along with this, full attention will also be given to the development of the environment and community. Tourism and Culture Minister Usha Thakur said that by implementing the plan being made by UNESCO for the development of both the cities, we will take not only Orchha and Gwalior but all the historical cities of the state to the peak of development. Full care of the culture, history, nature, traditions and heritage of the cities will be taken in the development of the cities. Junhi Han of UNESCO India said that cities will be developed keeping in mind the Sustainable Development 2030 agenda. Orchha and Gwalior cities will be developed keeping in mind their cultural and historical importance in partnership with UNESCO and Madhya Pradesh Tourism Department.



TEN DISTRICTS MAY SEE TOTAL LOCKDOWN AS CORONAVIRUS CASES CONTINUE TO RISE

State Health Minister Rajesh Tope said there are 10 districts that have a higher positivity rate as compared to the rest of the state.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Central team of experts that visited Covid-affected Kolhapur and Sangli in Maharashtra have suggested a total lockdown in the two districts. The Central team expressed concern as to why the transmission was not stopping in the two districts despite a series of measures in place.

According to media reports state health authorities have said they were yet to receive a report from the Central team members.

"There are 10 districts which have a higher positivity rate as compared to the rest of the state and the Central team that visited some of them has emphasised on



measures like testing, contact tracing, and vaccination... We are following all protocols," Rajesh Tope, state health minister, reportedly said.

The state health minister added that he would be visiting Delhi and would reiterate the state's request to Centre for the supply more

Covid-19 vaccine doses.

According to Dr Shashank Joshi, expert with the state Covid task force, the trend of coronavirus infection is picking up in districts such as Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara, Pune rural and even Ahmednagar and Nandurbar (which are showing upward trend due to a low denomi-

ator). "The entire Western belt of Maharashtra is a cause of concern... We have an active virus in circulation and something is not going right," Dr Joshi added.

Maharashtra's coronavirus case-load climbed to 62,20,207 on Monday after 6,017 people tested positive for the infection, the lowest since February 22, while the death toll jumped to 1,27,097 as 66 patients succumbed to COVID-19, a health department official said. The fresh COVID-19 deaths were the lowest in the last one week.

The official said as many as 13,051 patients were discharged from hospitals in the last 24 hours, pushing the number of recovered cases to 59,93,401. The state now has 96,375 active COVID-19 cases.

Maharashtra's COVID-19 recovery rate is 96.35 per cent, while the fatality rate is 2.04 per cent, the official said. Significantly, Hingoli, Wardha and Bhandara districts of Maharashtra did not report any new coronavirus infection in the last 24 hours.

OBC front to protest for local bodies quota, first rally in Baramati

The protest will be against the Centre as well as the Maharashtra government, said OBC leader Prakash Shendge.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

To fight for reservation in local bodies, OBC leaders are planning street rallies in Maharashtra. The initiative has come from OBC Sangharsh Samanvay Samiti president Prakash Shendge.

The protest will be against the Centre as well as the state government for failing to protect the reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) community in local bodies. Shendge said, "There is huge unrest in the community. But nobody from the state or the Centre has been able to address our concerns. Therefore, we have to take the fight to the streets." The first rally will be in Baramati, the home town of NCP president Sharad Pawar and deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar. An organiser of the rally said, "The idea to hold the first public rally at Baramati is to ensure leaders take note of our issues.

Pawar sahab is a national leader, with considerable say at both the state and the Centre." Shendge said, "When we hold a rally at Baramati, it will be noticed at all levels. Baramati has that potential. However, if there is no initiative from the government after the first rally, the OBC front will hold 10 rallies in big cities across Maharashtra."

In March 2021, the Supreme Court struck down OBC reservation in local bodies, as it exceeded the 50 per cent ceiling. The aggregate reservation for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward cannot exceed 50 per cent, the SC held. The ruling and the opposition parties in Maharashtra have been blaming each other for the development. While the MVA's Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena say the Centre is to blame for not providing empirical data on the OBC population, the BJP accuses

the government of not doing anything in the past 15 months to protect the OBC quota. Shendge said, "We are looking at this issue beyond party and politics. Our OBC front is open to all leaders across party lines who support our cause."

For the July 29 rally, the OBC front has sent invitations to prominent leaders across the state, including NCP's Chagan Bhujbal, Nana Patole and Vijay Wadettiwar from the Congress, Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut, and Pankaja Munde and Chandrashekhar Bawankule from the BJP.

Earlier, during the state monsoon session this month, the state government adopted a resolution asking the Centre to provide empirical data on OBCs. However, the BJP said the resolution was a ploy to push the state's responsibilities on to the Centre and cover up the state's failure in protecting the OBC quota.

55 policemen not eligible for Rs 50 lakh Covid-19 compensation

Officials said till date, 45,120 policemen have tested positive for Covid-19, of which 44,251 have recovered and 382 are undergoing treatment.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Authorities from the Director General of Maharashtra police headquarters on Monday revealed that 487 policemen working across the state have lost their lives to Covid-19. Authorities further said the family members of only 374 officials have received the compensation of Rs 50 lakh that was announced by the Maharashtra government at



the start of the pandemic in 2020, as 55 others are not eligible for the aid.

Additional Director General (admin) S K Singhal said, "Of the total number of deceased policemen, 55 are not eligible for the compensation as they caught the infection while they were either on leave or had failed to report to duty 14 days prior to being infected." Officials revealed that these personnel do not fall under the criteria announced by the government for Covid-related

compensation, as it clearly states that the policeman succumbing to the disease should have reported to work or performed any Covid-related duty 14 days prior to catching the infection, or 14 days before his/her death. The family members of the respective policemen have been informed of the same.

Officials said till date, 45,120 policemen have tested positive for Covid-19, of which 44,251 have recovered and 382 are undergoing treatment."

After furore, Adani denies move to shift Mumbai airport HQ to Gujarat

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Following a massive political furore over the Adani Group's plans to relocate the headquarters of its recently acquired crown jewel -- the high-profile Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) -- from Mumbai to Ahmedabad, the company late on Tuesday denied any such move.

"In light of rumours that the Mumbai Airport HQ will be moving to Ahmedabad, we unambiguously state that MIAL and NMIAL airports will remain headquarters in Mumbai," the Adani Group said in a statement. It also reiterated its commitment to make Mumbai proud and create thousands of jobs through its airport ecosystem. In a major organizational restructuring on July 18, the Adani Group had said it has decided to shift the headquarters of Adani Airport Holdings Ltd., which runs CSMIA, from Mumbai to Ahmedabad, stunning corporate and aviation circles.

The three ruling allies, Shiv Sena-

Nationalist Congress Party-Congress, strongly castigated the move on Tuesday as part of "a larger design" to downgrade the importance of Mumbai, the country's commercial capital. Praising the Adani Group announcement, State Congress Spokesperson Sachin Sawant said that despite all attempts, Mumbai's relevance cannot be diluted.

Earlier on Tuesday, on the AAHL's plans, he said it was "a message from (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi to the people of Maharashtra. The recent 'dandiya dance' at the CSMIA conveyed a lot"

"This whole exercise started 7 years ago when the International Finance Services Centre was also taken away from Mumbai and shifted to Gujarat," said Sawant. NCP Spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said that instead of being concerned about the development of Mumbai, the Modi government is concentrating on the progress of Gujarat at the expense of Maharashtra. "A few years ago, they decided to link Mumbai-Ahmedabad with a grandiose Bullet

Train project. Thankfully, the people of this state have rejected it," said Tapase.

The Shiv Sena's Kishore Tiwari - accorded MoS status - said since the day it took over, the Bharatiya Janata Party at the Centre has resorted to targeting Maharashtra, with the state BJP nodding its head to the machinations against any entrepreneur or industry and welcomes all who participate in the state's development with open arms and dignity.

"Now, next time, along with 'dandiya', organize even a 'lezim' dance at the airport."

Seeing the move as "a conspiracy" to run down Mumbai, Tapase had said it would be inadvisable and urged the Adani Group to respect the sentiments, culture and traditions of Maharashtra. Tiwari added that on every occasion, the BJP at the Centre and state have resorted to undermin-

ing the MVA government and also dilute the pre-eminent status of Maharashtra and Mumbai by shifting major government institutions from here.

But everything is falling in the lap of only Gujarat and not any other state. Why is this favourable treatment always given to Modi's home state when he is the PM of the entire country," Tiwari asked.

The Sena leader cautioned that it reeks of political malafide and must be opposed by all parties in the state, including the Maharashtra BJP failing which misguided leaders will harm Mumbai in the long run.

On July 13, the Adani Group's AAHL said it had acquired control of Mumbai International Airport Ltd and the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport Ltd.

This makes AAHL the largest private operator of airports with eight under its belt now including Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Jaipur, Lucknow, Mangaluru and Thiruvananthapuram.

Barge accident:

GOVERNOR FELICITATES INDIAN NAVY OFFICERS FOR RESCUE EFFORTS

The governor applauded the officers and their teams for showing exemplary courage in rescuing crew members of barge P 305, which housed personnel engaged in maintenance work of an offshore oil drilling platform of the state-run oil and gas major ONGC.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari on Tuesday felicitated the Commanding Officers of INS Kochi and INS d INS Kolkata, who were instrumental in saving the lives crew members from the barge that sank off Mumbai coast during Cyclone Tauktae in May. According to a release issued by the Raj Bhavan, Captain Sachin Sequiera of INS Kochi and Captain Prashant Handu of INS Kolkata were given certificates of appreciation by the governor at Raj Bhavan.



The governor applauded the officers and their teams for showing exemplary courage in rescuing crew members of barge P 305, which housed personnel engaged in maintenance work of an offshore oil drilling platform of the state-run oil and gas major ONGC.

The barge with a crew of 261 and Tug Varaprada sank off the Mumbai coast during Cyclone Tauktae on May 17, in which 86 died.

The Commanding Officer of INS Talwar Captain Partha U Bhatt could not meet the Governor due to operational commitments, the release stated.

Maharashtra administers over four crore Covid-19 vaccine doses

The state had administered 1.20 lakh doses till Tuesday afternoon, in the process taking the overall count to over 4 crore, with 3,06,99,399 people getting the first jab and 93,25,362 getting the second one as well, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Pradeep Vyas said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The number of COVID-19 administered in crossed the 4-crore mark on Tuesday, including one crore doses being given to beneficiaries in less than a month's time due to increase in stock, officials said. Maharashtra hit the 3-crore mark on June 26, while the number of doses adminis-



tered had crossed the 2-crore mark on May 13. The state had administered 1.20 lakh doses till Tuesday afternoon, in the process taking the overall count to over 4 crore, with 3,06,99,399 people getting the first jab and 93,25,362 getting the second one as well, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Pradeep Vyas said. Officials said 69,11,125 people in the 45 plus age group and 4,15,080 in the 18-44 segment have been given the second dose in the state so far. They added that 8,85,982 health care and 10,63,221 frontline workers have also got the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine in Maharashtra.

Porn case:

Kundra, techie in police custody till July 23

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A day after the sensational arrest of businessman Raj Kundra -- the husband of Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty -- the Mumbai Police has nabbed a techie in con-

nection with the alleged pornographic racket being probed by the Crime Branch-CID, official sources said here on Tuesday.

The police have arrested Ryan John Tharpe, entrusted with the technical aspects of Kundra-Shetty's companies, from Nerul in

Navi Mumbai, for his alleged role and involvement in the same scam. The duo was produced before a Mumbai magistrate and have been remanded to police custody till July 23. With this the total number of arrests in the case has shot up to around 12, till date and several more suspects are still on the police radar. Tharpe is an IT person, said to be closely involved with Kundra and Shetty's companies which are now being probed for the pornographic racket having possible international ramifications. Official sources reveal that the investigators have recovered certain incriminating materials, WhatsApp chats and other stuff, while the role of other known and unknown persons in the entire racket is also being investigated. Kundra, 46, was nabbed late on Monday on alleged charges of making and publishing pornographic content and publishing them through mobile applications. Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale himself made the announcement on Kundra's arrest based on a case registered in February. Since February, Kundra -- a British-Indian businessman -- was under the scrutiny of the Crime Branch-CID before the police's dramatic move last night. The sudden arrest stunned Bollywood which is already reeling

under the scanner of various narcotics agencies since the past one year, further soiling the industry's image. "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 evidence regarding this. Further investigation is in progress," the police chief added.

Viral WhatsApp chat on porn revenue has Raj Kundra as participant, claim netizens

Mumbai: Photographs of printouts taken from a WhatsApp chat of a group named 'H Accounts' have gone viral on social media. Unconfirmed claims by netizens suggest that one of the participants of the group is actress Shilpa Shetty's husband and businessman Raj Kundra, who was arrested late on Monday on charges of making pornographic content and publishing them through mobile applications. Photographs of the printouts show how much revenue was earned and how transactions were made through production of pornographic films. In the photographs of the WhatsApp group, a user named Raj Kundra writes: "Nice. Please start splitting live gross rev and movie rev." In another conversation, the same user writes: "Movie revenue has really dropped." The group has a total of five participants -- namely Raj Kundra, Megha Viaan Accounts (Viaan, incidentally, is Raj and Shilpa's son's name), Pardeep Bakshi, Rob Digital Marketing Hotshots, and Roy Evans Content Head Hotshots. Meanwhile, a day after the arrest of Kundra, Mumbai Police has nabbed a techie in connection with the alleged pornographic racket being probed by the Crime Branch-CID, official sources said here on Tuesday.

The police have arrested Ryan John Tharpe, entrusted with the technical aspects of Kundra-Shetty's companies, for his alleged role and involvement in the scam. The two were produced before a Mumbai magistrate and have been remanded to police custody till July 23.

Raj Kundra, star of controversies

Mumbai: Businessman Raj Kundra, husband of actress Shilpa Shetty, has made it to the headlines for the wrong reason once again. He was arrested on Monday night on charges of creating pornographic content. However, this is not the first time that Kundra has found himself in the middle of a scandal. While the Commissioner of Police said in a statement that they have enough evidence to arrest Kundra in the current case, he has had run-ins with the law earlier as well, in cases of fraud. IANS takes a look at his controversies of the past. The former co-owner of the Indian Premier League (IPL) team Rajasthan Royals was banned for life from cricket after being accused of betting. Kundra and the former ICC chief N. Srinivasan's son-in-law Gurusanth Meiyappan were found guilty of betting. However, Kundra had filed a petition in Supreme Court in 2018 after Delhi Police had given him a clean chit. In 2017, a textile company accused Kundra of cheating them of Rs 24 lakh. In the complaint filed, the textile company said that the money collected by Raj Kundra and his wife, actress Shilpa Shetty, in the name of the particular company, was never given to them. The Police had filed a complaint against him.

In 2018, Raj was allegedly involved in the Bitcoin Scam. As per the Pune crime branch, some Bollywood actors were promoting an illegal scam to invest money in Bitcoin. A lot of money was recovered after the police came down heavy on this racket. It is said that as much as Rs 2 thousand crore was recovered.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Climate change and Natural Calamities

Petteri Taalas, chief of the Geneva-based World Meteorological Organization (WMO), said extreme weather events and natural disasters will continue to increase, adding that climate change was the root cause of the torrential rainstorms and deadly floods ravaging Europe this summer.

'Climate Change Chaupal' is Meghalaya's new intervention for tackling climate change

James Sangma

As climate change morphs into a real time threat, Meghalaya has turned to invoking its traditional leaders and institutions by turning them into evangelists and climate actors and crusaders.

Meghalaya Forest Minister James Sangma has decided to take it upon himself to collect ecological knowledge and climate wisdom from the ancestral conceptions and indigenous tribal leaders of traditional institutions to create awareness and strategy of climate change adaptation and mitigation for the state.

Apart from the formal government systems (the state legislature and judiciary) as well as Autonomous District Councils that were carved to allot greater autonomy to tribal communities in Meghalaya, the state's village level traditional institutions called Dorbar in Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Nokma in Garo Hills are village level authorities that administer at the local levels in the matter of quotidian activities like settlement of local disputes, management of natural resources and provision of basic services.

Infact, Meghalaya was exempted from the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act which allows for the devolution of governance through the decentralised Panchayati Raj system because of its strong grassroot and community governance structure.

One of the global learnings emerging from Covid response all across the world is a new form of 'decentralised' governance where the state works in alliance with traditional and grassroots institutions and leaders.

This bottom up approach is critical for social mobilisation and tackling the 21st century challenges like climate change.

Several complex issues such as climate change, diminishing rain patterns,



green livelihoods were discussed with indigenous examples of several localised climate legislations - emerging in the conversation. In the idea exchange, there were conversations about green energy and livelihoods, agroforestry models and several preservation models that could incentivise the villagers and junta to create a new template of climate action economy.

After having piloted a successful project using multi strains of indigenous Algae or phyco-remediation to clean up the toxic industrial waste of one of its rivers, the Forest Minister has launched an open mandate to embrace local ecological knowledge and build nature based solutions.

Sacred Groves in Meghalaya, which are community based sacred forests, have been largely instrumental in community led forest management practices and large scale preservation. There were more green livelihood options such as algae and carbon farming, agro-forestry models and wellness tourism using folk

medicine - with abundance of high value indigenous wellness knowledge systems were also discussed with the grassroots representatives.

Forest management and climate change adaptation strategy should integrate socio-cultural and ecological phenomena and should be aimed to sustain human needs and maintain the ecosystem integrity.

It has also been emphasised to include climate change and conservation as a part of school along with several green interventions with the headmen for turning the province into a 'climate action zone'.

The grassroot conference was one of the first interventions on the part of the government to start collecting indigenous knowledge, community engagement and empower decentralised governance to bolster its fight against climate change.

(The writer is Minister for Power, Environment and Forests, Meghalaya)

Dividend windfall may help stretched govt finances

Subhash NarayanHuntsoe

The dividend windfall from government's holding in public sector undertakings will provide much needed relief to the treasury hard pressed on account of falling revenue and rising expenses for Covid relief work.

According to estimates, with the economy coming back on rails after getting Covid, dividend income for the government from PSUs may shoot up again in FY22 close to the original budgeted levels for FY21 at over Rs 60,000 crore.

Government sources said that most PSUs are performing well and numbers for the first quarter are indicative of rising revenues and profitability. If this is sustained, the government may get higher income as PSUs dividend this year. Though official sources maintained that no numbers had been worked out as yet, it could be close to double of Rs 30,000 crore garnered from roughly two dozen PSUs in FY21.

In a tweet earlier, Dipam secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey had said:

"Dividend receipts of GoI (Government of India) from CPSEs stand at about Rs 30,369 crore in the current financial year (as of 22.3.2021)." This was actually much below the original budget estimate of dividend income at Rs 65,746.96 crore estimated in FY21 from CPSEs. It is expected that energy sector companies, especially in oil and gas and power sectors would contribute the maximum towards dividend income of the government this year. Oil sector PSUs are expected to

fare well in FY22 as demand for their products, which had fallen last year is picking up fast and reaching pre-Covid levels. Also, firm crude prices may help them make big inventory gains.

Power sector PSUs are also faring well with a rise in demand for electricity both in commercial and household segments.

BPCL, which helped the government mobilise in close to Rs 9,000 crore in FY21 by dividend interim dividend, special dividend (Rs 79 dividend on a share price of Rs 10), is again likely to provide windfall to the Centre if its privatisation plan gets delayed to later part of the fiscal or next year. Also, Coal India, Indian Oil and banking sector PSUs may chip in with higher dividend.

Apart from BPCL, in FY21 Coal India Ltd provided Rs 6,520 crore to the government as dividend, Indian Oil Corporation close to Rs 6,000 crore, State Bank of India around Rs 2,000 crore and GAIL about Rs 1,200 crore. These would be contenders for providing maximum dividend in FY22 as well. Sources said that if profitability of companies is maintained during the year, certain PSUs may also consider declaring special dividend to payout from their reserves. The guidelines issued by the department of investment and public asset management (Dipam) in 2016 that every PSU would pay a minimum annual dividend of 30 per cent of profit after tax or 5 per cent of the net worth, whichever is higher, will also push PSUs to declare higher amounts as dividends.

international

PEDRO CASTILLO DECLARED PREZ-ELECT OF PERU

Lima | Agencies

The National Jury of Elections (JNE) of Peru on Tuesday officially declared Marxist village school-teacher Pedro Castillo as the president-elect, a month and a half after the June 6 run-off polls.

"I declare Jose Pedro Castillo Terrones President of the Republic, and Dina Ercilia Boluarte Zegarra, First Vice President of the Republic," the election body's highest authority, Jorge Salas Arenas, announced during a virtual ceremony.

According to the final election results, Castillo obtained 8,836,380 votes, or 50.12 per cent, while rival Keiko Fujimori garnered 8,792,117 votes, or 49.87 per cent, a margin of just 44,263 votes, said the National Office of Electoral Processes, the body in charge of organising elections in Peru.

After the run-off, Fujimori, daughter of a former president, launched a legal crusade against her opponent's political party, Peru Libre, which she accused of



using "systematic fraud" on election day, reports Xinhua news agency.

She filed appeals to annul more than 200,000 votes in favour of the left-leaning candidate, but the majority of the appeals were dismissed by JNE, an autonomous constitutional organ.

Keiko Fujimori made her latest attempt to challenge run-off results announced by regional electoral juries in the cities of Huancavelica, Cajamarca, San Roman, Huamanga and Chota.

The appeals were rejected, in accordance with a JNE resolution, on the grounds that they were "unrelated to the causes for which the validity of the results can be legitimately disputed".

She acknowledged the election results released by the JNE, but said, "the truth will end up coming to light anyway".

Salas said he would "shortly announce the date and place" for delivering to the winners their respective credentials. Castillo now faces enormous challenges ahead. Peru is suffering particularly badly from the coronavirus pandemic.

It is one of the countries with the highest mortality rate in the world, and its economy also collapsed by 12.9 per cent last year. Political turmoil has also marked the past year, as the Congress was locked in a bitter conflict with the government.

Parliamentarians first forced president Martin Vizcarra out of office, and then his successor, Manuel Merino, threw in the towel after fierce protests.

Interim President Francisco Sagasti has been in charge meanwhile.

ROCKETS LAND NEAR AFGHAN PREZ PALACE DURING EID PRAYERS

Kabul: Three rockets landed near the Afghan Presidential Palace, also known as the Arg, on Tuesday during an Eid prayer session attended by President Ashraf Ghani and other senior politicians and officials.

Hamid Roshan, deputy spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior, said the rockets were set in auto and were launched from Kabul's Police District 4 area, Khaama Press reported.

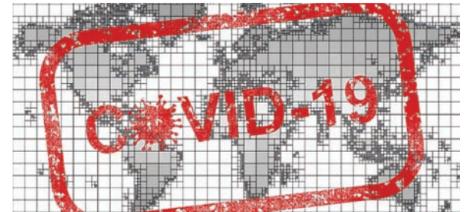
The rockets landed when the prayer session had just started at an open ground inside the palace compound, said a TOLO News report. Sources have confirmed that the rockets landed in Bagh-e-Ali Mardan and Chaman-e-Hozori areas in Kabul's District 1 and Manabe Bashari area in Kabul's District 2, all near the Presidential Palace.

There has been no immediate reports of casualties or damages.

People becoming desensitised to Covid illnesses, death: Study

New York | Agencies

While in early 2020 people incessantly washed their hands and wouldn't leave home for fear of the novel coronavirus disease, 11 months later the public has pushed the envelope on Covid-19 safety precautions and ignored warnings, suggested a new study based on news articles on Twitter. Researchers at University of California-Davis examined how Covid-19 news articles shared to Twitter were first met with anxiety-ridden tweets early in the pandemic, during a coinciding spike in instances of panic-buying, extreme social distancing and quarantine measures. Despite the increased death toll, those behaviours then gave way over time to less concerned responses to Covid-19 news, along with increases in societal risk-taking during that time period. The study was



published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research Infodemiology.

During a period of 11 months, the team used a computerised methodology to analyse linguistic anxiety levels in hundreds of Covid-19 news articles on Twitter, along with the anxiety levels in corresponding user tweets. They then correlated the findings with the Covid-19 death toll in the United States. "Our study shows a need to delve deeper into how to re-sensitise the public and motivate them to take action in the face of an ongoing emergency. Testing the effective-

ness of various health-risk communication strategies could quite possibly mean the difference between life and death in the future," said lead author Hannah Stevens, a doctoral student from the varsity's Department of Communication. "If another health crisis occurred today, or Covid-19 takes another turn for the worse, it is essential for public health officials to consider that they are communicating to a desensitised public.

I hope that this paper can be an impetus to get that discussion started," she added.

Biden downplays inflation fears before infrastructure bill vote

US President Joe Biden has downplayed inflation fears as lawmakers are slated to vote later this week to begin a debate on the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

Washington | Agencies

Our experts believe and the data shows that most of the price increases we've seen were expected and are expected to be temporary," Biden said in remarks on the economy at the White House on Monday, pushing back against fears of persistent inflation.

"The reality is, you can't flip the global economic light back on and not expect this to happen. As demand returns, there's going to be global supply chain challenges," he said, adding the so-called transitory effects account for about 60 per cent of the price increases over the last few months.

"My administration understands that if we were to ever experience unchecked inflation over the long term, that would pose real challenges to our economy. So while we're confident that isn't what we are seeing today, we're going to remain vigilant about any response that is needed."

Biden's remarks came as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer set a Wednesday deadline for a procedural vote to begin debate on the bipartisan infrastructure bill, reports Xinhua news agency.



The White House is concerned that fears of rising prices could derail Biden's legislative agenda, which includes massive spending packages, according to local media.

"If we make a prudent, multi-year investments in better roads, bridges, transit systems, and high-speed Internet ... it breaks up the bottlenecks in our economy," Biden said. "These steps will enhance our productivity -- raising wages without raising prices. That won't increase inflation. It will take the pressure off of inflation, give a boost to our workforce," said the President, urging lawmakers to pass the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

Biden also said that he has told Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell that he respects the central bank's independence.

"As I made clear to Chairman Powell of the Federal Reserve when we met recently, the Fed is independent. It should take whatever steps it deems necessary to support a strong, durable economic recovery," he said.

US consumer prices in June rose 0.9 per cent from the previous month and 5.4 per cent from a year earlier, the largest 12-month increase in roughly 13 years, according to the Labour Department.

Guterres warns against tensions in Old City Jerusalem

"He (Guterres) underscores that the status quo must be upheld and fully respected. He calls upon community, religious and political leaders on all sides to refrain from provocative action and rhetoric, in the interest of peace and stability," said Haq.

Jerusalem | Agencies

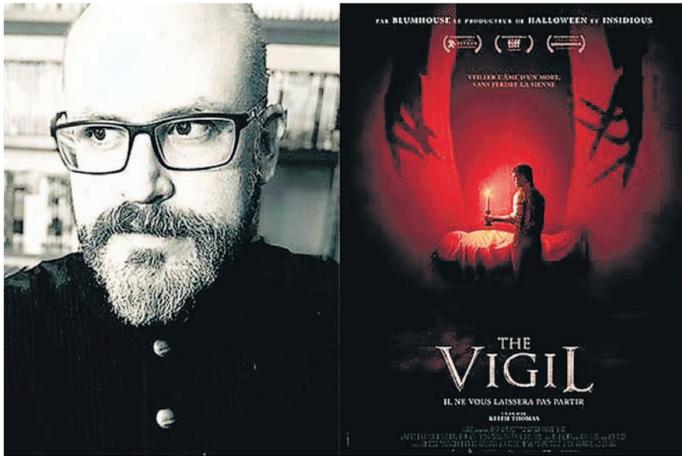
UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned against new tensions in the Old City of Jerusalem between Jews and Muslims.

"The Secretary-General is following with concern the heightened tensions in and

around the Holy Sites of the Old City of Jerusalem," Xinhua news agency quoted Farhan Haq, Guterres' deputy spokesman, as saying on Monday. "He (Guterres) underscores that the status quo must be upheld and fully respected. He calls upon community, religious and political leaders on all sides to refrain from provocative action and rhetoric, in the interest of peace and stability," said Haq. At least 1,300 Jews on Sunday visited the flashpoint Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem to mark the Jewish holy day of Tisha B'Av, despite tensions between Palestinians and Israeli police. The Al-Aqsa Mosque compound is a site holy to both Muslims and Jews, the latter of whom call it the Temple Mount. Israel captured East Jerusalem in the 1967 war and annexed it shortly later, claiming it part of its "indivisible" capital, in a move unrecognised by most of the international community.



KEITH THOMAS ON DIRECTING HORROR FILM 'THE VIGIL'



Los Angeles | Agencies

Keith Thomas, who has directed the horror film "The Vigil", has opened up about what drew him to making a movie on Jewish pain, holocaust and antisemitism. Thomas has said that a part of making a Jewish film comes from his own family history. He said he lost family not only in the Holocaust but also in pogroms before and this is something that always struck him as a child. "We conceptualise the Holocaust as this indescribably devastating event, but there were lots of other incidents. In my mind, even in the film, we are only showing the tiniest moment of the Holocaust through one man's experience, and it's just as powerful and destructive as

what happens to Yakov's brother on the street," the filmmaker said. "The Vigil" is about a man named Yakov (Dave Davis), who is hired by his old rabbi to watch over the body of a recently deceased community member and has to survive a night tormented by a demon in the chiller, steeped in Jewish lore and historical connections. The film also stars Menashe Lustig and Malky Goldman. The horror film comes from Blumhouse Productions, makers of films such as the "Paranormal Activity" franchise, "The Invisible Man", the "Insidious" franchise, "The Purge" franchise, the "Halloween" franchise, the "Happy Death Day" franchise, "Split", "Glass" and the "Ouija" franchise among others. The film released on Amazon Prime Video on July 9.

Los Angeles | Agencies

An old video of actress Julia Roberts on environment conservation has started generating buzz again as it trended on social media. The video, which was uploaded on the YouTube channel of the organisation Conservative International six years ago has got people discussing the issue once again. Incidentally, the video had gone viral in April 2020, too. In the video, which is one minute and 58 seconds long, the actress speaks from the point of view of Mother Earth. She says in the video: "Some call me nature, others call me mother nature. I have been here for over four and a half billion years -- 22,500 times longer than you. I don't really need people but people need me. Yes, your future depends on me. When I thrive, you thrive. When I falter, you falter, or worse." She goes on to make a powerful statement on behalf of earth as strong visuals add impact to her voice. "But I have been here for eons. I have fed species greater than you and I have starved species greater than you. My oceans, my soil, my flowing streams, my forests, they all can take you or leave you," she says.

Julia Roberts' video on environment conservation generates buzz again



Covid stops shoot of 'House Of The Dragon'

Los Angeles | Agencies

The production of "House Of The Dragon", prequel to the popular fantasy show "Game Of Thrones", has been stopped by the network HBO owing to a Covid-19 case in the unit. The UK shoot of the upcoming show had to be paused for two days after a positive case for the coronavirus was detected in zone A of the unit, which includes cast and crew, according to deadline.com. A production member tested positive and, in compliance with industry guidelines, would isolate. People who came in close contacts are required to quarantine. Production will resume on Wednesday, the site added. "House Of The Dragon" is the latest high-profile production in the UK that has been stalled owing to the pandemic. The straight-to-series fantasy drama started production in April with plans for a 2022 launch. "House Of The Dragon" stars Paddy Considine, Olivia Cooke, Matt Smith, Emma D'Arcy and Fabien Frankel. Rhys Ifans, Steve Toussaint, Eve Best and Sonoya Mizuno. Based on George RR Martin's "Fire & Blood", the series, which is set 300 years before the events of "Game Of Thrones", tells the story of House Targaryen.



'My everything'

PRIYANKA POSTS PICTURE WITH HUBBY NICK JONAS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas has shared a throwback picture with her pop star husband Nick Jonas, whom she tagged as her "everything". Priyanka posted a picture on Instagram. In the image, the actress and Nick are holding hands and are looking into each other's eyes. Priyanka's big glittering diamond ring is what catches the eye. "My everything..

3 years today. Seems like a blink and a lifetime at the same time. I love you," she captioned the image, which currently has over one million likes on the photo-sharing website. Priyanka also shared a glimpse from her birthday celebrations on July 18, tagging it as "photo dump". The actress also thanked everyone for all the wishes. "Photo Dump. Thank you to everyone who sent me so much love and affection this birthday. So many wonderful texts calls stories tweets. This was a quiet birthday but the lesson I have learnt as I step into the next year is everyday is a joy. And I will always seek it. Thank you to for all your good wishes and constant

support," she wrote. Priyanka thanked Nick Jonas for making her birthday special. "Thank you @nickjonas for making this bday so special even tho you weren't here. Thx @cavanaughjames @divya_jyoti@tialouwho for being my bday weekend buddies!" she said. Priyanka was last seen on screen in the OTT film "The White Tiger". The Ramin Bahrani directorial stars Adarsh Gourav and also features Rajkummar Rao in a pivotal role. She is currently busy with "Citadel". Helmed by "Avengers" makers Joe and Anthony Russo, "Citadel" is a spy thriller series co-starring Richard Madden slated for OTT release.

BTS, YOUTUBE ANNOUNCE 'PERMISSION TO DANCE' CHALLENGE FOR FANS

Seoul | Agencies

Popular South Korean band BTS wants the world to dance on their latest track "Permission to dance" as they have announced a challenge on YouTube Shorts. Starting Friday, fans across the globe can create a crisp 15-second YouTube Short from the mobile app, copying the dance moves in the music video. The dance moves for this challenge are the "International Sign" gestures that the septet was seen doing in the music video, bearing the meaning "Joy", "Dance" and "Peace". As part of the challenge, BTS will spotlight some of their favourite shorts in a compilation video, so participants are encouraged to use hashtags #PermissiontoDance and #Shorts for their creations. "Just as 'Permission to dance' sends the message that you don't have to ask anyone for permission to dance, we hope that we can bring people all over the world together to dance along with us, free of any limits or constraint. We are very excited to watch this challenge come to life on YouTube Shorts and can't wait to see what you all create," Shin Young Jae, General Manager of BigHit music, said. "Permission to dance" is BTS' latest single to top the Billboard Hot 100, replacing their own song "Butter".



MADE MONEY OF JOINING ONLYFANS: INES BASIC

Sydney: Married At First Sight star Ines Basic recently joined OnlyFans. And on Tuesday, the 31-year-old reality star revealed she's laughing all the way to the bank. Speaking to Daily Mail Australia, Ines said she's earned a whopping AUD\$80,000 since joining the subscription website earlier this month, reports dailymail.co.uk. "My fans are eating up everything I post, I am having to create content daily to keep up with demand so I'm just working. No time to be spending," she said. Ines explained that while her new passion project is bringing in some fast cash, she plans to make smart decisions with her money.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kelsey Stratford



India vs Sri Lanka 2nd ODI:

CHAHAR'S FIGHTING 69 HELPS INDIA WIN MATCH, SERIES

Pace bowler Deepak Chahar hammered 69 off 82 deliveries and shared an unbeaten 84-run partnership for the eighth wicket to bring India back from the dead and win the second One-day International by three wickets and take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

► **This was India's 93rd win over Sri Lanka, the most by a team against a particular team in ODI cricket.**
► **India had won the first ODI on Sunday by seven wickets.**

Colombo | Agencies

Pace bowler Deepak Chahar hammered 69 off 82 deliveries and shared an unbeaten 84-run partnership for the eighth wicket with Bhuvneshwar Kumar to bring India back from the dead and win the second One-day International by

three wickets for an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. Sri Lanka had made 275/9 in their 50 overs while India reached the target with five balls to spare.

The Indian team looked down and out after left-handed batsman Krunal Pandya was dismissed as the seventh man with the team score on 193. Although there were 89 deliveries to get the remaining 83 runs, India had only three wickets left.

But Chahar played calmly, hitting seven fours and a six while vice-captain Bhuvneshwar scored 19 off 28 deliveries and importantly guided his junior through the chase.

India were caught by surprise as the Sri Lankans brought in leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga in just the third over of the innings. The leggie's googly beat Prithvi Shaw (13 off 11 balls) who was bowled.

Hasaranga got the other two important wickets of Shikhar



Dhawan (29 off 38) and Krunal Pandya (35 off 54 balls) to leave India tottering. However, Hasaranga could not find support from the other bowlers.

Earlier, Chamika Karunaratne's unbeaten 44 off 33 balls towards the

end of the innings took Sri Lanka to 275 for nine in their allotted 50 overs.

Opener Avishka Fernando (50 off 71 balls) and batsman Charith Asalanka (65 off 68 balls) scored half-centuries to lead the Lankans to a challenging total.

Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal (3/50) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (3/54) were the most successful bowlers for India. Seamer Bhuvneshwar got rid of both the half-centurions after Chahal had got the first two wickets.

Brief scores

Sri Lanka 275/9 in 50 overs (C Asalanka 65, A Fernando 50, C Karunaratne 44 not out, Y Chahal 3/50, B Kumar 3/54) lost to India 277/7 in 49.1 overs (D Chahar 69 not out, S Yadav 53, M Pandey 37, K Pandya 35, W Hasaranga 3/37) by three wickets.



Dubai | Agencies

India batting star Mithali Raj is back at the top of the ICC women's ODI player rankings, the ninth time she is number one among batters since first occupying the spot more than 16 years ago, after West Indies captain Stafanie Taylor slipped to fifth position.

West Indies captain Taylor has lost 30 points after scoring 49 and 21 in the two times she batted. Taylor who had reclaimed the No. 1 posi-

ICC WOMEN'S ODI PLAYER RANKINGS

Mithali Raj back in No. 1 spot

tion last week courtesy her unbeaten century in the first match of the series, has also lost her top position among all-rounders to Australia's Ellyse Perry and slipped three places among bowlers after going wicketless in the three matches.

Deandra Dottin (up three places to 25th), Keshona Knight (up 11 places to 42nd) and Britney Cooper (up 22 places to 81st) are the batters to move up the rankings for the West Indies while off-spinner Anisa Mohammed's six wickets see her advance three places to 23rd among bowlers.

West Indies' Hayley Matthew (up two places to 32nd) and Chinelle Henry (up 14 places to 67th) have also moved up that list.

In the ICC women's T20I player rankings, India's left-handed opener Smriti Mandhana has attained a career-best equalling third position after slamming a fine 70 in the final match of their series against England, the only match played in the format over the past week.

5,000 ANTI-DOPING TESTS TO BE CONDUCTED DURING TOKYO GAMES

Tokyo | Agencies

The International Testing Agency (ITA) plans to conduct approximately 5,000 on-site tests as part of its anti-doping efforts during the Tokyo Olympic Games, starting July 23.

For these tests, 5,000 in-and out-of-competition urine and blood samples will be collected in collaboration with the organising committee for Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and the Japan Anti-Doping Agency (JADA), the ITA informed the 138th Session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), on Tuesday. The JADA lab will be conducting the actual tests. The ITA will be



responsible for the results management of any Adverse Analytical Findings or other Anti-Doping Rule Violations and will process the resulting cases before the Court of Arbitration for Sport's Anti-doping Division (CAS ADD), which will handle the sanctioning process.

Six federations granted full IOC recognition

Tokyo | Agencies

Six sporting federations have been granted full recognition by the International Olympic Committee at the 138th IOC Session on Tuesday.

The six are the International Sambo Federation (FIAS), World Lacrosse, the World Association of Kickboxing Organisations, the International Federation of Muaythai Associations, the International Federation Icestocksport and International Cheer Union.

The IOC also published its 2020 Annual Report and financial statements which were approved at the IOC Session here, reports Xinhua. The IOC Annual Report titled

"2020: Credibility, Sustainability and Youth" focuses on the efforts to reorganise the postponed Tokyo Olympic Games and support athletes amid

the COVID-19 pandemic. The report also includes the audited financial statements for 2020, along with the IOC Members' Indemnity Policy.



INDIAN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL COACH MAYMOL ROCKY QUILTS

New Delhi | Agencies

New Delhi: After four years in charge of the Indian women's senior national team, head coach Maymol Rocky has stepped down from her role due to personal reasons, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said on Tuesday. Maymol, who took over as head coach in 2017 after a stint as the assistant coach, led the team to a number of international events. "I am happy to see the progress we have made in the last few years. The facilities we got were always excellent and the support we got from the federation, Sports Authority of India (SAI), and the Government of Odisha has been the key to our success," Maymol told aiff.com. AIFF general secretary Kushal Das said in a statement that, "Maymol Rocky has expressed her inability to continue as the head coach of the senior national women's football team owing to personal reasons. We accept her decision and thank her for her contribution to Indian football."



SKI MOUNTAINEERING ADDED TO 2026 WINTER OLYMPICS PROGRAMME

Tokyo | Agencies

The 138th IOC session unanimously approved on Tuesday the inclusion of ski mountaineering in the programme of the 2026 Olympic Winter Games in Milan-Cortina, Italy.

The inclusion was proposed by the IOC Executive Board (EB) at its meeting in June.

Ski mountaineering at Milan-Cortina will consist of five new medal events: two men's events (sprint/individual), two women's events (sprint/individual) and one mixed-gender relay event, reports Xinhua.

An athlete quota of 48, with 24 each for men and women, falls within the overall quota framework of 2,900.



In its decision in June, the IOC EB highlighted some key features of ski mountaineering that supported its potential inclusion on the Milan-Cortina programme, including the same five ski mountaineering events contributing to the success of the 2020 Winter Youth Olympic

Games in Lausanne, and ski mountaineering's deep historical and sporting roots across the Alpine regions, particularly in Italy.

The IOC said that a full event programme and athlete quotas will be determined at the IOC EB meeting in June 2022.

KOHLI, RAHANE MISS WARM UP DUE TO NIGGLES; PACER AVESH INJURES THUMB

Durham | Agencies

Durham: The Indian Test team playing the three-day warm-up game against County Select XI faced fitness concerns after skipper Virat Kohli and his deputy Ajinkya Rahane were ruled out due to niggles leading to Rohit Sharma taking over the reins. Later, pace bowler Avesh Khan, who was representing the opposition, hurt his thumb during the first day's play and had to leave the field. "Captain Virat Kohli felt some stiffness in his back on late Monday evening and he has been advised rest from the three-day first-class warm-up game by the BCCI Medical Team. Vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane has mild swelling around his left upper hamstring. This has been addressed by an injection. He is not available for the three-day first-class warm-up game," said a statement from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Avesh and Washington Sundar are representing the County Select XI as the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) could not assemble a playing eleven on the field due to injury and Covid-19.



TRUST YOURSELF, NEVER GIVE UP: RELAY OLYMPIANS SHUBHA, DHANALAKSHMI'S MOTTO

MK Ashoka | Bengaluru

Shubha Venkateshan, and Dhanalakshmi Shekar, representing India in the 4x400 relay event at Tokyo Olympics, are scheduled to board the plane on July 23.

With their experience in international competitions, the duo are confident of winning medals for the country.

Both sprinters are from the town of Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu. They have been adopted and trained by Alva Educational Foundation of Moodbidri in Karnataka.

Talking to correspondent from the Indian Training Camp amidst rigorous practice sessions, both sprinters shared their journey and ambitions. Shubha Venkateshan, started showing talent from third standard at the school sports meets. Seeing her medal quest, her grandfather took her to Chennai. Her performance saw constant improvement such that by the time she reached Class 12, she got selected for Indian camp and won medals at the national level. After noticing her talent, Alva's Educational Foundation trainer



Abhishek asked her to join their sports school. She was readily sent by her parents for further training in Karnataka. Shubha's inspiration is US champion Allyson Felix.

Dhanalakshmi started sprinting at the age of 13. Without training, she managed to participate in zonal level competitions. She started getting quality training only when she came to college. Both hailing from humble backgrounds, now clearly aim at winning medals for India. "We have another advantage. The other two girls selected for the relay team are also from Tamil Nadu. There is better coordination and we want to make our nation proud," they added.

YOU COMPETE FOR YOUR TEAM AT OLYMPICS, NOT FOR YOURSELF: MUGURUZA

Tokyo | Agencies

Spanish tennis star Garbine Muguruza is one of Spain's best hopes for a tennis medal at the Tokyo Olympic Games, as she will compete in both singles and doubles along-

side Carla Suarez, and the current world No. 9 admits she is looking forward to a different challenge. Muguruza believes that winning an Olympic medal is "the greatest possible success - a medal is something unique in sport, I would love to have it," and she highlighted the different feelings between the Games and a Grand Slam event. "When you go to Wimbledon and it doesn't go well for you, you leave disappointed and you talk to your coach, but if things go badly in the Games, first you lose an opportunity that only comes every four years. Also, you want to win a medal for your country, so you are no longer an individual. If I lose there, I lose with my team," she explained.



Olympic countdown

Sania Mirza striving for an Olympic medal

Niharika Raina | New Delhi

Sania Mirza's cabinet of trophies is very glittering. As a doubles specialist, Sania has won the women's doubles title in Wimbledon and US Open in 2015 followed by the Australian Open in 2016. In mixed doubles, her record is equally good. 2009 Wimbledon, 2012 French Open and 2014 US Open. Add to it consecutive WTA Finals in 2014 and 2015.

Sania also has bronze in women's doubles at the 2010 Commonwealth Games and 2014 Asian Games. In mixed doubles, she won gold in the 2006 and 2014 Asian Games along with silver in the

2010 Asian Games. But there is one big missing piece from her trophy cabinet, which the 34-year-old aims to lay her hands on at Tokyo: a medal at the Olympics.

Sania almost had the medal in the 2016 Rio Olympics. She was only a few points away from being assured of a medal. But she and Rohan Bopanna lost the mixed doubles semifinals 6-2, 2-6, 3-10 to the American pair of Venus Williams and Rajeev Ram. In the bronze-medal match, Sania and Bopanna went down 1-6, 5-7 to Radek Stepanek and Lucie Hradecka of the Czech Republic. So close, yet so far from it.

In the run-up to the

Olympics, Sania took part in six tournaments. In between, lockdown caused by the pandemic forced her to bid time. Her best performance in 2021 came in a semifinal finish at WTA Total Qatar Open in March, two months after recovering from COVID-19. Recently, Sania played in the Viking International and Wimbledon, losing in the round of 16 and 32, respectively.

With her protected ranking of nine, Sania had gained direct entry into the women's doubles event at the Tokyo Olympics.

In Tokyo, she will be partnering Anika Raina, who has been soaring high in doubles this year.



HOCKEY CAPTAINS MANPREET & RANI WRITE HEARTFELT MESSAGE TO FANS

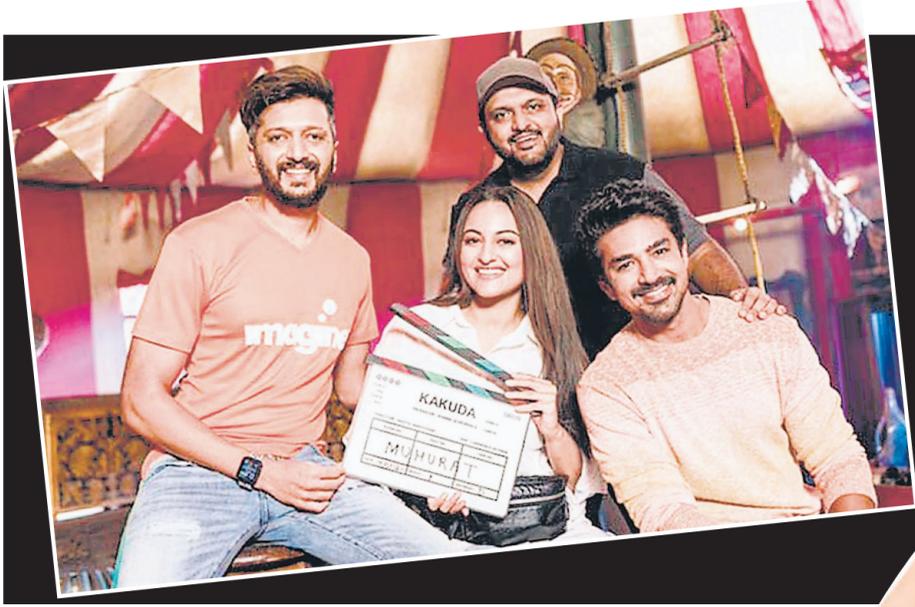
Tokyo | Agencies

The Indian men's and women's hockey team captains, Manpreet Singh and Rani Rampal, have written an open letter to the "Indian hockey fans around the globe", saying that being in Tokyo for the Olympics was an emotional moment given the "obstacles" they faced along the way. The Indian hockey contingents were part of the first batch of athletes to leave the country from the IGI Airport in New Delhi and arrived in Tokyo on Sunday morning. "We

are elated to share with all of you that the women's and men's Indian teams have safely arrived in Tokyo. This is an emotional moment for the whole group because there have been many obstacles along the way to get here. Representing one's country in the Olympics is one of the proudest and most special moments in any sportsperson's career. We promise you that we will value each and every minute of this prestigious tournament to make you all proud."



RSVP announces horror comedy 'Kakuda'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

RSVP announces its home-grown horror-comedy 'Kakuda'. The Riteish Deshmukh, Sonakshi Sinha and Saqib Saleem starrer, goes on floors today. 'Kakuda' also marks the Hindi directorial debut of filmmaker Aditya Sarpotdar, the man behind critically acclaimed Marathi films like - 'Classmates', 'Mauli' and 'Faster Fene'. 'Kakuda', with equal doses of comedy and spook, explores the legend of a strange curse in a village stuck in time. The eclectic trio are confronted with a challenging ghost who makes them question superstition, tradition and

even love in a rollercoaster ride filled with fear and fun. The film has been written by the talented duo Avinash Dwivedi and Chirag Garg and was developed from a nascent stage by Salona Bains Joshi, the Associate Producer on the film. Talking about the film, director Aditya Sarpotdar says, "I'm very excited to collaborate with Ronnie Screwvala. We are treating the film like nothing short of a big-scale commercial movie. The casting was just perfect and the story will have you both at the edge of your seat and in splits." Says Sonakshi Sinha, "Considering the current situation, a fun comedy film is truly the need of the hour. I loved the script of 'Kakuda' from the moment I read it. It's the kind

of movie I would enjoy watching as an audience."

Adds Riteish Deshmukh, "I can't wait to jump right in and work on the film with Sonakshi and Saqib. I personally love the horror-comedy genre and 'Kakuda' is a great opportunity for me to explore the part of a ghostbuster." RSVP Presents 'Kakuda'. The direct to digital horror-comedy goes on floors in various parts of Gujarat and is slated to release early 2022.

I ALWAYS ENJOYED SEEING MY FATHER ON SCREEN: SHRADDHA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shraddha Kapoor says ever since she was a kid, she has enjoyed watching her father Shakti Kapoor on screen. Shakti Kapoor is all set to come back in his popular avatar of Crime Master Gogo on a special OTT project. He had memorably essayed the role in the 1994 film "Andaaz Apna Apna". "Ever since I was little, I have enjoyed seeing my father on screen -- totally in his element, adding his personal touch to characters that today have a massive cult-like following!" said Shraddha. Shraddha calls it a learning process being on sets with her father. "Being on set with him is for the books. It's so memorable to share screen space with my father and I am really excited to see how this unveils," she said. Shakti Kapoor returns as Crime Master Gogo on Disney+ Hotstar VIP.

Bollywood wishes Naseeruddin Shah as actor turns 71

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Naseeruddin Shah turned 71 on Tuesday. Friends and colleagues of the film industry took to social media to wish the veteran actor. Naseeruddin Shah's younger son Vivaan Shah posted a candid picture of his father. In the picture, the actor is seen sitting on his bed with his cat on his lap playing the flute. He wears a

yellow T-shirt and white bottoms. "Happy Happy Birthday Baba Love youuu," wrote Vivaan on Instagram. He also shared a sketch of Naseeruddin Shah on Instagram stories.

Actor-director Konkona Sen Sharma wrote: "Happy Birthday favourite."

Actor Randeep Hooda shared a picture with Shah, and wrote: "I don't know where I would have been in my journey had I not met you @naseeruddin49 bhai. I still aspire for that rare pat on the back 20 years hence..of all one feels, the feeling of gratitude remains the most overwhelming. Hoping and praying for many more birthdays to come." Actress Dia Mirza wrote: "Happy Birthday Naseer Sahab."

Actor Arjun Mathur reposted an old post from 2017 with a picture with Shah, saying: "Happy Birthday to my Number One Naseeruddin Shah."

Actor Vijay Varma wrote: "Happy Bday Naseer sahib."

Actor Darshan Kumar shared a picture reading script on a stage with Shah. "Happy Birthday Sir," he wrote.

Kriti Sanon on Mimi transformation

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Kriti Sanon had recently shared her transformation journey for her upcoming film, Mimi where she had to put on weight for her role of a surrogate mother. The actress now reveals how she could not shoot for any other project for some months due to this. Talking about setting aside a chunk of

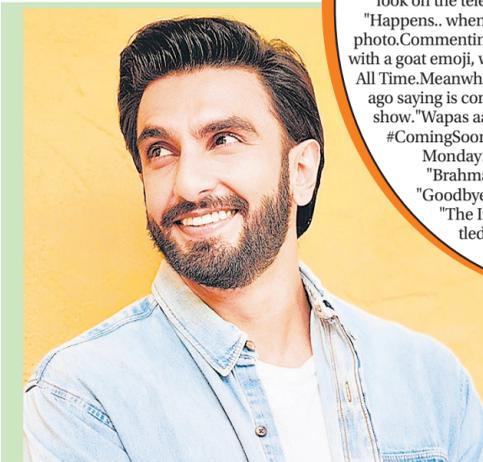
some months for the shoot of Mimi, Kriti shares, "I had to put on 15kgs in 2 months for Mimi which I could start losing only once I had completed the film." She adds, "It made more sense to not take up any other project during the shoot and even till a few months after since, I needed to lose the weight before starting any other project. I did let go of a lot of award show performances too in that period because dancing makes me lose weight very fast." The ruling lady of Bollywood will be carrying this content-driven film on her own shoulders as she is all set to deliver probably one of her best performances so far playing a different, mature role of a

mother for the first time. She has an enviable lineup with films like the Pan-India film, Adipurush as Sita, Bachchan Pandey, Bhediya, Ganapath, Hum Do Hamaare Do along with another unannounced project besides, Mimi.

RANVEER COMMENTS ON BIG B'S POST WITH GOAT EMOJI

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Amitabh Bachchan took to social media on Tuesday to share a photograph showing him yawning, which prompted Ranveer Singh to post an interesting emoji in the comment section. In the photograph posted on Instagram, Big B wears a black suit and red tie, sporting what appears to be his look on the television quiz show "Kaun Banega Crorepati". "Happens.. when you work round the clock," he captioned the photo. Commenting on the veteran's photo, Ranveer commented with a goat emoji, which fans interpreted as G.O.A.T or Greatest Of All Time. Meanwhile, Bachchan announced on Twitter just a day ago saying is coming back with season 13 of the popular quiz show. "Wapas aa rahe hain ... KBC pe .. #StayTunedForPart2 #ComingSoon #KBC13 @SonyTV," the actor tweeted on Monday. On the film front, Big B currently has "Brahmastra", "Chehre", "Jhund", "MayDay", "Goodbye" and a remake of the Hollywood film "The Intern" coming up, besides an untitled film with Prabhas and Deepika Padukone.



PAYAL GHOSH TO PLAY AN ESCORT IN 'RED'

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Payal Ghosh plays an escort in the upcoming film "Red".

The actress says she

referred to Tabu's character in "Chandni Bar" and Julia Roberts role in "Pretty Woman" while preparing for the project. "I can't reveal much but the preparation was extensive for the project. I referred to characters such as the one Tabu from 'Chandni Bar' or Julia Roberts in 'Pretty woman'. Have to find the right balance and the feedback has been great," Payal said. She tagged herself as a director's actor. Payal added: "I feel a job well done when I can know the director gets the scenes as he or she wishes. That's a huge tick on the checklist." She will be seen alongside Krushna Abhishek in "Red". The film is directed by Ashok Tyagi and produced by Surendra Jagtap and Rajeev Chaudhary.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Jannat Zubair