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PEGASUS ROW: RAHUL DEMANDS SHAH'S RESIGNATION, SC PROBE AGAINST MODI AND ASKS

WHO'S THE SNOOPER?

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Upping the ante against the government, former Congress Chief Rahul Gandhi on Friday described Pegasus as a weapon and demanded resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. He also demanded a Supreme Court probe against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He also accused the Prime Minister of using this (Pegasus) weapon against the people of the country and also to scuttle the probe of the Rafale fighter jet deal.

He alleged that the government used it politically. "They have used it in Karnataka, they have used it to scuttle probes, they have used it against the Supreme Court and against all the institutions of this country," he alleged. Slamming the government, Rahul said that in the Rafale deal case none of you people supported me. He said that the question is why at the last minute when the CBI director (Alok Verma) was about to file an FIR, why was his phone tapped and why was he blackmailed? Who did it. That is the question? He said that if the government did not do this then some other governments would have done this and this should be enquired. He further claimed that Pegasus has to be bought by the

"Pegasus is classified by the Israeli State as a weapon and that weapon is supposed to be used against the terrorist. The Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) and Union Home Minister have used this weapon against the Indian State and against our institutions. The only word for this is treason. And this has to be investigated and the Home Minister has to resign. Pegasus cannot be sold to the military of the country but to the government of the country. Please read the contract. It's sold government to government. And they should answer if they have bought this or not?"



BJP MOCKS RAHUL GANDHI PHONE-TAP CHARGE

New Delhi: The BJP on Friday dared Rahul Gandhi to submit his phone for investigation if he believes it was tapped, and asserted that no one's phone has been tapped illegally by the government. Rathore said Gandhi's comments were "irresponsible" while adding that everybody has the right to say what they want in a democracy. Rahul Gandhi should submit his phone to a probe agency, and investigation will take place according to the Indian Penal Code (IPC), he said.

Pegasus in Kashmir:

MORE THAN 25 FROM VALLEY WERE SELECTED AS POTENTIAL TARGETS

New Delhi: Besides Delhi-based Kashmiri journalists and a prominent civil society activist critical of official policy towards Jammu and Kashmir, more than 25 people from the Kashmir Valley were selected as potential targets of intrusive surveillance between 2017 and mid-2019 by an as yet unidentified government agency that is also believed to be a client of the Israeli company NSO Group, according to leaked records reviewed by The Wire. The numbers of key separatist leaders, politicians, human rights

activists, journalists and business persons from Kashmir all figure in the snoop dragnet. Others on the leaked database include at least two members of People's Democratic party (PDP) chief and former chief minister of J&K Mehbooba Mufti's family. The telephone number of a highly-regarded Delhi-based civil society critic of the government's Kashmir policy also features in the database for 2018 and 2019. The Wire verified the number but is withholding their identity at their request.

ISRAEL TO EXAMINE TIGHTER CONTROLS ON EXPORT OF SPYWARES LIKE PEGASUS

London: An Israeli commission reviewing allegations that NSO Group's Pegasus spyware was misused by its customers to target journalists and human rights activists would examine whether rules for Israel's export of cyberweapons such as Pegasus should be tightened, a senior MP said, The Guardian reported. The move came after French President Emmanuel Macron convened an emergency cybersecurity meeting following reports that his mobile phone and those of government ministers appeared in the leaked list. An official in Macron's Elysee Palace said that the President's phone and phone numbers had been changed. The German chancellor, Angela Merkel, added her voice to the escalating controversy on Thursday, telling reporters in Berlin that spyware such as NSO's should be denied to countries where there was no judicial oversight, after it emerged 14 heads of state were on the list, the report added.



RAIN FURY IN MAHARASHTRA

Over 100 killed; Army, Navy, IAF, Coast Guard pressed into service

In a series of disasters, more than 100 people have been reportedly killed in a dozen hillslides, landslides, house-crashes and other incidents after torrential rains shook Raigad, Ratnagiri and Satara districts, with the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard rushing to rescue the marooned populace, top officials said here on Friday.

IN THE SEASON'S WORST TRAGEDY, AT LEAST 50 PEOPLE WERE BURIED ALIVE IN A HILLSLIDE AT TALIYE-MADHALIWADE VILLAGE IN RAIGAD, WHILE ANOTHER 50 ARE STILL FEARED TRAPPED UNDER THE DEBRIS. BESIDES, ANOTHER 50-PLUS PERSONS HAVE PERISHED IN DIFFERENT RAIN-RELATED INCIDENTS, INCLUDING 15 IN POLADPUR (RAIGAD), 12 IN MIRGAON (SATARA), 11 IN KHED (RATNAGIRI), AND IN ANOTHER HALF-A-DOZEN LOCATIONS IN SATARA, AND 4 IN MUMBAI.

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

According to eyewitnesses in Taliye-Madhaliwadi, an estimated 50-60m tall portion of a hillock broke loose and crashed onto around three dozen houses below, trapping a majority of the victims under the huge boulders, stones, trees, bushes and slush which tumbled down at full force. In all these incidents, an estimated 70-80 persons are still feared trapped in the debris (At the time of going for print) and rubble with the NDRF, Army, Navy and local teams attempting to save them as rains continued to lash the region. In another heart-wrenching incident, at least 9 Covid-19 patients died after power supply to ICU ventilators suddenly snapped at a private hospital, prompting the CM to order the health department to take special precautions for the safety of Covid patients in all hospitals. According to tentative estimates, over 2,000 big and small vehicles, including trucks, tempos,

cars and scooters, were stuck or damaged in the floods and were seen piled up at various locations in the affected regions.

MAHABALESHWAR RECEIVED 594.4 MM OF RAINFALL IN 24 HOURS

Mahabaleshwar in Satara district, one of Maharashtra's most well-patronised hill stations, has received 594.4 millimetres of rainfall in a 24-hour period ending at 8:30 am on Friday, which an IMD official said may be the highest ever recorded there. Mahabaleshwar, some 260 kilometres from, got 482 mm of rainfall on Wednesday and 461 on Thursday, data from the India Meteorological Department showed.

ROAD AHEAD EVEN MORE DAUNTING THAN IN 1991: MANMOHAN SINGH

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday said that the road ahead is "even more daunting" than during the 1991 economic crisis and the nation would need to "recalibrate its priorities to ensure a dignified life for all Indians".

In a statement on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of economic liberalisation, he said



"It is not a time to rejoice and exult but to introspect and ponder. The road ahead is even more daunting than during the 1991 crisis. Our priorities as a nation need to be recalibrated to foremost ensure a healthy and dignified life for every single Indian."

that on this day 30 years ago, in 1991, the Congress "ushered in significant reforms of India's economy and paved a new path for the nation's economic policy. Over the last three decades, successive governments have followed this path to catapult our nation to a \$3 trillion economy and into the league of the world's largest economies," he added. Manmohan Singh said that he "was fortunate to play a role in this reform process and it

gives immense joy to look back with pride at the tremendous economic progress made by our nation in the last three decades".

Recalling that as Finance Minister in 1991, "I ended my budget speech by quoting Victor Hugo, 'no power on Earth can stop an idea whose time has come'", he said: "30 years later, as a nation, we must remember Robert Frost's poem, 'But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep'."

Santanu Sen suspended for remaining part of RS session



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Trinamool MP Santanu Sen was suspended on Friday for the remaining part of the Monsoon Session a day

after he snatched the papers from IT Minister Ashwani Vaishnav in the Rajya Sabha.

Chairman of the House M. Venkaiah Naidu asked him to withdraw from the House and allow the House to function. Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Minister V.

Muraleedharan moved a suspension motion against Santanu Sen for the remaining part of the session. While Trinamool's Sukhendu Shekhar Roy raised the point of order that it was not in the List of Business, the chair said he had allowed it.

Olympic Games inaugurated

TOKYO | Agencies

Applying high-end technologies, including virtual and augmented reality, and merging that with Japanese cultural motifs like the traditional kabuki theatre, the organising committee of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games put together an opening ceremony that lacked the glitz and glamour of previous editions but was apt for the current situation of a world ravaged by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Five-time world champion Mary Kom and men's hockey captain Manpreet Singh led the way as India made its way at the Parade of Nations during the Opening Ceremony of Tokyo Olympics on Friday here at the Japan National Stadium. Twenty-five members from the Indian contingent attended the Opening Ceremony amid the COVID-19 concerns in the Japanese capital.



After much debate on the fate of the Tokyo Olympics thanks to the COVID-19 situation, the Games were finally declared open on Friday as fireworks kickstarted the Opening Ceremony here at the Japan National Stadium.

After the fireworks and lighting show, International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach was welcomed on the stage. The IOC had decided that only six officials will be allowed per contingent.

CRIME BRANCH QUESTIONS SHILPA; RAJ KUNDRAS SENT BACK TO JAIL

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Businessman Raj Kundra and his IT head Ryan Thorpe will remain in police custody till July 27, a magistrate here ruled on Friday. The day also was marked by much drama at the Juhu residence of Kundra and his wife, the actress and businesswoman Shilpa Shetty, after Crime Branch sleuths came calling. They reportedly questioned Shetty over whether she had any knowledge of her husband's alleged involvement in the production of pornographic films. Though the Crime Branch did not make any statement on the visit by its officials to the Kundra-Shetty home, sources said that they believe that the money allegedly earned by Kundra from pornography was used for online betting. The Crime Branch is believed to be investigating the money trail. After recording Shetty's statement and collecting documents related to the case, the Crime Branch officials escorted Kundra back to Jail. There was no statement from the couple or their lawyers regarding the activities at their home on Friday.



EXILED TIBETANS ASK CHINA TO RESUME DIALOGUE

Dharamsala: A day after the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to the Tibet Autonomous Region, the democratically elected Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) on Friday asked him to resume dialogue between Tibetan representatives and the Chinese government. Xi's visit to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) on July 21-22 was the first since his taking charge as Chinese President in 2013. Additional Secretary and CTA spokesperson Tenzin Lekshay said: "The Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Lhasa and Nyingtri with great pompousity. I think this is his first visit to Tibet as President." "With this visit, he should understand the real aspirations of Tibet and consider that the Tibet issue is a long-pending issue which is still unsolved. He should initiate resuming the dialogue between Tibetan representatives and the Chinese government." More than 60 years ago, some 80,000 Tibetans, along with their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, left Lhasa after a failed uprising against Communist rule over Tibet and fled to India.

Nearly 1 in 2 Indian adults have poor quality of life: Study

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Nearly one out of two Indian adults (46.2 per cent) have a poor quality of life, according to a survey released on Friday. The survey by Danone India, in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), included 2,762 adults from eight Indian cities viz Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow, Chennai, Indore, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Patna. It was based on the mean percent scores of the four domains of Quality of Life (QoL) - physical health, psychological health, social relationships and environment. The findings showed that more women (50.4 per cent) were found to

have poor QoL than men (42 per cent). Kolkata recorded the highest percentage of adults (65 per cent) with poor QoL score, followed by Chennai (49.8 per cent), Delhi (48.5 per cent), Patna (46.2 per cent), Hyderabad (44.4 per cent), Lucknow (40 per cent) and Indore (39.2 per cent). Mumbai had the highest percentage of adults (68 per cent) recording a good quality of life. The survey is part of the Protein Week 2021, celebrated annually between July 24-30 to raise awareness about the importance of protein - a macronutrient which is integral to lead a healthy and active life. While malnutrition has always been a pressing issue in India and more preva-

lent in children, the survey found even adults are low on nutrition. Around 91 per cent of Indian adults do not meet their everyday protein requirement. A huge gap also existed for the intake of 10 micronutrients that are important for immune function and overall health. It is imperative to maintain a healthy lifestyle through appropriate diet and adequate physical activity. It is critical that people are aware that a balanced and nutritious diet with emphasis on protein and other essential nutrients can contribute to a healthy immune system, while maintaining good strength and mobility, he said.

SECOND MANIPUR ACTIVIST, HELD FOR FB POST, FREED AFTER HC ORDER

Team Absolute | Imphal

Manipur activist Wangkhemcha Wangthoi was released from the central jail following a High Court order on Friday, five days after his associate Erendro Leichombam was freed on the Supreme Court's orders. The duo had been detained under the National Security Act for their Facebook posts criticising BJP leaders for advocating cow dung and cow urine as cure for Covid-19. Officials said that the division bench of the Manipur High Court comprising Chief Justice Sanjay Kumar and Justice K.H. Nobin Singh directed the release of Wangkhemcha Wangthoi,



alias Kishorchandra, 41, from Manipur Central Jail at Sajiwa as he was jailed under the NSA for the Facebook posts. The High Court passed the order on a petition moved by Wangthoi's wife Elangbam Ranjita. It had asked the authorities to release him before 5 p.m. on Friday but the central jail officials released him before the stipulated time.



NO FIXED TIMELINE CAN BE GIVEN AT PRESENT FOR COMPLETION OF COVID VACCINATION: GOVERNMENT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government on Friday said that no fixed timeline can be indicated at present for the completion of the vaccination drive. The government said it is expected that beneficiaries aged 18 years and above will be vaccinated by December 2021.

Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Bharati Pravin Pawar in a response to Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and Lok Sabha MP Mala Roy's unstarred question said, "The Covid-19 vaccination is an ongoing and dynamic process, which is being guided by National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAK) on the basis of concurrent scientific evidence." She said that in view of the dynamic and evolving nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, "no fixed timeline at present can be indicated for the completion of vaccination drive". Pawar said, "However, it is expected that beneficiaries aged 18 years and above will be vaccinated by December 2021." To another question by Rahul Gandhi, Pawar said, "Between August to December 2021, a total 135 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccine are expected to be available."

She added that there has been no delay in entering into purchase agreements with the domestic vaccine manufacturers. "Advance



payments have also been made to manufacturers for the supply of orders placed with them," the Minister said. Pawar said, "A total of Rs 9,725.15 crore have been spent so far on the Covid-19 vaccination programme including procurement of vaccines and operational cost for vaccines."

SC dismisses telcos plea seeking correction in AGR calculation

In a big setback for telecom companies, the Supreme Court on Friday dismissed their plea seeking correction of alleged errors in Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) calculation.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A bench headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao said all applications dismissed. On Monday, the apex court already said it would pass its order on applications filed by -- Vodafone Idea, Bharti Airtel and Tata Tele Services Ltd -- alleging arithmetical errors in calculation of AGR dues payable by them. The top court, citing an earlier order in the matter, had noted the order clearly point out that no re-assessment of AGR related dues can be done. The telcos submitted that arithmetical errors can be rectified and there are cases of duplication of



entries. Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Vodafone Idea, had submitted they were not blaming the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for it, and there are arithmetical errors. Rohatgi added that they want to bring these errors to the attention of concerned department, for their rectification.

The bench reiterated that the apex court order had made it clear

that there can't be any re-assessment. Rohatgi responded figures are "not cast in stone" and added, tribunals don't have the power of review but they can correct arithmetical errors. He submitted that they were not seeking any extension of time. Senior advocate Arvind Datar, representing Tata Tele Services Ltd, submitted rectification of errors in calculation can be done. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta,

representing the Centre, submitted he has not received any instructions from the DoT on allowing correction of errors.

The bench had said that it has said not just once, but twice and thrice that AGR demand can't be recomputed.

Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, representing Airtel, said there are cases of duplication and also of payments made but not accounted for. He submitted, "I don't want to pay thousands of crores on account of these errors".

Mehta said he can take instructions on this within two days. "It may be little hazardous for me to make statement without taking instructions.", said Mehta.

In September last year, the top court had given 10 years' time to telcos, who were struggling to pay Rs 93,520 crore in AGR dues outstanding amount to the government.

The apex court had said that telecom operators shall make the payment of 10 per cent of the total dues as demanded by DoT by March 31, 2021. The bench had said the rest of the amount was to be paid in yearly instalments commencing from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2031.

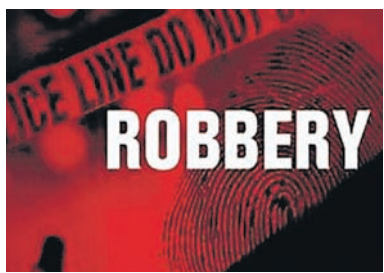
Trinamool MLA's wife robbed of Rs 1.86L in Delhi

New Delhi:

Kanika Gupta, the wife of Trinamool Congress MLA Vivek Gupta, was robbed of Rs 1.86 lakh and a gold coin in the national capital on Friday, the police said. According to senior Delhi Police officials, they received a complaint from Kanika Gupta at around 2.30 p.m. As per the complaint, Kanika Gupta and her husband are presently staying at the Oberoi Hotel in Delhi's Lodhi Colony. "At about 2.15 p.m., she reached the Defence Colony flyover where a motor cyclist pointed towards the tyre of her car," a police officer said.

Accordingly, the driver stopped the car and got down to check the tyre. "As she was feeling a little suffocated, she also got off the car for a few seconds before realising that her bag containing cash worth Rs 1.86 lakh, an i-Phone, one gold coin and other documents was missing," he said.

Vivek Gupta is a Trinamool MLA from the Jorasakho Assembly constituency in Kolkata. He was previously a member of the Rajya Sabha from 2012-2018.



Coast Guard rescue teams save 155 lives in Karnataka

Uttara Kannada | Agencies

The Indian Coast Guard conducted a day-long rescue operation in Karnataka, saving 155 people who were stranded in flood-ravaged Uttara Kannada district on Friday.

According to a Coast Guard release, units were kept on standby for rescue and providing relief to marooned and stranded people.

The rescue operation was part of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) with each team consisting of seven to nine Coast guard personnel was formed and deployed in the flood-affected region of Kadra, Unglijoog Island and Kharegoog Island of Uttara Kannada, it said.

The statement added that a team one rescued a total of 90 people from Khargejoog village while the rescue team two rescued 10 from Bodojoog



island in association with the state administration.

The rescue operations were conducted by the Disaster Response Teams (DRTs) using two rubberised inflatable boats, life jackets, and lifebuoys.

In this early morning operation, 23 stranded personnel were rescued and engaged for the relief operation, the

statement said.

Meanwhile, the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) said that this is the first time that more than 500 mm of rainfall has been recorded in the state.

The Ankola-Dongri stretch in Uttara Kannada witnessed 541 mm of rainfall in 24 hours between July 22 and July 23.

In the same duration, 42 TMC of water was added in 13 major reservoirs of the state.

According to the KSNDMC officials, a total of 18 taluks across six districts have reported notable damages. A total of 8,733 persons living in low-lying and vulnerable areas have been shifted by respective district administrations. A total of 4,964 persons residing in Uttara Kannada (3,066), Shivamogga (8) and Belagavi (1,890) districts have taken refuge in 80 relief camps.

Bird flu reported in Kerala



Thiruvananthapuram: Bird flu has been reported from a poultry farm at Koorachundu in Kerala's Kozhikode district, official sources said on Friday. Around 300 poultry birds at the farm was reported to have died on Tuesday. Following this, local authorities decided to send the samples for further testing and when the reports arrived from a laboratory, it was found out that the cause was bird flu. It was decided to immediately close down all poultry farms in a 10 sq km radius of the said locality, from which bird flu was reported. Meanwhile the authorities are now waiting for the test results from the NIHSAD, Bhopal. Officials, however, have said there need be no reason for any panic, as all the required precautionary steps to be taken have commenced and things are well under control.

LINGAYAT SEERS' MASSIVE CONVENTION ON JULY 25 TO EXERT PRESSURE ON BJP

Bengaluru | Agencies

Amid intense speculation about a possible leadership change in Karnataka, several seers of the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community on Friday decided to organise religious heads convention on Sunday (July 25) in what is seen as sending out a loud and clear message to BJP party high command not to remove Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa.

This convention is seen as a last ditch effort to save Yediyurappa from resigning after July 26. Yediyurappa had maintained that he has not received any message from party high command till date but he was in anticipation of their message on July 25 (Sunday) evening, and until then he



would be performing his duty.

After a meeting with like-minded seers here, Sri Dingaleswar Swami, the seer of Balehosur Matha, told reporters that a group of pontiffs

belonging all sects will be meeting on Saturday to deliberate on the agenda of the Sunday's convention.

"This will be the first of its kind, and deliberate on a host of several issues that are bogged down by various communities in the state. Besides, it may also discuss the present political scenario as well," he said.

According to him, the daylong deliberations by seers on Saturday will finalise the agenda of the convention.

Another prominent Lingayat seer, Rudramuni Sri of Tiptur Matha, said that Lingayat Mathas have given their own contributions to the society and whenever there is "confusion" prevails in the society or in the state, people do look towards religious heads to sort out such confusion.

COMPLAINANTS NOT ALLOWED INSIDE POLICE STATION FOR WEARING HALF-PANTS

Kolkata | Agencies

In a bizarre incident two persons who went to the police station to register a complaint were not allowed inside because they were wearing half-pants. The incident created a lot of controversy forcing the Kolkata police to order an inquiry. The incident happened in Kasba police station on Thursday evening when two youths wearing half-pants and T-shirts tried to enter the police station to lodge a complaint of theft that happened in a nearby temple. One of the youths alleged in his Facebook post that they were stopped at the gate by a Home Guard who informed them that half pants were not allowed inside the police station. Later one of them had to go home and change into a trouser after which they were allowed to lodge the complaint. When one of the youths raised this issue in the Twitter handle of Kolkata police he was asked whether he went to his office in shorts. Several



people raised questions about the attitude of the police. "Police station and office cannot be the same because we go to the police station when there is a problem and is it possible for the person to go properly dressed at that time?" a senior citizen who didn't want to disclose his identity said. The incident created so much of a buzz in the social media that DC (South Suburban Division) Rashid Muni Khan ordered an enquiry into the incident. However, many people complained in different social media that it was not just the Kasba police station but several police stations in Kolkata which created problems for the people when they went to lodge a complaint. When asked about it, senior police officers didn't make a comment. "I cannot make any comment on this. If something is found in the complaint then action will be taken," a police official said.

2 LeT terrorists killed in Sopore encounter refused to surrender

Srinagar | Agencies

Two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists who were killed in an encounter with the security forces in North Kashmir's Sopore, refused to surrender and instead opened indiscriminate fire, police said on Friday. "During the search operation, the terrorists were given repeated opportunities to surrender. However, instead of surrendering they fired indiscriminately at the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter," the police said. In the ensuing encounter, the two LeT terrorists were killed and their bodies were retrieved from the site.

The victims have been identified as Fayaz Ahmad War alias Rukana alias Umar, a resident of Warpora and top commander of the terror



oufit, and Shaheen Ahmad Mir alias Shaheen Molvi, resident of Cherpora, Budgam. According to the police records, the two were part of groups involved in various

criminal activities and several terror crime cases were registered against them.

"Fayaz Ahmad War had a long history of terror crime cases, as he

DRONE SHOT DOWN IN JAMMU IS FROM SAME SERIES BROUGHT DOWN EARLIER

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir police said on Friday that the threads used in the drone shot in Akhnoor area by the security forces earlier in the day were the same as those of the one used for dropping payloads at Air Force Station (AFS) Jammu.

Addressing the media, Mukesh Singh, ADGP (Jammu) said the police shot down a hexacopter carrying a payload of 5 Kg IED in Akhnoor area of Jammu, the threads of which were same as those used in the ones for dropping payloads at the AFS Jammu. "At around 1 a.m. today police shot down the drone when it went down to drop the payload that was around 5 Kg IED material", the ADGP said.

was associated with terrorism since year 2008. Although he had surrendered earlier with arms and ammunition yet after his release he again worked as terrorist associate for proscribed terror outfit Hizbul Mujahideen and was detained under PSA. He carried out several attacks against security, including one on a police party in Warpora on March 4, 2020, which claimed the lives of one personnel and a civilian. Incriminating materials, arms and ammunition including two AK-47 rifles, and four magazines were recovered from the site of encounter. Police have registered a case and investiga-

'IF BRAHMINS, DALITS JOIN HANDS, BSP WILL WIN IN UP'

Ayodhya | Agencies

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MP Satish Chandra Mishra, on Friday, explained the mathematics of power to Brahmins at the Prabuddha Varg Sammelan and said that the Ram temple would be completed in the BSP regime.

"If 13 per cent Brahmins join hands with 23 per cent Dalits, there is no stopping the BSP from coming to power. Since the past ten years, Brahmins have been deprived of the respect they deserve. In the BSP regime, they were given respect and the law-and-order situation was also good," he said.

He cited the example of the Bikru widow, Khushi Dubey, who has been in jail for over a year and said that his party would extend all possible help to her. Mishra made it clear that the BSP would not enter into alliance with any other party and would contest elections on its own. He further said that Lord Ram belonged to everyone. "The BJP is narrow minded and wants to believe that it has a copyright over Ram. Mishra offered prayers at the Ram Janmabhoomi temple and Hanuman Garhi before addressing the programme.





Players of MP will register the name of the country and the state on the world stage: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh has extended good wishes to all the players of the Indian contingent including Madhya Pradesh for once again registering India's name on the world stage with the best performance at the inauguration of Tokyo Olympics 2021 Games. He told all the players that this is the most important moment in the life of all of you. You have to do your best without any pressure. The country is with you - may you be victorious. Chouhan said that our players have set out to hoist India's flag in Tokyo Olympics. The slogan of "Cheer for India" from every part of the country is further boosting the morale of the players. While encouraging the players, Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that "Jeet hamari har nas me, aaye yahan jo karme ko karke ham dikhalayenge, jeet ki bajji khele ham aur dil ko bhi jeet kar aayenge." ("Victory in our blood, we shall achieve what we have come here for, we will play to win and also win hearts.") Chief Minister Chouhan said that it is a matter of pride for Madhya Pradesh that players Aishwarya Pratap Singh Tomar



of MP State Shooting Academy and Vivek Sagar of MP State Hockey Academy have got an opportunity to represent India in Tokyo Olympics. Chouhan has congratulated and extended best wishes to both the players. Chouhan said that at present sports are developing continuously in the state. Our players are ready to bring laurels

to the state and country on the international stage like Olympics, World Cup, Asian Games. He said that the Madhya Pradesh government was committed to provide all type of state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure to the players. Chief Minister said that in the Tokyo Olympics, two sportspersons of the state, Aishwarya and Vivek, who are from ordinary families, got a chance to shine in the state's academy. Today both are ready to achieve their goal. Chouhan said that at present Madhya Pradesh is leading in the field of sports. In the year 2006, the sports budget was only Rs 5 crore, which has now been increased to Rs 150 crore. In future also there will be no financial crisis for the development of the players and the game. He said that it is a matter of pride for us that in the last Olympics also India was represented by 6 players from the MP State Women's Hockey Academy. While congratulating all the Indian sportspersons participating in the Olympics, Chief Minister Chouhan said that you have infinite powers, bring glory to your state and country your determination, hard work, dedication of parents and commitment of the coach by achieving every goal.

Women exchange blows for Covid-19 vaccine shots in Khargone

Team Absolute | Khargone

A fight erupted between groups of women who were waiting to get inoculated at a Covid-19 vaccination centre, which did not have enough vaccine doses, in Khargone district, an official said on Friday. A video of maskless women jostling and exchanging blows to get inoculated has gone viral on social media. In the video of the incident that took place on Thursday, women are seen queuing up at a vaccination facility in Khal Bujar of Kasrawad tehsil, some 60km from the district headquarters, when one of them tried to sneak into the facility. The video shows a woman being pushed, following which two groups of women are seen pulling each other's hair and exchanging blows, even as a man is also seen trying to separate two women engaged in a fight. When contacted, Khargone District Immunisation Officer Dr Sanjay Bhatt said more than 500 women turned up for vaccination at the centre, which only had 200 doses at its disposal. The official however said that slots are allotted to people for vaccination, and there was no shortage of vaccines in the district.



Heavy rainfall likely in parts of State; IMD issues red alerts

IMD on Friday issued two red alerts to very heavy rainfall for isolated places in eastern and western parts of Madhya Pradesh.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday issued two red alerts of heavy to very heavy rainfall for isolated places in eastern and western parts of Madhya Pradesh. According to Nagpur-based Regional Meteorological Centre, heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely to occur at isolated places during the day. Bhainsdehi area in Betul district received the highest 275 mm rain in the last 24 hours ending 8.30 am, while 16 districts received heavy, very heavy and extremely heavy show-

ers in the same period, senior meteorologist PK Saha of IMD Bhopal said. "A well-marked low-pressure area has formed over northwest Bay of Bengal. Apart from this, a monsoon trough is passing over MP's Rewa district, and an offshore trough is running from the coast of Maharashtra to Kerala," the official said, adding that the developments have triggered rainfall in the state. Light to moderate rain with few heavy showers occurred over Madhya Pradesh on Friday. During the next 24 hours, light to moderate rain with a few heavy spells are expected over Madhya Pradesh.

Heavy Rain in Bhopal After a Dry Spell

The capital city of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal, received heavy rain since Friday morning after a short dry spell. The city was witnessing intermittent rain since Thursday night and it turned into a heavy downpour from 7 am on Friday morning. The heavy rain continued for several hours. People have breathed a sigh of relief from the sweltering heat for the past 15 days as a result of the heavy rain. On the other hand, waterlogging in several parts of the city has become a problem for the people. Many of the capital's main squares were flooded as a result of the heavy rain. People in the low-line areas of the city had to get up early in the morning to remove water from their houses. Water entered many houses in low-line areas after roads were flooded. Although the Bhopal Municipal Corporation claimed that the rivers and streams were cleaned ahead of the monsoon season, the waterlogging across the city exposed the civic body's falsehood.

On Friday and Saturday, heavy rain is expected in several districts of the state including Sagar, Rewa, Shahdol, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Hoshangabad, Gwalior, Indore, Ujjain, and Chambal divisions, according to the India Meteorological Department. Pachmarhi, Narsinghpur, Naugaon, Damoh, Khajuraho, Betul, Umaria, Mandla, and Tikamgarh districts are already experiencing rain.

Teachers to be vaccinated from July 26 to 31

Bhopal: The Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains has directed all the Collectors and Chief Medical and Health Officers to conduct Covid 19 vaccination of teachers and employees working in all the colleges and schools coming under the Department of Higher Education and School Education from 26 to 31 July. For this, vaccination campaign will be organized from 9 am to 5 pm on the appointed date by selecting the colleges with facilities in the district headquarters and development blocks. In this campaign, it will be ensured that the first and second dose of Covid-19 vaccine will be administered to the teachers and employees of all government and non-government colleges and schools, including the schools of the Tribal Welfare Department. It has been directed that the workplace Covid-19 vaccination session should be held in coordination with all the educational institutions. Along with this, instructions have been given to strictly follow the COVID-19 friendly behaviour at the vaccination centers during this campaign.

There will be no shortage of financial resources for development works: Deora

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Finance and Commercial Taxes Minister Jagdish Deora said that the government will not allow any shortfall in financial resources for development works. Deora said this while dedicating various construction works worth Rs. 7 crore 32 lakh and performing bhoomi-pujan in Malhargarh and Narayangarh areas of Mandsaur district. He inaugurated the new building of District Co-operative Central Bank Limited Branch Malhargarh constructed with Rs 32 lakh and oxygen plant constructed at Narayangarh with Rs 50 lakh 31 thousand. Deora also performed Bhoomi-Poojan of ITI College building at Malhargarh costing Rs.6 crore 40 lakh and Manglik Bhawan to be constructed at a cost of Rs.10 lakh in Limbawas. Deora said that development works in the district have gained momentum. Malhargarh region has received many gifts in the name of development. Development has taken place in every field and efforts are being made continuously. He said that during the period of Covid-19 epidemic, no shortage was allowed in the development works. He said that the dream of self-reliant



Madhya Pradesh is being realized due to the efforts of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. The state government is making constant efforts for development so that every area should be included in the mainstream of development. Chief Minister did not allow any shortfall in the development work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Deora said that the vaccine is the only way to avoid the Covid-19 epidemic. That's why get the vaccine. Inspire the people in the neighbourhood to get the vaccine as well. This is a work of charity. Deora said that so far 6 oxygen generation plants have been set up in the district. There is no problem with oxygen, yet caution is necessary to avoid Covid-19. Wear a mask and follow social distance. Public representatives and officials were present on this occasion.

Nabard disbursed crop loan to over 71 lakh MP farmers

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The National Agriculture and Rural Development Bank (Nabard) has disbursed crop loan worth Rs 55,759 crore to over 71 lakh farmers in Madhya Pradesh over the last few years and also gave Rs 24,526 crore for animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries, food processing and other allied sectors, an official said on Friday. Nabard chairman GR Chintala, who is on a six-day tour of the state, met Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday and briefed him about the bank's activities, an official release said. The Nabard has disbursed credit limit of Rs 55,759 crore towards crop loan, covering more than 71 lakh farmers in the last few years in Madhya Pradesh. Also, since its inception, the bank has provided long-term refinance support of Rs 24,526 crore for activities such as animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries, food processing, storage, godowns, farm mechanisation and non-farm sector

activities. The release quoting the chairman stated. Chintala informed that the Nabard has funded and supported the creation of 17,349 km rural roads in 46,352-meter bridges and also helped set up power plants of 158.84 MW capacity in the state. Speaking about the irrigation sector, the chairman said the bank has supported the state government in creation of an irrigation potential of 34,09,151 hectare benefiting around 15,141 villages. In the warehousing sector, 30 lakh MT capacity has been created under various infrastructure funds of the Nabard in the state. Apart from this, 74.68 lakh MT capacity has been created through government-sponsored schemes, subsidies of which was channelised through the bank. Referring to the food processing infrastructure, Chintala said the Nabard has funded Avante Mega Food Park and Nimar Agro Processing Cluster in the state. Direct-Indirect employment to over 10,000 persons have been generated, along with value addition to the primary agri-produce.

PM Modi will virtually launch Anna Utsav on August 7

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Anna Utsav is being organised by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually launch the Annotsav programme organised under the "Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana" on August 7. Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Minister Bisahul Singh and Cooperative Minister Arvind Bhaduria reviewed the preparations for Annotsav at Mantralaya on Friday. They said that on the occasion of Anna Utsav, free ration would be distributed from 25 thousand 435 fair price shops across the state.



Singh said that according to the intention of PM Modi, as per the instructions of CM Chouhan, in order to ensure food security to every citizen during the Corona period, free ration is being distributed to all the beneficiaries of NFSA, in addition to their entitlement, at the rate of 5 kg per person per month.

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Mahotsav is being organised to make the beneficiaries more aware about the scheme. Singh said that Madhya Pradesh is among 32 states in the country where eligible families under One Nation One Ration Card can get ration from any government

fair price shop under the National Food Security Act 2013. Along with this, ration is being distributed to about 4 lakh families of the state through portability every month. In the last one year under the scheme, 1266 families of other states were provided ration from Madhya Pradesh. Singh informed that

under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, 5 kg rice or wheat per person per month will be distributed to the beneficiary in one lump sum for two months. The eligible beneficiaries from outside the state will also be benefited under this scheme. Bhaduria informed that preparations are being made for Annotsav in the form of a celebration at fair price shops in urban and rural areas of the state. In this, folk dance and cultural programmes will be organised by local artists. The festival will be promoted through banners and filming video spots in the programme, so that more and more beneficiaries can get the benefit of the scheme.

Mix up and communicate with common man: Governor

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that the conduct of an administrative officer is very important. The communication made by keeping the heart and mind open along with a closeness with the common man is effective. The style of language should be such that there is affinity. The person before you should understand. He said that the pleasures which can be bought with money can provide material happiness. Spiritual happiness cannot be bought. That can be attained only by serving others. He said that the public has high expectations from an administrative officer. It is very important for the officer to be sensitive. Patel was holding a discussion with the officers of Madhya Pradesh cadre of Indian Administrative Service at Raj Bhavan on Friday. Governor Patel has said that administrative service is an opportunity to create new dimensions of happiness, experiences and development by helping others. It is a challenging and accountable responsibility. They have to make the systems accountable and transparent for good governance and quality of public services, as well as fulfil the role of a clean and sensitive administrator with challenges. They have to work with an open heart and mind by giving top priority to the



works directly related to the public. He asked the officers to work considering it an opportunity to pass on the benefits of their expertise and talents to the society. The goal of the work is to provide maximum benefit of your knowledge and experience to others. The mode of working should be to win the trust and heart of the person before you. There is a difference between training and ground experience. You will have new experiences in the field every day. Many problems and challenges have to be faced during practical work, whose solutions are not found in the

guidelines. At such times, one can be successful in work by understanding the specifics of the workplace environment and sensitively coordinating with subordinate employees and senior officers. Patel said that the administrative officers have a special responsibility towards the deprived sections of the society. Despite the spread in education, there is a need for special sensitive behaviour towards women and children. The work of policy making is done at a higher level in governance, but in the implementation of policies, the role of offi-

cial is very important in bringing benefits to the public by keeping pace with the local conditions. He told the instances of Guru Nanak ji asking the children to give up the addiction of jaggery and the officer's behaviour with the family of the tribal areas and said that the sensitivity of behaviour makes work effective. The success of the officer lies in creating public-friendly administrative systems. He should make a lot of tours where he is posted, while giving priority to remote and backward areas. The purpose of the visit is to get feedback on the field realities of the schemes. They must visit the Anganwadis, schools and health centers to understand the arrangements there and improve it. Patel told the officers that behaviour is the most important thing for a successful officer. Wherever you stay, talk to everyone you meet in very simple language. Treat them like friends. By working with the spirit of service, gain the trust of the underprivileged. While you will be mentally satisfied by adopting such behaviour, the local people will prove to be your allies in tackling difficulties. He said that anyone can take whatever is in one's hand. No one can take anyone's luck. Life becomes meaningful when one works with integrity and honesty. He said that no work is big or small, the need is to motivate one's subordinates through understanding.



CM pays tribute to Azad and Lokmanya Tilak

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid his tributes to Amar Shaheed Chandrashekhar Azad and Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak on their birth anniversary here on Friday. Chief Minister Chouhan in respect also garlanded the pictures of Chandrashekhar Azad and Lokmanya Tilak at his residence. Chouhan garlanded the statue of Amar Shaheed Chandrashekhar Azad here today at Geetanjali Square.

While addressing the media representatives on the occasion, Chief Minister said that today is the birth anniversary of Chandrashekhar Azad, as well as the birth anniversary of Shri Lokmanya Tilak, who gave the slogan "Swaraj is my birthright." Chouhan further said that I pay my homage and respect to immortal revolutionary Chandrashekhar Azad and Lokmanya Tilak, the center of our faith and reverence, who led the country before Mahatma Gandhi for independence.



MAHARASHTRA FLOODS/LANDSLIDES

PM MODI ANNOUNCES RS 2 LAKH EX GRATIA FOR NEXT OF KIN OF DECEASED

PM Narendra Modi said the situation in Maharashtra due to heavy rains is being closely monitored and assistance is being provided to the affected.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday con- doled the loss of lives in a landslide in Maharashtra's coastal Raigad district and announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh for the next of kin of the deceased.

Modi said the situation in Maharashtra due to heavy rains is being closely monitored and assistance is being provided to the affect- ed.

Thirty-six people were killed in a land- slide near a village in coastal Raigad dis- trict of Maharashtra, police said on Friday.

The incident occurred near Talai vil- lage in Mahad tehsil on Thursday evening.

"Anguished by the loss of lives due to a landslide in Raigad, Maharashtra. My condolences to the bereaved families. I wish the injured a speedy recovery. The situation in Maharashtra due to heavy rains is being closely monitored and assistance is being provided to the affected," the



prime minister said.

Prime Minister Modi has announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each from Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) for the next of kin of those who lost their lives due to a landslide in Raigad, Maharashtra, according to a tweet by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The PMO said Rs 50,000 would be given to the injured.

Earlier, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu also condoled the loss of lives.

"Saddened by the loss of lives due to landslides following heavy rains in Raigad, Maharashtra. Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured," he said in a tweet.



Amit Shah speaks to Uddhav Thackeray, assures help from Centre

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday took stock of the situa- tion in Maharashtra's Raigad where around 35 people lost their lives due to landslides.

Shah spoke to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Director General SN Pradhan about the tragedy.

Expressing grief over the inci- dent, Shah in a tweet said that NDRF teams are engaged in relief and rescue operations.

"Sad over the casualties due to heavy rain and landslide in Raigad. I spoke to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and NDRF Director-General about this. NDRF teams are engaged in relief and rescue operations. The central government is providing all possible help to save the lives of people," Shah tweeted in Hindi.

Landslides were reported in and around Mahad tehsil in the

coastal district of Raigad in Maharashtra on Thursday evening where sev- eral houses in a vil- lage were trapped.



Thackeray informed around 35 people have lost their lives due to landslides in Talai village, Raigad. "Due to land- slides in Talai vil- lage, Raigad around 35 people have lost their lives. Rescue operation is underway at many places. I have ordered the evacuation & reloca- tion of people who are living in areas where there is a possibility of landslide," he said. Over 1,000 people have been rescued so far by various relief operations. As many as 18 NDRF teams are engaged in the rescue operation and some more teams are being deployed there.



CM UDDHAV THACKERAY REVIEWS SITUATION

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amid the ongoing flood-like situation in the Raigad district, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday took stock of the situation and directed officials to

maximise their rescue efforts.

As many as 35 people have died in a landslide near Talai village in Mahad, and many are still feared to be trapped.

"Rescue operations have started in Mahad with the help of teams on foot as well as helicopters. It will be easier for helicopters to spot people and evacuate them if they manage to reach a higher location or get onto the roof of their houses," a statement by the chief minister's office (CMO) read.

"We are currently focusing on rescue operations. We are taking help from all agencies like Army, Navy and even Air Force. People have been evacuated from flood zones," Thackeray said after the review at Mantralaya control room.

"At least 15-20 more people are feared trapped under the landslide at Talai vil- lage," relief and rehabilitation minister Vijay Wadettiwar added.

The CM also ordered that work to clear roadblocks should get started immedi- ately. "Bridges and roads have been washed away in some places in the hilly areas of Mahad. The rescue teams should be contacted to evacu- ate the civilians," the state- ment said. Thackeray directed officials to arrange food pack- ets for those in need in the Mangaon region, which has

been badly hit with torrential rains. He asked authorities to pay special attention to Covid-19 and other patients and ensure that they do not face any inconveniences.

The MIDC fire brigade has also been deployed to speed up the rescue opera- tions.

Raigad Guardian Minister Aditi Tatkare informed that the Maharashtra govern- ment has sought assistance from the central government and Army to rescue the

people trapped in Mahad.

Following the request by the state government, seven rescue teams from the Western Naval Command, Mumbai, have been mobilised to the flood-hit dis- tricts of Raigad and Ratnagiri.



7 Navy teams start flood rescue

Following a request by Maharashtra Government, seven naval rescue teams reached Raigad and Ratnagiri districts by road. En route they encountered adverse weather conditions and widespread inundation in affected areas and are being deployed as per direc- tions of the civil adminis- tration.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Western Naval Command, Mumbai has mobilised flood rescue teams and helicopters to provide assistance to the state for rescuing those marooned in flood-hit areas of Raigad and Ratnagiri, defence officials said here on Friday.

Following a request by Maharashtra Government, seven naval rescue teams reached Raigad and Ratnagiri districts by road. En route they encountered adverse weather conditions and widespread inundation in affected areas and are being deployed as per direc- tions of the civil adminis- tration.

The navy is also taking up the airlift of marooned people from Poland in Raigad for which a Seaking 42C heli- copter departed from the INS Shikra early today. The naval Flood Rescue Teams are fully self-sustained and equipped with Gemini rubber boats, loud hailer, first aid kits, life jackets and life buoys, manned by specialist Naval Divers and diving equipment. Additional Flood Rescue Teams are being maintained on a high degree of readiness at Mumbai, for immediate deployment, should the need arise, said a navy spokesperson.

At least nine persons were killed as unprecedented torrential rains pounded the coastal and western Maharashtra for the past 36 hours. Several towns and villages in Raigad, Ratnagiri have been flooded, marooning thousands and over two dozen villages were completely cut off from the rest of the state.



HEAVY RAIN IN MAHARASHTRA BREAKS 40-YEAR JULY RECORD, NAVY ROPED IN

While Ratnagiri, Raigad, Kolhapur districts are flooded, Sangli and Amravati are facing a flood-like situation.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Incessant rain over the last 24 hours has led to devastating floods in parts of Maharashtra, with three districts flooded and two districts facing a flood- like situation. This is the heaviest spell of rain in the state in 40 years. The Navy has been roped in for rescue and evacuation.

Several teams of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel too have been deployed for rescue operations in the Konkan region. While Ratnagiri, Raigad, Kolhapur districts are flooded, Sangli and Amravati are facing a flood- like situation. More than 50 per cent area of the coastal town of Chiplun in Ratnagiri, around 250 km from Mumbai and having a population of over 70,000, has got submerged in flood waters, news agency PTI reported. A terrifying video from Chiplun shows a few people trying to pull up a woman from a flooded area using what appears to be a rope. The

woman clings on to the rope as she is pulled up, but just as she nears the ter- race of the building, the rescuers lose grip and she falls into the water. Several people are missing after landslides in Raigad, which also led to roads being blocked.

Mumbai, neighbouring Thane and Palghar and other districts in the Konkan region have been witnessing heavy down- pour since the last few days. This morning, seven people died and three were injured after a building collapsed in Mumbai's Govandi area. The Mumbai-Goa Highway has been closed for traffic due to severe flooding in the region. The Met depart- ment has issued red and orange alerts for several regions in Maharashtra that are set to receive heavy rainfall in the next few days. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday held an emer- gency meeting to take stock of the situa- tion and asked disaster Management units and other departments responsible to stay vigilant and start rescue operations immediately.

WOMAN FALLS INTO FLOOD WATERS AS RESCUERS LOSE GRIP

Apart from the NDRF and state rescue teams, the navy has mobilised flood rescue teams and helicopters to provide assistance to the Maharashtra administration.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As the Konkan coast of Maharashtra bat- tles devastating rain and flooding, the coastal town of Chiplun in Ratnagiri, around 250 km from Mumbai, appears to be among the worst- affected.

A terrifying video from Chiplun shows a few peo- ple trying to pull up a woman from a flooded area using what appears to be a rope. The woman, in the 11- second video, can be seen clinging on to what appears to a rope as she is pulled up. But just as she nears the terrace of the building, the rescuers lose grip and she falls into the flood waters.

More than 50 per cent area of Chiplun, which has a popula- tion of over 70,000, has got submerged in flood waters. More than 5,000 people are stranded.

Maharashtra is witnessing the heaviest rain in July in 40 years. While Ratnagiri, Raigad, Kolhapur districts are flooded, Sangli and Amravati are facing a flood-like situation. Four landslides have been reported in Raigad due to incessant rain.

Apart from the NDRF and state rescue teams, the navy has mobilised flood rescue teams and helicopters to provide assistance to the Maharashtra administration. The unprecedented rain has affected road and rail traffic. Traffic on the Mumbai- Bengaluru national highway was disrupted today after a stretch of road in Belgaum district of neighbouring Karnataka got inundated, prompting the police in Maharashtra's Kolhapur to stop the vehicles going to the neighbouring state as a safety measure, officials said. The Met department has issued red and orange alerts for several regions in Maharashtra that are set to receive heavy rainfall in the next few days.



4 KILLED, 10 INJURED IN MUMBAI HOUSE COLLAPSE

Teams of Mumbai Fire Brigade and other rescuers rushed to the spot and retrieved at least four bodies from the rubble and saved the rest, even as inter- mittent rains hampered relief efforts.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

At least four persons were killed, and 10 others injured when a single-storey house crashed in Govandi suburb of northeast Mumbai, BMC Disaster Control said on Friday.

The incident happened around 5 am when the ground-plus-one storey structure in Shivaji Nagar collapsed, catching the vic- tims unawares in sleep. Teams of Mumbai Fire Brigade and other rescuers rushed to the spot and retrieved at least four bodies from the rubble and saved the rest, even as intermit- tent rains hampered relief efforts.

The dead have been identified as Mukar Z Shaikh, 80, and three women Shamshad Shaikh, 45, Neha Parvez Shaikh, 35 and Farhin Shaikh, 22. The injured were rushed to the BMC's Sion and Rajawadi hospitals for treatment and their condition was described as stable.



4 killed, 4 injured in landslide in Mahad



Mumbai: As heavy rain continues to lash Raigad district, four people are reported to have died in a landslide at Sakhar Sutar Wadi in Mahad taluka early Friday. Five people are still trapped under the rubble while four others are injured. A rescue operation could not be carried out as the Pitalwadi-Umarath Fata bridge connecting these villages as well as the Umarath Fata-Sakhar bridge were washed away. Amid heavy rainfall, two factories in MIDC area of Mahad caught fire—one on Thursday night, another on Friday morning. "We have called fire tenders from neighbouring locations but access is becoming difficult so local fire tenders are trying to put out the fire," Nidhi Choudhari, the Raigad district collector, said.

At Least 20 Feared Trapped In 2 Landslides Rain-Hit Satara

Pune: At least 20 people are feared trapped in landslides in two locations in Western Maharashtra's Satara district which has been battered by rain, police said on Friday. Landslides took place at Ambeghar and Mirgaon villages during the night, burying a total of eight houses, said senior police official Ajay Kumar Bansal. The incidents followed a major landslide in the coastal Raigad district on Thursday evening. Some people have been rescued, police said. "At Ambeghar, 13 or 14 people in four houses are feared trapped, while at Mirgaon, three houses were affected with 8 to 10 people inside," said Bansal, adding that rescue work is underway. Due to incessant rains, the roads leading to the two villages are either blocked or inundated, making it diffi- cult to bring heavy machines for rescue work, a senior police official said.



2 PEOPLE RESCUED BY IAF CHOPPERS FROM FLOOD-HIT RATNAGIRI

Mumbai: The Indian Air Force's Mi-17 helicopters rescued two persons stranded in inundated areas of coastal Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra on Friday, said a defense release. The Air Force has kept its two Mi-17V5 and two Mi-17 helicopters ready for rescue operations in the region which has been bat- tered by heavy rains, it said.

It did not give specifics of the two rescue operations by choppers. The Western Naval Command has also deployed seven rescue teams along with its helicopters in Ratnagiri and the adjoining Raigad district, it said. The Navy's Flood Rescue Teams are equipped with Gemini rubber boats, loud hailer, first-aid kits, life jackets and life buoys and include its special- ist divers. Additional Flood Rescue Teams are in Mumbai, ready for quick deployment if needed, the release said.





EDITOR'S SPECS

Bad remedy of dengue

Global warming could limit the spread of dengue fever but could also affect Wolbachia as a biological control agent, according to new research. Researchers, at the Pennsylvania State University in the US, found that infection with the bacterium Wolbachia, which has recently been used to control viral infections in mosquitoes, also increases the thermal sensitivity of the insects. Wolbachia have been shown to prevent viruses, including dengue, from replicating inside mosquitoes. But future climate models point to increasing frequencies of extreme temperature events, making short exposures to high temperatures a threat to the survival of dengue and Wolbachia infected mosquitoes, the researchers said. "At higher temperatures, while the virus may replicate faster, our work suggests that a corresponding reduction in mosquito thermal tolerance may act as a counterforce on mosquito survival that could help to reduce transmission and potentially human disease incidence in hotter, more climate-variable regions," said Fhallon Ware-Gilmore, graduate student in the Department of Entomology at Penn State. For the study, the team placed infected mosquitoes in sealed vials and then submerged the vials into a water bath heated to 42 degrees Celsius -- a realistic temperature extreme that a mosquito might encounter in the wild. The researchers then measured how long it took for the mosquitoes to become immobilised and compared the time to uninfected control mosquitoes. The team found that mosquitoes infected with dengue virus showed greater sensitivity to heat; they became immobilised almost three times faster than uninfected mosquitoes when placed in the hot water bath. Similarly, mosquitoes infected with Wolbachia became immobilised four times faster than uninfected mosquitoes. Interestingly, dengue virus and Wolbachia bacteria did not have an additive effect on mosquito thermal tolerance.

Geopolitical indicators India cannot ignore

D.C. PATHAK

The long speech of President Xi Jinping at Tiananmen Square in Beijing on the occasion of the CPC's centenary celebration on July 1 and the address of US President Joe Biden to the joint session of the Congress earlier on April 29 provide significant inputs on the contemporary global scene that was marked by a developing bipolarity between US-led West and the residual of the world of Communism of the Cold War era now led by China. In that equation the present profile of Pakistan is important for India in determining the latter's strategic framework. The two Presidents were expansive about defining their domestic and international policies that makes it easy to identify the thrust areas of their future approach and have an idea of how in their own ways the two countries were visualising their role as a superpower. Pakistan's current strategy is to be on the right side of the Biden regime without allowing any let up on its closeness towards its 'all weather friend', China. India has all pieces in place to firmly decide not only upon its strategy for South Asia but its long-term approach towards the developing global scenario, as well. At Tiananmen Square, Xi Jinping attired in Mao suit declared that the Chinese nation -- comprising 'Chinese people of all ethnic groups' -- had achieved the first centenary goal of building a 'moderately prosperous' society resolving the 'historical problem of absolute poverty' and was now moving to the second goal of making China a great 'modern Socialist country'. Recalling how salvos of Russian October Revolution brought Marxism-Leninism to China and how CPC was born in 1921 to seek 'happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation of Chinese nation', Xi contended that establishment of People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 was a victory of the 'new democratic revolution' over 'imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism'. He warned that time when the Chinese nation could be 'bullied and abused' by others was gone and any attempt by anyone to do that would 'run into the great wall of steel forged by the Chinese people'. The Chinese President talked of 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' that believed in rule-based governance and a sound system of intra-party regulations. In tracing the history of CPC he put only Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping on

the top and evidently identified himself primarily with these two ideologues. This found reflection in Xi's proposition that 'China transformed itself from a highly centralised planned economy to a Socialist market economy taking the country from isolation to one that is open to the outside world across the board'. Xi asserted that China leapt to world's second largest economy raising the living standards of people from 'bare subsistence to an overall level of moderate prosperity'. This confirms the view that Xi Jinping continues to pursue the economic route to becoming a superpower while maintaining a strong military position. The Chinese President presented Belt and Road Initiative as China's new achievement in providing 'development opportunities to the world'. He emphasised on the acceleration of modernisation of national defence and the armed forces and asserted that 'a strong country must have a strong military'. On Hong Kong, Xi accepted 'one country two systems' but on Taiwan he reiterated the call of 'one China' secured through 'peaceful reunification'. President Joe Biden's address to the Congress on the completion of hundred days of his administration also devoted more to the US domestic scene and while defining the American stand on various aspects of international relations, laid emphasis on US responding to threats 'jointly with its allies'. The speech avoided any aggressive overtones. Biden talked of rebuilding the nation after the worst economic crisis caused by the pandemic and spoke at length on American Rescue Plan, Family Plan and the Jobs Plan -- the last one in particular was described as a 'blue collar blueprint to build America'. He laid emphasis on 'revitalising our democracy' and declared upfront that 'white supremacy is terrorism'. He called for unity 'to heal the soul of the nation' and strongly recommended gun control. On the world scene, Biden christened President Xi Jinping of China as an autocrat who was 'earnest about becoming the most significant and consequential nation in the world' and warned China that while US welcomed competition it will do all to defend America's interests across the board -- he referred to unfair trade practices, theft of intellectual property and military defence of Indo-Pacific in this regard. In respect of Russia, President Biden stated that 'we do not want escalation but there will be consequences for its actions'. Highlighting the importance of US alliance

with NATO, Biden declared that 'we are back to stay' to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Making a passing reference to 'the forever war in Afghanistan' he claimed that having degraded Al Qaeda, the US will now 'maintain over the horizon capacity to suppress threats to homeland'. Both President Biden and Xi Jinping used the term 'rebuilding our nation' and 'rejuvenation of Chinese nation' as their respective theme points giving the impression of a preoccupation with their domestic scenario. However, their speeches also suggested a slow but definite ideological polarisation between them as world powers, based on the rival systems of a pluralistic democratic order on one hand and a one-party dictatorship, on the other. Xi Jinping did not mention India and Biden was silent on Sino-Pak military alliance. The Chinese President glorified the role of PLA that is now strengthened in Ladakh sector under an independent General -- this can be read as a message for India. President Biden talked of 'terrorism having metastasized' -- saying that Al Qaeda and ISIS were still there -- but he made no reference to Pakistan whose patronisation of Islamic extremists was globally acknowledged. It can be presumed that the Biden Administration attached an overriding importance to Pakistan as a helpful factor in dealing with Afghanistan. This should cause India some degree of concern. It is in this context that the recent TV interview given to a prominent Afghan journalist -- in which Shah Mahmood Quraishi, foreign minister of Pakistan, spoke at length about Afghanistan -- becomes important. Saying that Pakistan desired a stable, peaceful and sovereign democratic Afghanistan for regional connectivity and economic progress, Quraishi significantly remarked that it was for the people of Afghanistan to decide what will be the ruling dispensation there, adding that Pakistan will deal with the government so established at Kabul. He highlighted the role of Pakistan in facilitating the peace process at Doha between US and Taliban and participating in Afghan reconstruction and regretted that the Afghan leadership was not able to sit with all others and work out a peaceful resolution. He talked of Islamic bonds between the two countries and predictably remarked that Indian presence in Afghanistan was larger than what it ought to be. The Pak foreign minister

warned that President Ghani must learn to reconcile with Taliban if Afghanistan was to be kept from heading into a civil war. If in President Biden's scheme of things Pakistan's strategic partnership with China is of no consequence for the US in terms of the American global objectives, then the Sino-Pak axis that opened up the prospect of these two hostile neighbours planning some joint acts of aggression on our borders, is a threat which India would have to face alone and plan for it. The axis would create difficulties for India in Afghanistan and add to India's concerns in Kashmir. Quraishi dismissed the June 24 meeting of the Prime Minister with the leaders of mainstream parties of Kashmir -- the first such interaction since the annulment of Art 370 of the Constitution by the Indian Parliament -- as a PR exercise and alleged that the Prime Minister did not give any reply to the demand of the Kashmir leaders for restoration of full statehood to their state. He claimed that US had appreciated Pakistan for its role in the Afghan peace process. Pakistan has been trying to create a lobby against India's action in Kashmir in the UN and in the Muslim world-Turkey, Malaysia and Qatar have spoken against India on Kashmir. President of UN General Assembly- Volcan Bozorkir- who is from Turkey, told pressmen at Islamabad some time back that Pakistan should take up the case of Kashmir 'more strongly' at UN. He asked all concerned to refrain from changing the status of the 'disputed territory of Kashmir'. In the prevailing global scenario, India is required to be on the side of the US as a leader of the democratic world against an advancing China and be an active member of QUAD, maintain strong bilateral friendship with Russia, insist on having a place on Afghan round table, deal with Pakistan with a strong hand on LOC and develop the capability of stretching China all along LAC in the event of that country indulging in aggressiveness. While diplomatic support of the friendly countries would be expected, India has to muster military capability to deal with the Sino-Pak axis, particularly in the Ladakh sector on its own.

(The writer is a former Director Intelligence Bureau)

international

IMF board approves policy reforms to support low-income nations

Washington | Agencies

The executive board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved a set of policy reforms to the concessional lending facilities to better support the recovery of low-income countries (LICs) from the Covid-19 pandemic. "These reforms are set to ensure that the Fund has the capacity to respond flexibly to LICs' needs over the medium term while continuing to provide concessional loans at zero interest rates," the IMF said on Thursday in a statement. The centrepiece of the policy reforms that were approved by the IMF executive board last week is a 45 per cent increase in the normal limits on access to concessional financing, coupled with the elimination of hard limits on access for the poorest countries. Xinhua news agency quoted the statement as further saying, "The decision to raise access lim-



its is not a directive to lend more across all IMF programs," Sean Nolan, deputy director of the IMF's strategy policy and review department, told reporters later in the day. "It provides the flexibility to provide more zero interest financing for countries with strong economic programs to handle the pandemic and the path to full recovery," Nolan said.

The IMF executive board also approved a two-stage funding strategy to cover the cost of pandemic-related concessional lending and support the sustainability of the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT), which is tailored to the diverse needs of low-income countries. In the first stage, the IMF will seek to secure about \$4 billion in subsidy resources needed to finance zero interest lending from the PRGT. Meanwhile, the IMF will seek to mobilize about \$18 billion in new PRGT loan resources from PRGT lenders. The move came as the demand from low-income countries for IMF financial support is expected to remain high over the next few years. The IMF has provided financial support to 53 of 69 eligible low-income countries in 2020 and in the first half of 2021, with about \$14 billion disbursed as zero percent interest rate loans from the PRGT.

Death toll in S Africa unrest rises to 337

Johannesburg | Agencies

The death toll from the week-long violent protests and looting across South Africa, which were triggered following the imprisonment of former President Jacob Zuma, has increased to 337, according to a government official. Addressing reporters here on Thursday, Acting Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni said the number of deaths in Gauteng is 79 and in KwaZulu-Natal 258, reports Xinhua news agency. "Of the reported deaths in Gauteng to date, 42 cases of murder have been opened and 37 inquest dockets have been opened. In KwaZulu-Natal, 171 cases of murder have been opened and 87 inquest dockets have been opened. "The SAPS (South African Police Service) have to date opened 132 cases of arson in KwaZulu-Natal," she said. Ntshavheni said the govern-

ment considered the situation as stable since there had been no new incidents of looting or vandalism in either province in recent days. In the past week's unrest in the eastern provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, thousands of businesses and infrastructures were looted and burned. Meanwhile, more than 2,500 people have been arrested in connection with the violent protests. In the wake of the violence, the number of South African National Defence Force (SANDF) deployed has increased to 25,000. The deployment will remain until August 12. Zuma, once known for his fight against apartheid, has been imprisoned in the Estcourt Correctional Centre for 15 months for disobeying court orders. He did not testify before the judicial commission that was investigating accusations of corruption against him between 2009-2018.

PALESTINE WELCOMES UN COUNCIL'S MOVE TO PROBE ISRAELI VIOLATIONS



Ramallah: Palestine has welcomed a decision by the UN Human Rights Council to form an independent international commission to investigate Israeli violations. The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Thursday that the Council's decision "reflects the international community's persistence to implement international law and protect Palestinian human rights", reports Xinhua news agency. "Forming the commission came in implementation of Palestine's decision in the Council during its special session number 30," the statement said. The Ministry added that the commission will look into Israeli violations of humanitarian and international human rights law in the Palestinian territories since April 13. On Thursday, Nazhat Shameem Khan, president of the Human Rights Council, announced the appointment of Navi Pillay, Miloon Kothari and Chris Sidoti as the three members of the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Pillay, a South African, who was the former chief of the Council, will serve as the chair of the new three-person commission, which was also tasked with investigating "all underlying root cause of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict", Khan added. In response, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said the move "completely ignores the 4,300 rockets fired from the Gaza Strip toward Israeli citizens in May". In April, tensions escalated in East Jerusalem and then spread to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in May following an Israeli court's verdict to evict families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in the city. On May 10, Israel waged a large-scale aerial offensive on the Gaza Strip after militants led by the Islamic Hamas movement, launched a barrage of rockets at Israel. The offensive ended after 11 days of fighting when Egypt brokered a ceasefire deal between the two sides. More than 250 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed, with widespread destruction of buildings and infrastructure in Gaza.

CUBA SLAMS LATEST US SANCTIONS

"I refute the unfounded and slanderous US government sanctions against Army Corp General Alvaro Lopez Miera and the National Special Brigade," Foreign Affairs Minister Bruno Rodriguez said in a Twitter post on Thursday.

Havana | Agencies

The Cuban government has denounced the latest sanctions imposed against the island nation by the US administration. "I refute the unfounded and slanderous US government sanctions against Army Corp General Alvaro Lopez Miera and the National Special Brigade," Foreign Affairs Minister Bruno Rodriguez said in a Twitter post on Thursday. "I denounce that the State Department is exercising offensive and humiliating pressures on European countries, particularly six from Eastern Europe, and eight from Latin America, to force them to support a declaration condemning Cuba," he added. Earlier in the day, the US Treasury Department announced sanctions against



Miera and an elite military unit popularly known as the "black wasps" for their participation in the "rebuque" of protests this month in Cuba. The new sanctions come amid the worst outbreak of Covid-19 Cuba has seen to date, with a rise in infections, deaths and hospitalisations.

'Nord Stream 2 pipeline to start operation despite US pressure'

Moscow | Agencies

The Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline will soon become operational despite the US' attempt to politicise the project, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said. Zakharova made the remarks on Thursday a day after the US and Germany agreed on measures to reduce the risk that the Nord Stream 2 would pose to European energy security and Ukraine, reports Xinhua news agency. "Despite the strange decisions that were made under US pressure, as was the case during the recent German-American negotiations, they are not able to change the objective reality, the construction of this large-scale facility," she said. Russia is confident that the Nord Stream 2 project will function reliably, provide affordable energy to European consumers and strengthen



the energy security of the continent, the spokesperson added. The 1,230-km gas pipeline, expected to be completed next month, would bring 55 billion cubic metres of gas annually from Russia to Germany through the Baltic Sea. Washington seems to be pursuing its own geopolitical and economic interests by disrupting the implementation of the pipeline, but the project is beneficial for Europe, said Zakharova, stressing

that Russia is completely against the politicisation of energy cooperation. "From the joint statement issued by the US and Germany, it has become clear to us who intends to control the development of the Ukrainian fuel and energy complex," she added. The US has long claimed that the Nord Stream 2 is a geopolitical manoeuvre by Moscow that will undermine Ukraine's role in transiting energy to Europe and increase European dependence on Russian gas. Germany and Russia insisted that the project is purely commercial. Wednesday's agreement came days after German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to the White House last week, when US President Joe Biden said that the two allies were developing practical measures to ensure energy security in Europe.



KANYE WEST SOBS IN EMOTIONAL NEW TRACK 'LOVE UNCONDITIONALLY'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kanye West sobbed that he was "losing his family" while performing his emotional new track, Love Unconditionally. The rapper - who is in the midst of divorce from Kim Kardashian - covered his face and fell to his knees while playing the song at the launch event for his new album, Donda. Kanye, 44, wore a balaclava and an all-red outfit as he repeatedly said: "I'm losing my family / I'm losing my family / I'm losing my family."

His late mother Donda - who the album is named after - could also be heard in the song saying, "No matter what you never abandon your family."

Kim and their four children - North, eight, Saint, five, Chicago, three, and Psalm two - sat in the audience at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, as the emotional song played.

Kanye reportedly told Kim about the personal nature of Love Unconditionally before his performance as he didn't want to "blindside" the KUWTK star.



JENNIFER LOPEZ AND BEN AFFLECK GO 'INSTAGRAM OFFICIAL'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Lo and Ben Affleck go 'Instagram official' as the singer's friend Leah Remini posted photos to social media from her 51st birthday party on June 15 and Jen and Ben are seen cuddled up together in a sweet snap. In the black and white photo, Jen presses her body against Ben's with one hand on the actor and director's chest.

The King Of Queens star and high-profile former Scientologist wrote in her Instagram post: "Wanted to share a little video from my birthday with you all because I got so much love from you on my birthday but also everyday. I consider myself to have the best support system here on social media. Also, I can't thank my family & friends enough for coming, for celebrating with me in a way that was very special to me." Earlier this week, a source revealed to E! News that the celebrity couple is 'fully committed to each other,' although they've both agreed they aren't in a rush to get married again.



ANNE-MARIE DEMANDS NEW CAREER AS PRIVATE DETECTIVE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Anne-Marie leads a glittering pop star life, complete with - big bank balance, showbiz pals, a string of huge hits and millions of adoring fans. The 'Don't Play' singer has got her sights set on a new career as a private detective after admitting she is obsessed with catching love rats.

In an exclusive chat, Anne-Marie, who is back today with second album Therapy featuring collaborations with some of the UK's biggest stars, including Little Mix and Niall Horan, confessed: "I just always want to catch people out. My whole life I have wanted to be a private detective."

"Honestly, it is my dream job to catch people out who are cheating. I want my secondary job to be this. Writing a song about someone that isn't treating you right is another one of my favourite things to talk about. And I like getting people back for things they have done wrong to me."

Anne-Marie's ability to sniff out infidelity inspired tracks X2 and Tell Your Girlfriend from her new record, the follow-up to 2018 debut Speak Your Mind.



CAMILA CABELLO RELEASES MUSIC VIDEO 'DON'T GO YET'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Camila Cabello released a video for her new song 'Don't Go Yet' on Thursday from her upcoming third studio album Familia. The 24-year-old Cuban-American singer took to social media to share her first single of 2021 along with a music video directed by Philippa Price and Pilar Zeta. '#DontGoYet is the first song from my next album, Familia. This album was inspired by two things: family & food. Your family by blood, but also your chosen family. Who you want to sit at the dinner table, get wine-drunk, & dance in the living room with,' Camila posted for her roughly 12.3 million followers on Twitter. She added: "To me, those are the moments that make me glad to be alive, those moments of collective joy & true vulnerability & connection with other people. I hope you enjoy it & I hope it inspires many wine drunk kitchen dance parties for you & your familia."

The music video available on YouTube opened with Camila driving solo in a convertible and changing the station on the car radio.

Don't Go Yet marked the first solo music released by Camila since she released her second studio album Romance in 2019.

Sean Penn wants 'Gaslit' crew to get Covid jabs

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor filmmaker Sean Penn will not resume work on the series "Gaslit" until the entire cast and crew get Covid-19 vaccines. NBCUniversal, the studio for "Gaslit", imposed obligatory vaccines for "Zone A" cast and crew members (those in close proximity during production), and provided an on-site vaccination clinic for those involved with the production as Penn has put his foot down, reports variety.com

The actor-filmmaker has offered to facilitate the mandatory-for-all vaccination effort, free of charge, through his non-profit organisation. "Gaslit", a political thriller series, tells the tale of forgotten characters of Watergate. Penn will play Attorney General John Mitchell, Nixon's most trusted adviser. Actress Julia Roberts will be seen essaying Martha Mitchell, the Arkansan socialite who was one of the first to publicly sound the alarm on Nixon's involvement in Watergate.



Emily Blunt appreciates Dwayne Johnson's struggle

Los Angeles | Agencies

Emily Blunt has opened up working with Dwayne Johnson in the upcoming film "Jungle Cruise". The actress talked about how she takes career advice from him and shared that she really appreciates that the Hollywood star comes from struggle. Blunt in a recent interview with The Hollywood Reporter, said: "When you get to know him as being much gentler, much more shy than people realize, you really realize that 'The Rock' is the performance of a lifetime. It is so the antithesis of who he is. And so I'm going to push him to play, to take big swings with characters. She added: "Because it's really transformative if you know him as I do."

The 38-year-old actress also says she has relied on him for counsel as she navigates the next stage of her career.

"I really appreciate that DJ comes from struggle," Blunt added. "He comes from some hard times, and he wears it very lightly and in a very wise philosophical sense. And so I do go to him for advice because he has lived in the trenches. He has not just winged it, and it has not been this meteoric rise to where he is now. It's been a lot of razor blades and tears," she said.

Inspired by the famous Disneyland theme park ride, "Jungle Cruise" is an adventure-filled, rollicking thrill-ride down the Amazon with wisecracking skipper Frank Wolff and intrepid researcher Dr. Lily Houghton.

Jaume Collet-Serra directs the film, which also stars Edgar Ramirez and Jack Whitehall, with Jesse Plemons and Paul Giamatti. Disney's "Jungle Cruise" will release in theatres in India soon.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Bianca Gascoigne

OLYMPICS:

TOKYO STARTS FRESH CHAPTER DESPITE OPENING SHORN OF GLAMOUR

Tokyo | Agencies

The Tokyo Olympic Games on Friday have officially been declared open by Japan's Emperor Naruhito. The opening ceremony held at Japan National Stadium lacked the glitz and glamour of previous editions but was apt for the current situation of a world ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Tennis star Naomi Osaka lit the cauldron to mark the culmination of a subdued ceremony, which started by paying tributes to the dead but ended as a celebration of hope in the times of pandemic.

The usual razzmatazz and razzle-dazzle and pyrotechnic caused by laser and high-intensity sound were replaced by the clever interplay of light, sound, and shadows with softer music.

Postponed by one year due to the pandemic, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games finally opened on Friday night at Tokyo's Olympic Stadium behind closed doors, adding a new chapter in the history of the Olympic Games.

Led by six-time world champion and London Olympic bronze medalist boxer MC Mary Kom and men's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh, the Indian contingent made a subdued entry, as the 21st group in the march past, with



less than 30 representing the full contingent of over 200.

There was no cheering, screaming, and clapping for the huge crowd that usually fills the stadium for ceremonies of this magnitude and stature because the fans are banned from the entire Olympics. However, the athletes did not seem to mind as they got ready to represent their respective countries.

The biggest sporting event on the planet is being held exactly one year later than originally planned due to the postponement caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Only about 950 people, including officials and reporters, were allowed into the 68,000-capacity venue to watch the opening ceremony. But perhaps for the first time in Olympic history, billions of the audience members enjoyed the show more than the very limited number of

Olympic family members present in the stadium, Xinhua reported. It has been



positive Covid-19 cases related to the Olympics, including two infected foreign athletes in the athletes' village, bringing the total number of Olympics-linked cases to 87 since July 1.

Consequently, the majority of the venues barred spectators from entering, with cheers and chants from previous Games to be put in place as part of the IOC's digital engagement campaign to ensure athletes won't feel alone.

It wasn't until late Thursday night that the organisers confirmed the opening ceremony would stick to its original programs following the firing of ceremony director Kentaro Kobayashi after a joke about the Holocaust he made in 1998 resurfaced. Yet, against all odds, a virtual seed under the surface of the Olympic Stadium sprouted out of the ground after intensive struggles displayed by its human representation inside the arena, starting a countdown that led to the eventual start of the spectacle.

IOC president Thomas Bach said earlier at a press conference that the Olympic Games are capable of "getting the entire world together in one peaceful competition, to have athletes in one country, in one city, in one Olympic village, competing against each other but living together because they are under the same rules."

The Tokyo Olympic Games, attracting 11,000 athletes from 206 delegations and the refugee team, will run through August 8.



almost eight years since Japanese people celebrated the return of the Olympic Games after the 1964 Olympics, but the journey to this point was full of challenges. On March 24, 2020, Japan's then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach agreed to delay the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics by one year due to Covid-19, four days after the Olympic flame, which was lit up in Olympia, Greece without spectators, arrived in Japan. Sixteen months later, the coronavirus is still threatening the Games, with Tokyo put under its fourth state of emergency for the duration of the entire Olympic Games. On Thursday, Tokyo 2020 organisers reported 12 new

Archery: Deepika qualifies ninth; Atanu, Pravin, Tarundeep ranks outside Top-30

Tokyo | Agencies

Ac Indian archer Deepika Kumari finished a creditable ninth after the women's individual ranking round, notching up a total of 663 points, on the opening day of the Tokyo Olympics at the Yumenoshima Ranking Field, the venue of the archery competitions, on Friday.

On a day when the Olympic record of 673 points in the qualification round was broken by the top four archers -- South Korean trio of An San (680), Jang Minhee (677) and Kang Chae Young (675) and Mexico's Alejandra Valencia (674) -- Deepika endured a challenging day as she kept moving up and down the leaderboard throughout the event.

All four top archers surpassed the long-standing record of Lina Herasymenko of Ukraine, who had shot 673 points at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. South Korea also smashed the team event record -- where the scores of three archers of a county are combined -- aggregating 2032 points, ahead of Mexico (1976 points) and USA (1970 points).

The 27-year-old Deepika, winner of a hat-trick of gold medals at the in the World Cup Stage 3 in Paris late last month which helped her reclaim the No.1 spot in the world, has now been paired with Bhutan's Karma in the elimination round (round of 32).

Deepika's performance fluctuated between



brilliant and mediocre as the Indian world No. 1 started at No. 8 after the first six shots but slipped to 14th, finishing the first half placed fourth on the leaderboard.

Men archers -- Atanu Das, Pravin Jadhav and Tarundeep Rai -- finished with rankings outside the top-30 in the individual mens ranking round on the opening day of the Tokyo Olympics, at the Yumenoshima Ranking Field on Friday.

On a day when the youngest archer in the event, Korea's 17-year-old Kim Je Deok took the top spot with 688 points, the trio of Das, Jadhav and Rai endured a day full of a few ups and many downs. Jadhav, in his Olympics debut, was the highest-ranked Indian archer at 31, while Das ranked 35th and Rai 37th with final scores of 656, 653 and 652, respectively. Team-wise, the troika ended up ninth in the field of 12, just above Great Britain, Australia and France with a score of 1961.

Sri Lanka score consolation Three wicket win in third ODI



Colombo: Sri Lanka defeated India by three wickets in the third and final One-day International here at the R Premadasa Stadium on Friday night. India had collapsed for 225 from 147/3, leaving the task easy for the host who rode on Avishka Fernando's 76 (98 balls) and Bhanuka Rajapaksa's 65 (56 balls). The match had been reduced to 47-overs-a-side due to rain. India, however, won the series 2-1.

Brief scores

India 225 all out in 43.1 overs (P Shaw 49, S Samson 46, S Yadav 40, A Dananjaya 3/44, P Jayawickrama 3/59) lost to Sri Lanka 227/7 in 39 overs (A Fernando 76, B Rajapaksa 65, R Chahar 3/54, C Sakariya 2/34).

WOMEN'S HOCKEY PREVIEW: RANILED SIDE TO TAKE ON NETHERLANDS

Tokyo | Agencies

After appearing in the Olympics for the first time in 36 years at the 2016 Rio Games, the Indian women's hockey team is set for the first time in history to take part in their second consecutive Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The Rani Rampal-led team will be up against world No. 1 Netherlands at the Oi Hockey Stadium on July 24.

Following the disappointing performance in Rio, the Indian team has grown from strength to strength, winning the 2016 Asian Champions Trophy, 2017 Asia Cup, silver medal at the 2018 Asian Games and reaching the quarterfinals of the 2018 Women's World Cup for the first time in history.

The team also gave commanding performances at the FIH Women's Series Finals Hiroshima 2019, where they defeated Japan 3-1 to win gold, and the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers 2019 where they defeated the



US to book a place in the Olympics. Ahead of their Olympic encounter, captain Rani expressed the side's enthusiasm, saying, "It's very exciting to be here in Tokyo. We have worked very hard for this tournament in the last five years, and we can't wait for it to start. It's been a long wait for the Tokyo Games, and we are glad that we are just one day away from our first match. All players are looking good during the practice sessions, and we are very confident about our chances in this competition."

Rani added that the execution of plans will hold the key for the team in the Olympics. "We have all the skills to perform at this level. However, it's very important for us to execute our plans properly. Everyone is clear about their respective roles. If we coordinate well on the field and play to our potential, I am sure we can produce great results in this tournament."

Following their first Pool A match against the Netherlands, India will take on Germany (July 26), Great Britain (July 28), Ireland (July 30) and South Africa (July 31) before the knockout stage, which begins on August 2.

SREESHANKAR AND IRFAN GIVEN GO-AHEAD FOR OLYMPICS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Friday decided against withdrawing the entries of long jumper Murali Sreeshankar and 20km race walker KT Irfan from the Tokyo Olympics.

The AFI's Selection Committee arrived at the decision following an emergency meeting. In a last-minute fitness trial on July 21, Sreeshankar had jumped 7.48m with the second-best jump coming at 7.33m. The 22-year-old had bagged qualification for the Olympics with a personal best of 8.26m, bettering his own national record at the Federation Cup in Patiala in March this year.

Irfan, on the other hand, had qualified for the Olympics in March 2019 during the Asian Race Walking Championships in Nomi, Japan. He last competed in March in the Race Walking National Championships in Ranchi, unable to finish the race. In May, he tested positive for the COVID-19 virus and made recovery from it.

Despite strong opinions that the two athletes should be withdrawn after they under-performed in the trials in Bengaluru, the committee considered



that the trials were called only to assess fitness and not form. The narrative meant that the meeting arrived at the unanimous decision to not pull the two athletes out of the squad.

"The selectors were of the view that athletes, especially those who meet qualification standards early, need to compete in the final selection trial and show their performance," said the AFI President Adil Sumariwalla in a statement. Tokyo will be Irfan's second appearance at the Olympics after finishing 10th in 2012 London Olympics. For Sreeshankar, it will be his first Olympics outing. Sumariwalla added that the coaches of both athletes had been spoken to about the lacklustre form in the trials. The track and field events at the Tokyo Olympics will commence on July 30.

Shooters all set to launch India's gold quest at Olympics

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's 10m air rifle women's duo of Apurvi Chandela and Elavenil Valarivan and the men's 10m air pistol pair of Saurabh Chaudhary and Abhishek Verma will kick off India's medal hunt at the Tokyo Olympic Games on Saturday, with the four being among the best prospects to bring home medals from the quadrennial showpiece. The experienced Apurvi and the young world No. 1 Elavenil will be up against an extremely tough field, as they look to make it to the top-eight finals field from among 49 shooters in the qualification fray. Saurabh Chaudhary and Abhishek Verma will then take the field with the same intention in 10m air pistol in a 36-man field.

A total of 60 shots are fired in the qualification round in an allotted time of 75 minutes, and scoring is in decimals of 10, with a 10.9 being the perfect shot. Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) shooter,

Yulia Karimova, who is the reigning world champion in the 50m rifle 3-positions event and Chinese Taipei's world No. 4 Lin Ying-Shin will pose a formidable threats to the Indian duo.

In form shooters like Carolyne Mary Tucker of the US, Ziva Dvorsak of Slovenia, Sofia Ceccarilo of Italy, and Eszter Mezaros of Hungary will also pose a strong challenge along with the Chinese duo of Wang Luyao and Yang Qian and strong Korean shooter Eunji Kwon. Generally a score of 630 out of a maximum possible 654 ensures qualification into the finals at this level. The Indian duo has recorded world competition bests of 633 (Apurvi) and 632.7 (Elavenil) respectively.

Apurvi also holds the finals world record in the event with a score of 252.9 to her name.

The finals are a 24-shot affair with eighth place being decided after 12-shots and one shooter being eliminated after every two shots thereafter, till the winner is decided after the 23rd and 24th single shots. In men's 10m

air pistol, Chaudhary and Verma have been by far the two best shooters in the world over the past three years, but the much narrower 36-man field here is fraught with danger, simply because of the presence of some legends of pistol shooting, led by Korean Jongho Jin.

The four-time Olympic champion is also the reigning world champion and will have for company, Beijing Olympic champion Pang Wei of China, the Rio rapid fire pistol champion Christian Reitz of Germany and the Rio defending champion Hoang Xuan Vinh of Vietnam. The Indian duo will also have to contend with the challenges of ROC athlete Artem Chernousov (world No. 3), in-form Iranian Javad Foroughi (world No. 4 and winner of the last two world cups before the Olympics), seasoned Serbian Damir Mikec, recently crowned European champion Juraj Tuzinsky of Slovakia and top Ukrainian shooters Oleh Omelchuk and Pavlo Korostylov among others.

Vinesh Phogat outburst as Oly association denied Physio's accreditation

Budapest | Agencies

Asian Games gold medalist wrestler Vinesh Phogat made an angry outburst through her Twitter handle late on Thursday night, expressing her disappointment at her physiotherapist Poornima Ngomdir not being given accreditation by the Indian Olympic Association despite sending the request long back. "Is it a crime to ask for one Physiotherapist for four women wrestlers when there are instances of one athlete having multiple coaches/ Staff? Where is the balance? We have asked for a Physio long back and not at the last moment as reported. @IOA_Official @PMOIndia @ianuragthakur," read the 26-year-old's tweet citing a picture of a report done by The Times of India on the issue. Vinesh, seen as a gold medal hopeful, will compete in the women's freestyle 53kg category. Her first match is scheduled for August 5 and she will depart for Tokyo from her training base in Budapest on July 26. This will be her second appearance at the Olympics. Vinesh is headed to Tokyo as the No. 1-ranked wrestler in her category. In the 2016 Rio Olympics, Phogat was carried off the mat on a stretcher after suffering a career-threatening knee injury in the quarterfinals against Sun Yanan of China. Since the surgery and rehabilitation, Vinesh has been in fine form, winning the gold in 2018 Commonwealth Games and Asian Games followed by a bronze medal in the 2019 World Championships. Earlier this year, she won the gold medal in the Asian Championships.





'SURVIVING CHALLENGES' SHILPA SHETTY WRITES FIRST INSTA POST AFTER HUSBAND RAJ KUNDRA'S ARREST

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra has shared a cryptic note on social media talking about surviving challenges from a book penned by James Thurber.

The picture shared on social media marks her first post after her husband Raj Kundra's arrest in an alleged porn content controversy. Shilpa posted a chapter from the book on her Instagram story late Thursday. The actress highlighted the quote which read: "The place we need to be is right here, right now."

Not looking anxiously at what has been or what might be but fully aware of what is."

"I take a deep breath, knowing that I'm lucky to be alive. I have survived challenges in the past and will survive challenges in the future. Nothing need distract me from living my life today."

Raj Kundra was sent to police custody till July 23 after being arrested by Mumbai Police on charges of creating and publishing pornographic content. Shilpa got engaged to Raj in 2009. The two tied-the-knot in November the same year. The couple have two children Viaan Raj Kundra, who was born in 2012. They welcomed their daughter in February 2020 via surrogacy.



KARTIK AARYAN SET TO PLAY PILOT IN 'CAPTAIN INDIA'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Kartik Aaryan has been roped in to star in filmmaker Hansal Mehta's next titled "Captain India".

Kartik said: "'Captain India' is inspiring and thrilling in equal measure and it gives me great pride and honour to be a part of such a historic chapter of our country."

The film is produced by Ronnie Screwvala and Harman Baweja and is an action-drama inspired by India's successful rescue missions from a war-torn nation.

"I have immense respect for Hansal sir's body of work and this was the perfect opportunity to collaborate with him," Kartik said.

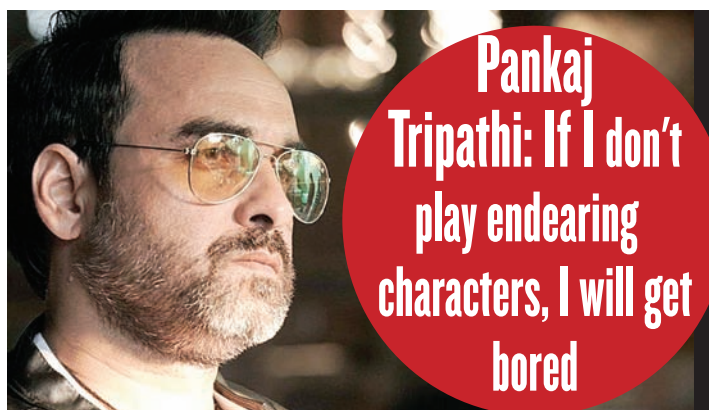
Mehta said the film will revisit a moment where a man goes beyond his own pain.

"'Captain India' which is inspired by true events will revisit a moment in time where a man goes beyond his own pain and suffering to save thousands. I'm happy to collaborate with Ronnie Screwvala and Harman Baweja on the film and I look forward to working with Kartik," the filmmaker said.

Talking about the film, producer Ronnie Screwvala said that "Captain India" is not just a story of one of the biggest humanitarian operations ever but also about the indomitable human spirit, one that rises above failure despite the odds.

Screwvala added: "Hansal Mehta is one of the finest filmmakers of our time and has always beautifully captured the true essence of humane stories. Kartik Aaryan's fans are surely in for a treat as he steps into an all-new territory with 'Captain India'."

Writer and Producer, Harman Baweja said that "Captain India" is the film that strikes the perfect balance of an inspiring human story and an exhilarating cinematic experience.



Pankaj Tripathi: If I don't play endearing characters, I will get bored

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Acclaimed actor Pankaj Tripathi has wowed the audience with his negative characters such as Kaleen Bhaiya from "Mirzapur" and the power-hungry Guruji from "Sacred Games". He has also made many hearts melt with his endearing roles in films such as "Bareilly Ki Barfi" and "Criminal Justice". The actor will again be seen playing an affable character in the upcoming film "Mimi", where Pankaj will be seen going through the thick and thins along with Kriti Sanon's character named Mimi. Is it a conscious choice to make a balance between grey characters and the endearing

ones? Pat came his reply: "No." He added: "I don't do it for balance, that is a coincidence because there are characters like south and north pole. Also, if I don't play endearing characters like in 'Mimi' or 'Bareilly Ki Barfi' then even I will get bored."

The 44-year-old actor performs such roles; it turns out to be like a whiff of fresh air as he looks for change. "So, I even want a little change. I don't do this intentionally. It is a coincidence that I get such films to do and chance to play different colours," he concluded. "Mimi" also stars Sai Tamhankar, Supriya Pathak and Manoj Pahwa. The film streams July 30 onwards on Jio Cinema and Netflix.

JACQUELINE FLAUNTS 'SEXY BACK'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Jacqueline Fernandez set the mercury soaring with a glamorous picture flaunting her "sexy back" on social media. She posted two pictures on Instagram on Friday. In the first one, sporting a short bob haircut, minimum make-up the "Kick" actress is seen covered in a bright red towel. She completes her look with long lashes and orange lip-tint.

In the second, Jacqueline's toned back is towards the camera, captioned: "You.. you're not ugly.. society is #livey-ourlifewow." Speaking about her work, the actress recently featured in the music video "Paani paani" by rapper Badshah and singer Aastha Gill.

Jacqueline has her date diary full as she has several releases coming up.

She has "Ram Setu" and "Bachchan Pandey" coming up with Akshay Kumar, "Kick 2" with Salman Khan, "Cirkus" with Ranveer Singh and the multi-star cast horror comedy "Bhoot Police".



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Jimmy Sheirgill is three web-series old and is looking forward for more opportunities on the platform. He has

Jimmy Sheirgill: Actors now have another option with OTT

played pivotal roles in series like "Rangaaz Phirse", "Your honour" and the recent "Collar Bomb".

"I like the digital space. For actors I think we have got another option now to look at. When an actor is offered a script for a commercial film, we feel that this particular character I have done it before. At the same time we have an option which is

from an OTT platform where the story and character is different," said Jimmy. He added: "There is scope of experimentation or trying something new and interesting. Now, actors can go ahead

and choose whichever is better for them."

With the long form content on web series, Jimmy feels that there is more depth in the characters. The actor shared that he will be doing a project with Pushpendra Nath Misra, director of web series "Taj Mahal 1989".

"Web series have more time to tell the story. The characters are more etched out and have more screen time."

He added: "Both the mediums have their own charm. The OTT has done wonders for us while we were locked down in our house and got entertained by the OTT. So many people got hooked on watching series and different subjects. I have watched a lot of stuff during the pandemic."

ADARSH GOURAV: I WANT TO PLAY A TRACK ATHLETE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Adarsh Gourav says his dream role is to play a track athlete someday as he was one back in school but never a great one. Talking about the same, Adarsh said: "I want to play a track athlete. I used to be a track athlete in school but never a great one. So I want to play a great track athlete and live my unfulfilled dream through cinema."

Adarsh garnered global recognition with his performance in the film "The White Tiger" including a nomination at the 74th British Academy of Films and Television Arts (BAFTA) Awards earlier this year. How has life changed after the film? "Life has been pretty much the same. In terms of the number of opportunities I have been getting, yes it has definitely increased a lot more than what I was getting before 'The White Tiger'. I am getting

to audition a lot more, and speaking to writers and filmmakers that I always had immense respect for," the actor revealed. Talking about the kind of roles he would like to take up next, Adarsh said: "Nothing in particular. I would like to experiment a lot, find unique stories and individuals, and tell stories that engage me."

On the work front, Adarsh is all set for the

release of his upcoming project, the second season of the popular web series "Hostel Daze" where he plays a college student.

Opening up on his character in the show, Adarsh said:

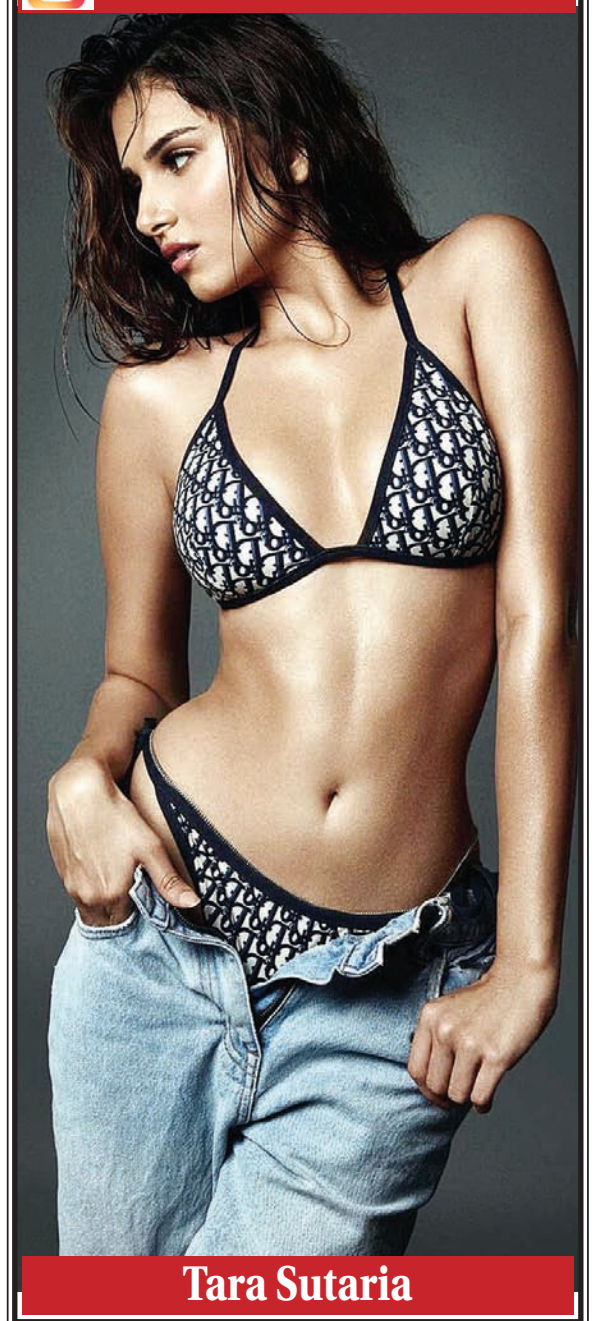
"Ankit Pandey is a civil engineering student and in season 2 he is in the second year. He is naive, endearing and somebody who is constantly seeking validation. He

did not have a lot of friends while growing up and really values the friendship that he has formed in the last couple of years in college."

"People will get to see a very different side of all the characters in the second season because now we have become seniors from freshers. They will see how we have a bond with our juniors and also the dynamics between the characters have changed," he added informing about the upcoming season. Any similarities he shares with his screen character? "Ankit and I are as different as chalk and cheese but yes I treasure my friends as much as he does," shared the actor. The actor said that he has never stayed in a hostel in real life. "I haven't in real life but yes I have lived in a hostel through two seasons of Hostel Daze," he said. "Hostel Daze" season 2 will release on Amazon Prime Video on July 23.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Tara Sutaria