

absolute india

VOL. 6, ISSUE 225, BHOPAL | SUNDAY, JULY 4, 2021 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI



NATION >02
BJP sweeps UP Panchayat polls, SP alleges rigging...



HOLLYWOOD > 06
Priyanka Chopra shares glimpse of her with pet pup...



SPORTS > 07
Record: Mithali becomes top run-getter in...

A REPORT REVEALS THAT FOR MOST INDIANS RESPECTING ALL FAITHS VERY IMPORTANT FOR

BEING AN INDIAN

Eighty-five per cent of Hindus, 78 per cent of both Muslims and Christians as well as 75 per cent of Sikhs agreed with the view that respect for all religions is integral to being Indian, said the report by the US-based Pew Research Center that was based on face-to-face interviews with nearly 30,000 Indians.

ARUL LOUIS | New York

In a resounding endorsement of India's enduring secular values, an extensive report has found that most Indians respect all religions as it is "very important to being truly Indian" and they are all free to practice their religions. The report said there was overwhelming support for the view that "respecting other religions is a very important part of their own religious identity".

The belief that they were "very free" to practice their religion found tremendous support across religions, with 91 per cent of Hindus, 89 per cent of both Muslims and Christians and 82 per cent of Sikhs endorsing it.

But in a discordant note, the report found that for many Hindus, being of the Hindu faith and speaking Hindi were essential to being "truly Indian".

It said that for 64 per cent of Hindus to be truly Indian one had to belong to the religion and for 59 per cent speaking Hindi was essential.

In a sign of weakening caste barriers, Pew said that most Indians, 72 per cent, from other castes said that they would be willing to have a Dalit as a neighbour.



When it comes to marriages, there is still strong opposition to alliances across religious and caste lines.

Only 37 per cent of Christians were against women of their religion marrying members of other religions, and 35 per cent when it came to men having inter-religious

marriages, it said.

When it comes to inter-caste marriages, a majority of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Jains consider stopping them for both men and women a high priority, Pew reported. The report said that in the 2019 national elections, 60 per cent of

"Tolerance is a religious as well as civic value: Indians are united in the view that respecting other religions is a very important part of what it means to be a member of their own religious community, Indians generally feel their country has lived up to one of its post-independence ideals: a society where followers of many religions can live and practice freely."

Pew Research Center, one of the foremost think tanks and polling organisations on religion and society, said that it conducted the interviews in 17 languages across India between late 2019 and before the Covid-19 pandemic struck the next year. Its report based on the polling covers religious beliefs, politics and social issues and summaries of the report were also issued in Hindi and Tamil.

Hindus who subscribed to the view that it was "very important" to be Hindu and to speak Hindi to be truly Indian voted for the BJP, compared to only a third of Hindu voters who felt less strongly about both these aspects of national identity. The report, however, found very large differences between regions on these views of Indianess.

- ▶ 65 per cent of the Hindus who hold those beliefs and voted for the BJP also said that religious diversity was good for the country.
- ▶ There were wide divergences regarding the Partition of India, according to the report: 66 per cent of Sikhs and 48 per cent of Muslims considered it "bad", while only 37 per cent of Hindus and 30 per cent of Christians shared the view. Forty-three per cent of Hindus, 30 per cent of Muslims, 25 per cent of Sikhs and 37 per cent of Christians said it was good, the report added.
- ▶ A larger percentage of Muslims, 80 per cent, than Hindus, 67 per cent want to stop women of their religion marrying outsiders, according to the report, which also found that 76 per cent of Muslims and 65 per cent of Hindus were against their men marrying outside their faith. Among Sikhs, 59 per cent were for stopping inter-religious marriages of their women and 58 per cent for their men, the report said.
- ▶ Overall, 64 per cent of Indians said it is "very important" to stop women in their community from marrying into other castes, while it was 62 per cent when it came to men, the report said, adding that "nearly identical shares" of Dalits and other caste members said that stopping inter-caste marriages is "very important".



Spirit of competition turns barren village into green

▶ SAYAMBACHIWADI IS NOW A MODEL FOR OTHER DROUGHT-HIT VILLAGES WITH VILLAGERS FROM OUTSIDE THE PUNE DISTRICT UNDERTAKING STUDY TOURS.

SUNIL BALASAHEB DHUMAL | Pune

Sayambachiwadi in Baramati tehsil in Pune district, once stricken with drought, is now a picnic spot with a large lake and thriving agriculture. The vision of local elected representatives and aid and expertise from the Paani Foundation has helped transform this village into a water surplus one.

At the epicentre of this transformation is the village lake, spread over 6 acres of land. Manicured lawns slope down the embankment beyond which lies a massive water body in which boating activities were held before the lockdown. Crash guard and drains abutting the asphalted road, fencing, walking track, an open-air gym and benches give this tank bund a plush, well-maintained look.

Located some 60 km from Pune and 30 km from Baramati, the village is spread over 1,403 hectares with a population of 1,800. The village receives moderate rain even during the monsoon and could harvest only the Kharif crop. Post the monsoon, the villagers had to rely on water tankers even to meet their drinking water needs. Four defunct lakes in the village only worsened the issue.

Sayambachiwadi had to shed many inhibitions in order to bring about this change, driven by an outlook of villagers not to be tied down by the vagaries of nature, in general, and the southwest monsoon, in particular.

A gram panchayat decision to participate in the Satyamev Jayate Water Cup organised by the Paani Foundation ushered a turnaround. The competition was hosted annually from 2016 to 2019 and thousands of villagers in Maharashtra took part in it. Shramadaan or donation of labour is the key point of this contest in which the villagers put into practice what they learned in the training.

The idea to pitch their names into the ring came from Sunanda Rajendra Pawar, chairperson, Sharadabai Pawar Girls' College in Malegaon, Baramati. For seven years, NSS students from the college had been undertaking camps in Sayambachiwadi. As part of these annual camps, the students had constructed seven bunds (an earth bank used to regulate the flow of water) in the village from 2011 to 2017.

The efforts have helped the village to improve groundwater levels and now the village is not drought-prone.



TN NAVAL BASE WILL DESTROY DRONES WITHIN 3KM RADIUS

Team Absolute | Chennai

The naval air station, INS Parundu, in Tamil Nadu has warned that it will destroy any drone flying within its 3-km radius. A statement from INS Parundu situated in Uchipuli of Ramanathapuram district on Friday said that there is a prohibition on the flying of non-conventional aerial objects, including remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) or Drones within a 3 km radius of the naval air station.

Ever since China took over the Hambantota port on lease for a period of 99 years with more than 70 per cent of the stakes of the port vested with the China Merchants Port Holdings Company Private Limited (CM Port), Indian defence establishments have been on a high alert.

The Chinese control of Hambantota port, which is hardly 100 miles from Tamil Nadu, has always been a matter of concern for India and given the drone attack in Jammu, the intelligence agencies had given high alert to the Southern Coastal line and hence the statement from INS Parundu. INS Parundu has been on high alert following the unexpected Jammu drone attack.

WOMEN SOLDIERS DEPLOYMENT IN J&K TO IMPROVE INTERFACE WITH PUBLIC

SHEIKH QAYOUM | Srinagar

Indian army deployed women soldiers on Friday at various checkpoints in J&K's Ganderbal district in order to bridge the gap between locals and the security forces.

Colonel R.S. Karakoti, commanding officer of 34 Assam Rifles said the Rifle women of Assam Rifles have been deployed at mobile vehicle check posts in Ganderbal district.

Women soldiers are also known as Rifle women in the area. They were first deployed in Kupwara district in August 2020 after intelligence reports that militants were employing women handlers for narco and weapon smuggling. Colonel Karakoti said the Rifle women have been a force multiplier and they have become the bridge between the locals and the security forces. "We deploy them during other operations as well. They have been able to develop a special relationship between the locals and the security forces," the officer said.



Dead man walking

To remarry wife as he turns 28 again

AZAMGARH (UP) | Agencies

Lal Bihari 'Mritak', the man who made headlines when he fought a long battle to prove he was 'alive', after being declared 'dead' in government records, is in news again.

'Mritak' is now planning to remarry his 56-year-old wife Karmi Devi because it has now 27 years since he turned up alive again. He was declared alive on June 30, 1994.

Mritak has three children--two daughters and one son--all of whom are now married.

Lal Bihari, now 66-years-old, said that he wanted to remarry his wife and draw the attention of the people towards the plight of the 'living dead'.

Lal Bihari is a resident of Amilo village

in Azamgarh district and was officially declared dead in 1975. During his legal battle to regain his identity, he



'Mritak' (deceased) in his name. He even formed a Mritak Sangh to highlight the cases similar to his. Filmmaker Satish Kaushik has made a film 'Kaagaz' on his life and actor Pankaj Tripathi essayed the role of Mritak.



World's third largest cricket stadium to come up in Jaipur

Archana Sharma | Jaipur

The stage is all set for the construction of world's third largest cricket stadium in the Pink City as the Jaipur Development Authority has allotted land to Rajasthan Cricket Association.

Speaking to the media, RCA president Vaibhav Gehlot said, "The stadium to be constructed on around 100 acres of land and will be completed in 2.5 - 3 years with an investment of around Rs 650

crore. The BCCI has given a grant of Rs 100 crore while loan worth Rs 100 crore will be collected by the RCA and others. The new stadium will have two practice grounds, academy, club house hotel and all other state of the art facilities available in all international stadiums.

The first largest stadium -- Narendra Modi Stadium is situated in Ahmedabad while the second largest cricket stadium is situated in Australia's Melbourne.

Earth's cryosphere shrank by 87,000 sq kms per year in last 37 years

The global cryosphere -- all the areas with frozen water on Earth -- shrank by about 87,000 square kilometers per year on average between 1979 and 2016, as a result of climate change, according to a new study.



BEIJING | Agencies

The extent of land covered by frozen water is just as important as its mass because the bright white surface reflects sunlight so effectively, cooling the planet. Changes in the size or location of ice and snow can alter air temperatures, change the sea level, and even affect ocean currents worldwide.

The researchers from Lanzhou University in China calculated the daily extent of the cryosphere and averaged those values to come up with yearly estimates. While the extent of the cryosphere grows and shrinks with the seasons, they found that the average area covered by Earth's cryosphere has contracted

overall since 1979, correlating with rising air temperatures. The new study is published in Earth's Future.

"The cryosphere is one of the most sensitive climate indicators and the first one to demonstrate a changing world," said first author Xiaoping Peng, a physical geographer at Lanzhou University. "Its change in size represents a major global change, rather than a regional or local issue."

The estimates showed that not only was the global cryosphere shrinking but that many regions remained frozen for less time. The average first day of freezing now occurs about 3.6 days later than in 1979, and the ice thaws about 5.7 days earlier.

The shrinkage primarily occurred in the Northern Hemisphere, with a loss of about 102,000 square km each year. Those losses are offset slightly by growth in the Southern Hemisphere, where the cryosphere expanded by about 14,000 square kilometers annually. This growth mainly occurred in the sea ice in the Ross Sea around Antarctica, likely due to patterns of wind and ocean currents and the addition of cold meltwater from Antarctic ice sheets.



BJP SWEEPS UP PANCHAYAT POLLS, SP ALLEGES RIGGING

Lucknow | Agencies

In what appears to be a fantastic political premiere for the BJP ahead of the UP Assembly election early next year, the party has registered a thumping victory by winning 65 out of 75 seats in the Uttar Pradesh Zila panchayat elections.

The Samajwadi Party was able to win only 6 seats at the polls. The Apna Dal won the Sonbhadra seat while the Jansatta Dal, led by independent MLA Raghuraj Pratap Singh or Raja Bhairya, has won the Pratapgarh seat.

The Jaunpur seat was won by Srikala Singh Reddy, wife of former BSP MP Dhananjay Singh.

Chairpersons of 22 zila panchayats out of a total of 75 in Uttar Pradesh had been declared elected unopposed on Tuesday with BJP winning 21 seats and one seat (Etawah) went to Samajwadi Party.

The districts where Zila panchayat chairpersons won unopposed are



Saharanpur, Bahraich, Etawah, Chitrakoot, Agra, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Bulandshahr, Amroha, Moradabad, Lalitpur, Jhansi, Banda, Shravasti, Balrampur, Gonda, Gorakhpur, Mau,

Varanasi, Pilibhit and Shahjahanpur. According to reports, the BJP-supported candidates managed to register victory in Ayodhya and Mathura, the epicentre of Hindutva politics. While in Ayodhya, BJP-backed

candidate Roli Singh defeated SP-backed Indu Sen Yadav, in Mathura, BJP-supported candidate Kisan Singh registered a win against RLD-backed Rajendra Singh Sikarwar.

The BSP did not officially contest the elections and the Congress hit rock bottom and could not win even a single seat.

Following the BJP's victory at the Zila panchayat elections - counting for which was completed on Saturday - the Samajwadi Party workers staged protests outside various collectorate offices in different districts of Uttar Pradesh as the party alleged rigging of elections.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav accused the ruling BJP of using fear and greed to grab the posts of chairpersons of the Zila panchayats. He also alleged that the BJP is using the administration in every district to register fake cases against SP candidates and threatening them. The party urged Governor Anandiben Patel to intervene in this regard.

Youth Cong workers protest against LPG price hike in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian Youth Congress (IYC) workers on Saturday staged a protest outside the Petroleum Ministry in the national capital against a hike of Rs 25.5 per Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinder.

Hundreds of Delhi IYC activists assembled outside the Petroleum Ministry with placards in their hands and raised slogans against the Narendra Modi government.

Speaking to the media, IYC National President Srinivas BV said, "The people of the country are seeking liberation from the 'expensive days' of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government."

Taking a jibe at the BJP government, the IYC leader said the BJP's 'achche din' are now proving to be 'costly din'.

"Poor people are facing the brunt of inflation while buying LPG. The countrymen are compulsorily paying the price of so called 'achche



din' by buying expensive items. They want freedom from such so-called 'achche din', he added.

Srinivas said the people are facing extreme unemployment, economic helplessness and high inflation, the income of 97 per cent families has come down.

"During the current BJP government's tenure, the prices of gas cylinders have increased more than double as compared to the Manmohan Singh government," he added.

THE IYC leader said during the BJP government, the price of domestic gas cylinders has increased by up to Rs 140 in the last six months.

The price of the LPG cylinder has increased by Rs 25.50, with this the price of the cylinder in Delhi has now gone up to Rs 834.50, he added.

At the same time, the price of commercial cylinders has also increased by Rs 76.50. What is the Modi government punishing the public for?, asked Srinivas.

Congress again demands JPC probe into Rafale deal

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day after France ordered a judicial probe into the allegations of graft in 36 Rafale fighter jets deal with India, the Congress on Saturday upped its ante against the Narendra Modi government and demanded Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe.

Addressing a press conference virtually, Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "The scandalous expose of Rafale scam involving corruption, treason, loss to public exchequer has finally been uncovered." He said that Congress and former party chief Rahul Gandhi stand vindicated today. "The French have ordered an investigation into the Rafale scam. On June 14, 2021 French Public Prosecution Services has ordered an investigation for corruption, influence peddling, money laundering, favouritism on the complaint of an NGO," he said.

He said that if the role of former French President Francois Hollande and current



President Emmanuel Macron is being investigated, then why not Indian former Defence Minister and an Indian company can also be investigated. Surjewala pointed out that the French government deleted the anti-corruption clause. "The defects now clearly call for a JPC probe," Surjewala added. The Congress leader's demand came a day after Mediapart.fr, a media outlet in European country said that a French judge has been appointed to lead a judicial investigation into alleged corruption and favouritism in the 7.8 billion euro sale to India of 36 fighter aircrafts.

GOA CRIME BRANCH BEGINS PROBE INTO TRIPLE SUICIDE CASE

Panaji: The Crime Branch of the Goa Police on Saturday started its probe into the suicide of three persons from a family on Tuesday.

"We were handed over the responsibility of the probe by the South Goa district police. We have now begun our investigation," a Crime Branch official said on Saturday. Three persons -- Hulgappa Ambigera (35), his spouse Devamma (28), and his brother Gangappa (29) -- had allegedly committed suicide after returning to their house in Zuarinagar in South Goa district from the Verna police station on Tuesday. The trio had been summoned to the police station in connection with a theft case filed against Devamma by the owner of a house, where she was working as a maid. However, a suicide note left behind at the scene of the crime said that they were being harassed by their extended family members in Karnataka, according to the police.

ED searches in Delhi, UP in alleged conversion case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Days after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) registered a case of money laundering in connection with alleged religious conversion case, the financial probe agency is carrying out searches at six locations in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

According to ED sources, the agency sleuths are carrying out searches at the premises of Mohammad Umar Gautam, arrested in connection with the case in Delhi.

The source said that the agency is also carrying out searches at Gautam's residential and office premises in South Delhi's Jamia area and several locations in Uttar



Pradesh. The source said that searches are on at the office of Islamic Dawah Centre (IDC), premises of Gautam's associate Mufti Qazi Jahangir Qasmi, all located at Jamia Nagar in Delhi. In Uttar Pradesh, the ED has conducted searches at offices of Al Hassan Education and Welfare Foundation and Guidance Education and

Welfare Society located in Lucknow. The source said that these organisations are run by Gautam and have been instrumental in carrying out illegal conversions.

Several incriminating documents have been seized during searches which reveal the large-scale conversion racket run by accused Gautam and his organisa-

tions all over India. The documents also reveal several crores of rupees of foreign funding received by the accused organisations for the purpose of illegal conversions, the source added.

The ED has registered a case of money laundering on the basis of the FIR registered by the ATS into the alleged conversion racket with its links from foreign countries.

According to ED officials, the agency has also named Delhi residents -- Qasmi and Gautam -- as accused in the case, who were arrested by the ATS.

The ED is looking into foreign funding and money laundering angles in this case.

Protesting AAP workers face water cannons near Punjab CM's house

Team Absolute | Chandigarh

The police on Saturday used water cannons to disperse the workers of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) who were protesting near Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's farmhouse near here against the statewide power outages.

Led by Punjab AAP chief Bhagwant Mann, thousands of party workers gathered and started marching towards the farmhouse in Siswan, raising slogans.

Facing severe electricity crisis, the Punjab government curtailed timings of government offices from Friday, besides cutting down on power supply to high energy consuming industries with immediate effect to save crops and



ease the domestic power situation. AAP MLA and Youth Wing state president Gurmeet Singh Meht Hayer said the main cause for the high cost and shortage of power is the wrong power purchase agreements reached by the previous (Parkash Singh) Badal government with the private thermal plants, which were not cancelled by the present Congress government. "Just like the Badals, the Amarinder Singh government is also taking bribes from the power companies," he alleged. The protest came days after AAP's national convener Arvind Kejriwal promised free electricity up to 300 units and round-the-clock power supply in Punjab if the party wins the Assembly elections slated early next year.

Nitish became CM by 'passing exam in 3rd division': Lalu

Patna | Agencies

Taking a jibe at Nitish Kumar, RJD chief Lalu Prasad said the JD-U leader "passed examination with a third division" and went on to become the chief minister of Bihar. The remark was a reference to the seats won by the Janata Dal-United (JD-U) in the 2020 Bihar Assembly election.

Nitish Kumar-led JD-U managed to bag only 40 seats in the last year's Assembly election, and finished with a third position. The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) got 75 seats while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured 74 seats.

"Nitish became chief minister of Bihar after putting morality and mandate aside... its result is now coming in the form of their own legislators and ministers levelling corruption charges on the government," Lalu Prasad said in a tweet. Lalu's statement has come at a



time when Nitish Kumar is facing criticism that officialdom is ruling in the government and public representatives are ignored.

He was referring to Madan Sahani, the social welfare minister in the Nitish Kumar-led government, who offered to resign from the post, and also levelled serious allegations on his department's principal secretary Atul Prasad.

2ND TIME IN A WEEK, MAHA NOTCHES RECORD COVID JOBS

Mumbai: For the second time in one week, Maharashtra broke its own national record in daily Covid vaccinations by notching 796,738 jobs, a top official said here on Saturday. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Health Minister Rajesh Tope lauded the health department and medical teams across the state for their dedication which resulted in the record-breaking vaccination figures on Saturday. Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Pradeep Vyas said that by 8 pm on Saturday, the state had administered 796,738 Covid doses for the day. The inoculation drive was still in progress at many centres and the state could cross the 8 lakh mark later tonight, he said. This is the highest since the last record of 738,704 vaccination doses registered last Saturday (June 26), Vyas said. By Saturday evening, the state maintained the top position on the Covid vaccination dashboard, clocking 3,38,57,372 jobs till date, comprising both first and second doses, to the state's eligible adult population and other categories as per the Centre's norms.

Sayed Moziz Imam Zaidi | New Delhi | New Delhi

The tussle in the Punjab Congress is far from over with Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and Navjot Singh Sidhu still at loggerheads and the latter is not leaving any stone unturned to target the Chief Minister, though interventions from the Gandhis have been futile and both sides are flexing their muscles. The latest has been the issue of electricity in which Sidhu targeted the Chief Minister and with counter offensive after the allegation that Sidhu himself has been a defaulter and has not paid his bills.

Sidhu mocked his own government in Punjab over power outages and asked the government to follow the AAP's Delhi model of extending subsidies to generation companies. The disgruntled Punjab Congress leader met Priyanka and Rahul separately on Wednesday, and there is a speculation that Priyanka Gandhi has suggested that Sidhu be made Punjab Congress chief, but Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and some of the other factions in the party are not accepting this formula. Sources said that Punjab Congress leaders may accept Sidhu as the working president, but not as a full-fledged state unit chief as the Chief Minister is keen on having a non-Sikh face as the state Congress president. But Amarinder Singh is not going to give up as he called the MLAs supporting him for lunch in Chandigarh on Thursday and is rallying support for him and has been trying to scuttle every move of Sidhu. The move has reportedly upset the party high command, which sees it as a show of strength, especially when the panel formed



by the Congress to look into the Punjab issue has said that there is no question of removing the Chief Minister. Sidhu is silent about what transpired during his meetings with Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi on Wednesday, neither did the Congress make any official statement to placate both parties.

Freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma held in money laundering case



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said that it has arrested freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma in connection with money laundering case.

He was produced before a Delhi court, which sent him to seven days ED custody.

An ED official said that Sharma was arrested on July 1. The ED case of money laundering is based on the FIR and charge sheet filed by Delhi Police against Sharma under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code, and the Official Secrets Act.

The official said that during probe it was revealed that Sharma had supplied "confi-

dential and sensitive" information to Chinese Intelligence officers, in exchange for remuneration thereby compromising the security and national interests of India. The official said that probe further revealed that cash for remuneration of Sharma and other unknown persons was being generated through hawala means by Mahipalpur based shell companies that were run by Chinese nationals namely Zhang Cheng a.k.a. Suraj, Zhang Lixia a.k.a. Usha and Quing Shi along with a Nepali national Sher Singh a.k.a. Raj Bohara.

He said that apart from cash, huge transactions were made with various Chinese

companies and some other trading companies in India which are being examined.

CHANGE OF NAME

My old name was Balachandran Nair Puthanpurayil Raghvan Nair. I have changed my name. My new name is Balachandran Nair S/o Chali Kuttan Raghvan Nair. I will be known by my new name BALACHANDRAN NAIR. Address- H.No.368, F-1, B-Sector, Indravihar Colony, Airport Road, Bhopal (MP).

CHANGE OF NAME

My old name was Asha Khilrani D/o Ishwar Lal Khilrani. I have changed my name. My new name is Manya Bhamhani. I will be known by my new name MANYA BHAMBHANI. Address- 174, 9-B, Saket Nagar, Bhopal (MP).

absolute india

VOL. 6, ISSUE 225, BHOPAL | SUNDAY, JULY 4, 2021 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI

“The most serious failure of leadership is the failure to foresee.”



Robert K. Greenleaf

MAJOR THIRD WAVE OF COVID-19 IN INDIA HIGHLY UNLIKELY, SAYS IIT RESEARCH

NEWS OF RELIEF

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Researchers from Indian Institutes of Technology in Kanpur and Hyderabad have jointly developed a mathematical projection model by Covid-19-Sutra, has predicted that a major third wave of the pandemic in India is highly unlikely.

The researchers assumed that the next wave will not start before August this year as a new mutant takes at least a couple of months to spread over a large region and people are just coming out of a bad second wave, and are expected to be cautious for at least another couple of months. The researchers also projected that by November this year, only 75% of the adult population may get vaccinated due to vaccine hesitancy. Their work also highlighted that while infected persons develop immunity; however, for some of them it does not last long



and evidence from last year suggests that between 5-20% of infected people lose immunity within eight months. The researchers noted that with the new delta variant of SARS CoV 2 spreading in the last few months, there are indications that immunity

loss is higher and some, as yet informal, estimates put it at nearly 40%. The more recent delta plus variant is believed to cause even higher immunity loss and the researchers associated with the project estimated it to be around 50%.

WHAT WILL BE THE SCENARIO?

- ▶ The model led by IIT Kanpur predicts that there could be up to 2 lakh daily new infections between October and November this year, in the worst-case scenario, assuming that 50% of infected persons lose immunity after three months and the remaining stay immune.
- ▶ Other assumptions for this scenario is that 25% become immune one month after first vaccine shot, another 25% one month after second shot and a fresh mutant arrives by August-end which will raise the contact rate to 0.5.
- ▶ In the intermediate scenario, there could be up to 75,000 daily Covid-19 cases, assuming that 50% infected persons lose immunity after three months while remaining stay immune.
- ▶ This scenario also assumes that 25% become immune one month after the first vaccine shot, another 25% one month after the second shot and a new mutant comes up leading to the maximum contact rate of 0.4.
- ▶ On the other hand, in the best-case scenario, the level of daily new cases will stay as low as they are now -- at under 50,000 -- and this assumes that 40% of infected persons lose immunity after three months and 30% become immune one month after first vaccine shot, and another 30% one month after second shot.
- ▶ For this possible scenario, no new mutant will have to emerge and the contact rate will need to stay at 0.4.

IAF chief differs with CDS over force's role in theatre command system



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian Air Force (IAF) chief, Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria, has expressed his reservation over terming the air force as a supporting arm in the proposed theatre command system, which is intended to bring better synergy between the three branches of the armed forces. Even IAF veterans have come out in support of Bhadauria, terming Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat talk

about the IAF's air defence charter as well as its role as a supporting arm to the ground forces as 'controversial'. Speaking at a webinar organised by a defence think-tank on Friday, Rawat had termed the Air Force as a supporting arm, while Bhadauria later said: "It is not". In the same webinar, the IAF chief said that his service was not of a supporting role. "It is not for a supporting role alone. Airpower has a huge role to play in any of the integrated

battle areas and it is not an issue of support alone. And, there are a whole lot of things in any air plan. Those are the issues that are under discussion," Bhadauria said. He also said that the formation of the theatre command is much more complex. "The air force is for the formation of theatre commands. But the issue we have raised is about how we should do it. It is the most important reform that has an impact on war fighting," the officer said. He clarified that every service has its own doctrine, and one needs to have the best knowledge of how to employ the capabilities and capacities to get the best results. Theatrisation is one of the charters of the Chief of Defence Staff's plans to integrate the forces into five theatre commands -- air defence, maritime theatre, eastern theatre, western theatre and the northern theatre command.

AIR FORCE TO BE PART OF THEATRE COMMANDS: BIPIN RAWAT



The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Bipin Rawat, said on Friday that the air force has to be there to assist the ground forces and will be part of theatre commands, even while maintaining its exclusive mandate. Rawat had said that the air force is required to provide support to the ground forces. "Do not forget, the air force continues to remain a supporting arm to the armed forces just as the artillery or engineers support the combatant arms in the army," the CDS had said. They have an adequate charter of supporting the ground forces in times of war, he had said. "Navy too requires air support," the Chief of Defence Staff had said.

Pushkar Singh Dhami is new Uttarakhand CM

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Pushkar Singh Dhami has been elected as the new chief minister of Uttarakhand. Dhami, a two-time MLA, was elected new chief minister of the hilly state in a meeting of the BJP's legislative party in Dehradun. The 45-year-old Khatima constituency MLA from the in Udham Singh Nagar district. He has also served as president of BJP youth wing president



in Uttarakhand for two terms. Tirath Singh Rawat late Friday submitted his resignation to Governor Baby Rani Maurya. Rawat, as per the rules, needed to be sworn in as an elected MLA within six months of taking over as the Chief Minister. The Election Commission has decided not to hold any election due to the Covid pandemic. Tirath Singh Rawat was sworn in as Uttarakhand's Chief Minister on March 10 replacing Trivendra Singh Rawat. Saffron camp in Uttarakhand believes that the move will strengthen party in the Kumaon region and among youths.

Covaxin show efficacy of 77.8% against Covid



Efficacy analysis demonstrates Covaxin to be 77.8 per cent effective against symptomatic COVID-19, through evaluation of 130 confirmed cases, with 24 observed in the vaccine group versus 106 in the placebo group. Bharat Biotech has concluded final analysis for Covaxin efficacy from Phase 3 clinical trials. Efficacy analysis demonstrates Covaxin to be 93.4 per cent effective against severe symptomatic COVID-19. Safety analysis demonstrates adverse events reported were similar to placebo, with 12 per cent of subjects experiencing commonly known side effects and less than 0.5 per cent of subjects feeling serious adverse events. The data demonstrates 63.6 per cent protection against asymptomatic COVID-19 and efficacy data demonstrates 65.2 per cent protection against the SARS-CoV-2, B.1.617.2 Delta variant. Bharat Biotech on Saturday announced safety and efficacy analysis data from Phase III clinical trials of Covaxin, a whole virion inactivated vaccine against SARS-CoV2, was developed in partnership with ICMR and NIV Pune.

J&J'S ONE SHOT COVID VAX EFFECTIVE AGAINST DELTA VARIANT

Washington: The single dose Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine has shown strong neutralising antibody activity against the Delta (B16172) variant, with immunity lasting at least eight months, according to results of phase-III trials. The vaccine is 85 per cent effective against severe/critical disease and demonstrated protection against hospitalisation and death from the deadly coronavirus. The phase-III trials, showed the vaccine was consistently effective across all regions studied globally. It also generated neutralising antibodies against a range of other SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern, which increased over time, such as the Gamma (P1) variants and the Alpha (B117), Epsilon (B1429), Kappa (B16171) and D614G variants, as well as the original SARS-CoV-2 strain.



DMA challenges Ramdev's plea against FIRs in SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Medical Association (DMA) has moved the Supreme Court against yoga guru Ramdevs plea seeking a stay on the proceedings against him in connection with the multiple FIRs lodged over his alleged remarks against the use of allopathic medicines during the Covid-19 pandemic. DMA has called Ramdev a "businessman clad as a 'yog guru'" and claimed that he does not have any degree or licence to practice Ayurveda and prescribe medicines. The medical body contended that Ramdev has insulted allopathy and "instigated" people to disregard Covid vaccines and treatment protocols. On June 30, a bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana had



asked Ramdev to bring on record original version of his statement allegedly made against the use of allopathic medicine for treating Covid patients. The DMA claimed that Patanjali has earned over Rs 1,000 crore by selling Coronil kits, which were not approved by the medical bodies. The plea contended that Ramdev referred the modern medical system i.e. allopathic science as "Tamasha" and "Stupid Science".

In final stages of appointing resident grievance officer, Twitter tells Delhi HC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

US microblogging and social networking service Twitter has informed the Delhi High Court that it is in the final stages of appointing a resident grievance officer in India. In a reply submitted to the Delhi High Court, Twitter said that even before steps were taken to formalise the appointment of a grievance officer in India, the interim grievance officer



had withdrawn his candidature on June 21. "The answering respondent is in the final stages of appointing

a replacement while in the meanwhile the grievances of the Indian users are being addressed by the grievance officer," the microblogging platform said in its reply. Appointing a resident grievance officer is one of several norms which Twitter and other social media platforms operating in India have to follow under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

Repeal, not modify 3 farm laws: Maha farmers' body to MVA govt

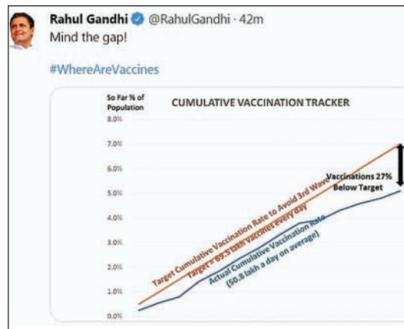
Team Absolute | Mumbai

The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee on Saturday appealed to the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra to ensure that the three central farm laws are fully repealed and not accepted with any modifications. AIKSCC President Ashok Dhawale and other AIKSCC leaders said in a joint statement that the Maharashtra government is trying to bring the new farm laws in the state by making certain changes to the three controversial laws enacted by the Centre last year. "However, making amendments to the draft of the central laws will not change the purpose behind them nor the 'anti-farmer' and corporate character of these laws," said Dhawale. Keeping in mind the sentiments and expectations of the farmers' groups across India, the state government should not rush to enact these laws on the lines of the Centre since the



farmers have demanded a complete repeal of the laws. Accordingly, there was no need for the state government to move hurriedly in the matter especially since the seven-month-long farmers' agitation is still underway and the laws Maharashtra plans to bring have not been adequately discussed in the public domain, they pointed out. "In the interest of Maharashtra farmers, we demand that the state government take an unequivocal stand on the issue by passing a resolution in the Legislature asking the Centre to revoke the three disputed farm laws, and enact a central law that gives a fair guarantee to agriculture produce," the signatories said.

Rahul again targets govt vax policy



#Wherearevaccines. He also attached a graphics of cumulative vaccination tracker to back his claims. Earlier on Friday, Rahul Gandhi had said that July has come but vaccines have not, drawing a sharp rebuttal from the BJP. The Congress leader has been critical of the government over its Covid vaccination policy.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Saturday once again targeted the government over its vaccination policy, saying "mind the gap". In a tweet, the Congress leader said, "Mind the gap." He tweeted with the hashtag

Scientists develops nano-DAP fertiliser that boosts agronomic use efficiency

- The development can potentially reduce the volumes of fertiliser usage, while increasing phosphate intake capacity of seedlings, a UoH release stated.
- Since these resources are limited in availability, and also unevenly distributed globally, nano-fertilisers can make a huge difference in cutting down the volumes of fertilisers used.

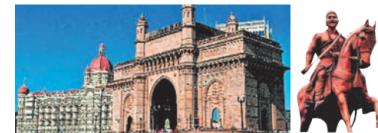
Hyderabad | Agencies

A team of material scientists and plant biologists from the University of Hyderabad (UoH) and International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI), have developed an industrially viable dry method to generate chemically stable nano-diammonium phosphate (n-DAP) fertiliser that is around 5,000 times smaller in size. After developing it, the team, led by Dr Rahul



Kumar, tested the nano fertiliser (n-DAP) as well as the conventional granular fertiliser (c-DAP), on tomato and wheat seedlings. The results demonstrated an extraordinary superiority of nano-DAP fertiliser over the

conventional granular DAP (c-DAP). In the lab-scale experiments, the reduced quantity of nano-DAP fertiliser input than c-DAP promoted the early seedlings growth and development in both crops. One of the factors that contributed to the enhanced crop productivity during the green revolution and afterward is the application of chemical fertilisers such as Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium. However, with the excessive use of chemicals, soil quality has been adversely affected over the decades.



Maharashtra Assembly Monsoon Session:

OPP LIKELY TO CORNER GOVT ON QUOTAS, ED PROBE AGAINST DESHMUKH

The monsoon session of the state legislature is scheduled to be held for only two days- July 5 and 6- in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Enforcement Directorate's move to attach a sugar mill linked to Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and its probe into a money laundering case related to former state Home minister Anil Deshmukh are some of the issues the opposition BJP might raise in the next week's monsoon session to corner the Shiv Sena-led MVA government, which is also facing the heat from organisations of Marathas and OBCs on the sensitive issue of quotas.

The monsoon session of the state legislature is scheduled to be held for only two days- July 5 and 6- in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and fear of a possible third wave of the pandemic.

Deshmukh, a senior NCP leader,

is also facing a CBI probe into allegations of an "extortion racket" raised against him by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh.

The ED has issued a fresh summons asking Deshmukh to appear before it in Mumbai on July 5 in connection with the money laundering case.

The BJP had also criticised the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government of the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress over the two-day duration of the session, alleging the government was avoiding to face tough questions citing the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the Deshmukh issue is still hot, the attachment of a sugar mill related to Ajit Pawar by the ED in connection with the alleged Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) scam has given fresh ammunition to the Opposition.

The BJP had walked out of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting last month over the short duration of the monsoon session where the only passage of bills and supplementary demands will be allowed without a question hour

and calling attention.

Recently, Maharashtra Governor BS Koshiyari had written to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to take a call on the issues raised by Leader of Opposition in the state assembly Devendra Fadnis who had sought the extension of the duration of the session and holding of the election of the Assembly Speaker.

In his reply, Thackeray justified the short duration of the session citing the pandemic and the threat of a possible third wave along with the delta plus variant.

The chief minister had said the health of the people and the elected representatives was the priority of his government. Thackeray was, however, non-committal on holding the election of Speaker during the session despite the Congress in the favour of the election.

A senior Congress leader had said a final decision on the schedule for Speaker's elections can be decided only after RT-PCR test reports of all the MLAs are received.

The Sena and the NCP had said the MVA candidate for the Speaker's post will win with a bigger margin than in November 2019 when the

MVA won the floor test with 169 votes in the 288-member House.

During the budget session held in February, the BJP had tried to corner the Thackeray government on the recovery of an explosives-laden SUV from outside the south Mumbai residence of industrialist Mukesh Ambani and the subsequent murder of Thane-based businessman Mansukh Hiran.

Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh had alleged that then home minister Anil Deshmukh had asked some Mumbai police officers, including Sachin Waze, to collect Rs 100 crore from bars and restaurants in Mumbai per month.

Deshmukh resigned in April after the high court ordered a CBI probe.

He had denied the corruption allegations.

Other issues the Opposition might raise to put the government on the mat are quashing of the quota in jobs and education for Marathas and of OBCs in local bodies by the Supreme Court.

The BJP blames the state government for the rulings given by the SC in these sensitive issues.

ED summons Anil Deshmukh for questioning on July 5

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has once again summoned former Maharashtra Home Minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Anil Deshmukh for questioning on July 5 in connection with the alleged bribery charges. This is the third summon to Deshmukh in a week.

An ED source related to probe said that the financial probe agency has summoned Deshmukh to record his statement on July 5.

Deshmukh had earlier skipped two summons of the ED in the case.

On June 29, Deshmukh skipped the second summon citing Covid pandemic and said that he was ready to join the probe through any "video or audio" medium.

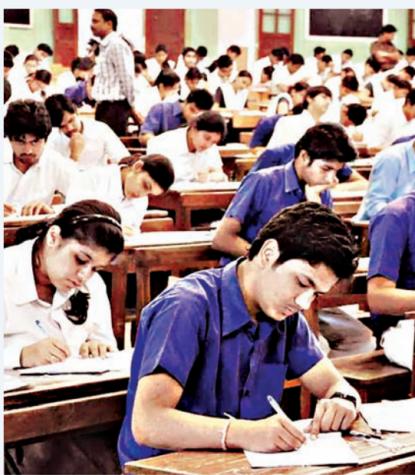
Deshmukh had skipped the ED's first summons last week also following searches at his residence in Nagpur. He had sought more time to appear before the financial probe agency. The NCP leader also said that he would furnish all information and documents sought by the ED after the agency provided him a copy of the Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) filed by it in the case. He further mentioned that the ED summons "do not clarify" the purpose of his personal appearance before it.

On June 26, the ED arrested Deshmukh's personal secretary Sanjeev Palande and personal assistant Kundan Shinde in connection with an alleged 'hafta' case. In its remand copy of the two officials of Deshmukh, the ED said that over Rs 4 crore collected from bar owners between December 2020 and February 2021 was routed to Deshmukh's charitable trust in Nagpur, through four shell companies in



Delhi. Deshmukh (72), is facing an ED investigation on the basis of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) case as the fallout of the allegations made in a letter penned by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, who is now the Commandant-General of Home Guards. Singh had alleged in his letter to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray in March that Deshmukh had fixed a collection target of Rs 100 crore per month for sacked assistant police inspector Sachin Vaze, who was the then head of the Crime Intelligence Unit of the elite Crime Branch-CID of the Mumbai Police. Thereafter, Singh had approached the Supreme Court which directed him to go to Bombay High Court where the CBI was asked to conduct a preliminary enquiry. Meanwhile, Vaze was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for the twin cases of planting of an SUV Scorpio with 20 gelatin sticks and a threat note near Antilia, the home of Reliance Industries Ltd Chairman Mukesh Ambani, followed by the murder of Thane-based owner of the SUV, Mansukh Hiran.

MAHARASHTRA BOARD HSC CLASS 12 EVALUATION SCHEME RELEASED



Mumbai: Class 12 or HSC students of Maharashtra will be promoted taking into consideration their performance in college-based assessments of Class 12, and Class 11, and the three best performing subjects of Class 10 or HSC final exams.

Class 12 or HSC students of Maharashtra will be promoted taking into consideration their performance in college-based assessments of Class 12, and Class 11, and the three best performing subjects of Class 10 or SSC final exams, School Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad said on July 2. Board exams for these students were cancelled earlier and the minister announced the detailed assessment scheme.

"After several rounds of consultations with various stakeholders, we have finalised the assessment mode and the policy for the tabulation of marks for Std.12th HSC board students. Given the pandemic situation, the state board is permitted to pass all students," Gaikwad tweeted.

"It is no doubt an ad-hoc arrangement but one that attempts to capture the spirit of continuous assessments using credible data points. It also offers some semblance of 'normal times', with computation of Std.10th,11th marks based on assessments held during pre-Covid times," Gaikwad added.

For the practical component, marks will be awarded based on the Maharashtra board's existing policy.

In the theory portion, 40 per cent of weightage will be from exams held in Class 12. These exams can be unit tests, first-semester exams, or practice exams. Marks of Class 11 and the average of the best three performing subjects of HSC exam will have 30 per cent weightage each.

"Any candidate who is not satisfied with the marks allotted can appear in the next couple of examinations for improvement in scores to be conducted by the board," Gaikwad added.

"Maharashtra has been pushing for an #UniformAssessment formula across India for Std 12th. Opting for an evaluation method similar to the one devised by central education boards will certainly help," the minister said. result committee, headed by the principal and comprising six teachers, will be responsible for finalisation of results and safekeeping of records, the minister has informed. The same method of evaluation will be used for students who were to appear for minimum competency vocational courses, bifocal vocational courses and courses aligned with the National Skills Qualification Framework, the Maharashtra school education minister said.

For private and repeater students and those who were to appear for exams of isolated subjects, separate assessment plans have been prepared.

For improvement students, the cancelled board exam of 2021 won't be counted as a missed opportunity, and they can still avail their eligible number of attempts, Varsha Gaikwad said. "Colleges are requested to meet the timelines for various activities to allow the board to declare results in a timely manner. The board will organise webinars, a timely FAQs & set up helplines to give colleges, teachers a

India's first hospital with 4 robotic surgical systems opened in Pune

Team Absolute | Pune

Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar inaugurated the country's first super specialty hospital of the Lokmanya Group having four robotic surgical systems and other state-of-the-art advanced forms of treatment, an official said here on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, Pawar said that Pune, which is already famous for its IT sector and education, now also has a reputation for highly advanced healthcare and medical services.

"During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Pune medical fraternity contributed a lot to control it. We need many more such hospitals to help patients lead a healthy life, reduce mortality and morbidity rates. We appreciate Narendra Vaidya and his entire team for this well-equipped hospital with all essential facilities and cutting-edge technology for various ailments," said Pawar.

The Lokmanya Hospital for Special Surgery (LHSS) is also the Lokmanya Group's 5th super specialty hospital in the city and has 4 robotic-assisted joint replacement systems renowned interna-



tionally -- Rosa, Navio, Cori and Brainlab, said Group Managing Director Narendra

Vaidya, a noted robotic joint replacement surgeon.

"We need newer and advanced technologies to enable patients get back on their feet quickly. Pune and its surroundings are developing at a rapid pace and the Lokmanya Group has brought high-quality medical care to the local community," Vaidya, who pioneered robotic-assisted technology in India five years ago, told IANS. Lokmanya Group Director, Meetal Vaidya, said the hospital will conduct health awareness camps for early detection of various diseases among local communities and societies. "Since many people avoid travelling long distances for treatment, we have also started super specialty OPDs in Nashik, Jalgaon, Aurangabad, Sangli, Satara, Karad and Solapur, with more cities to be added soon to provide world-class medical services," said Meetal Vaidya. Spread across over 47,000 sq ft area, the 104-bed hospital has 20 ICU beds, 9 modular operation theaters, and 4 robotic-assisted technology for joint replacement, minimally invasive surgery, sports medicine department, comprehensive spine treatment, foot and ankle, cosmetic and reconstruction, oncology, general and laparoscopic surgeries, dental and ophthalmology, among other departments.

Maharashtra Govt Mulling Resumption of Classes at Medical Colleges: Ajit Pawar

Pawar said he is going to have a meeting with the chief minister over the issue and Medical Education Minister Amit Deshmukh will also be consulted.

Team Absolute | Pune

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said the state government is thinking of resuming classes at medical colleges on the condition that students, teaching and non-teaching staff should have taken both doses of COVID-19 vaccine. Speaking to reporters in Pune, Pawar said the decision to resume classes at medical colleges is being taken to ensure that the state does not face any shortage of doctors in the future.

"We are thinking of taking a deci-

sion to allow classes to resume at medical colleges, both government and private. The only condition is that students, teaching and non-teaching staff should have taken both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine," the deputy chief minister said. Every year, thousands of doctors pass out of medical colleges, and if classes are not conducted, new medical professionals will not pass out, causing a shortage, he said.

Pawar said he is going to have a meeting with the chief minister over the issue and Medical Education Minister Amit Deshmukh will also be

consulted. Speaking about the restrictions in Pune, Pawar, who is also the guardian minister of the district, said considering the current positivity rate, Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad and Pune rural will continue to be in level three of the state government's five-level plan to ease COVID-19 curbs.

Pawar further since the preparations for Wari processions are currently underway, around 306 devotees, who were supposed to take part in the event, underwent RT-PCR tests. Of 306 devotees, 23 tested positive for COVID-19, and all asymptomatic persons have been shifted to a COVID-19

centre in Mhalunge area, he said. Speaking about a meeting called by him in relation to some issues, including the merger of 23 villages in the Pune Municipal Corporation, where Mayor Murlidhar Mohol was absent, Pawar said there is some misunderstanding. "Being the first citizen of the city, the mayor was invited, but news reports said that he was not invited. I have spoken to him. There was some misunderstanding. I have given standing instructions that for any such meeting involving civic administrations, the mayor must be invited," he said.

Ajit Pawar denies involvement in Jarandeshwar sugar factory case

"The allegations levelled against me are politically motivated. The Jarandeshwar matter has already been probed by various agencies but nothing has come out of it. The issue is being deliberately politicised, putting the future of many workers at stake. We are taking legal advice in the matter," said Ajit Pawar.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Couple of days after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) slapped attachment orders on the Jarandeshwar cooperative sugar factory in Satara, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar denied that he or his wife Sunetra were involved in any manner with the matter.

Speaking to media-persons here, the

Deputy CM said that the sugar factory was sold as per the directions of the Bombay High Court and he was not connected in any manner with Guru Commodity Services Pvt Ltd, which won the bidding process to take over the factory.

The ED had on Thursday slapped attachment orders on properties worth around Rs 65 crore of the Jarandeshwar Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana (JSSK), including its land, buildings, plant and machinery, at Chimangaon in Satara, as part of its probe into the alleged scam in the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB).

"The allegations levelled against me are politically motivated. The Jarandeshwar matter has already been probed by various agencies but nothing has come out of it. The issue is being deliberately politicised, putting



conducted in the matter. You're saying it's a scam. Please show me where it (scam) is," added Ajit Pawar, who is the nephew of Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar.

He added that the BVG Group had asked Guru Commodities to run the 'sick' factory, but the former incurred a Rs 5 crore loss in their first year of operations.

the future of many workers at stake. We are taking legal advice in the matter," said Ajit Pawar. "The ED has a right to conduct an enquiry. Earlier, the state CID and ACB had probed the matter, while the EOW probe is on. Even a judicial probe was

Accordingly, the company was taken over by one of Ajit Pawar's relatives, Rajendra Ghadge. It was later expanded and a loan was taken for the project and it is being repaid, he added. The assets of JSSK are owned by Guru Commodity Services Pvt Ltd, and leased to Jarandeshwar Sugar Mills Pvt Ltd in which Sparkling Soil Pvt Ltd (SSPL) holds majority shares. During the ED investigation, it emerged that SSPL was linked to Ajit Pawar and his wife Sunetra, and the MSCB-conducted auction of JSSK in 2010 was done at undervalued prices without adhering to the due procedures.

At that time, Ajit Pawar was one of the prominent and influential MSCB board members, the ED said.

The ED contended that Guru Commodity Services was a 'dummy company' deployed to acquire the JSSK, which was actually under the control of the JSMP.

The JSSK was later used as a vehicle by JSMP to get a Rs 700 crore loan from the Pune District Central Cooperative Bank and others from 2010 till date.



CM dedicates 55 godowns and lays 144 foundation stones

COOPERATIVES HAS CAPACITY TO REBUILD: CM SS CHOUHAN

Programme "Better rebuilding through cooperatives" organised on International Cooperatives Day

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that there is immense potential in cooperatives. Instead of me, the feeling of us is cooperative. Cooperative is the feeling that let all work together and for the good of all and our good is in the good of all.



established in 1904 at Sehora, Jabalpur. Successful efforts have been made in the field of cooperatives in the state. Primary cooperative societies are the biggest support of farmers for fertilisers and seeds.

Madhya Pradesh has also made its mark. The forest produce and herbs of the state have many possibilities including Malwa Fresh brand for oranges, Neemuch's garlic, Burhanpur's bananas, Amarkantak's Gul Bakawali, Dindori's Kodo-Kutki.

ducted under cooperatives should not be misused. Continuous monitoring and vigilance is essential. Many cases of plot grabbing have come to the fore in the house construction societies formed on the principle of cooperative.

Chief Minister reviews the situation of Corona

DO MAXIMUM TESTS, ISOLATE, DO CONTACT TRACING, CREATE MICRO-CONTAINMENT ZONES: CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that daily 33 new cases have come up in the state, but after that 38, then 40 and today 43 new cases have come. Although these are very few, we have to be fully alert and careful.



Iqbal Singh Bains, Health Commissioner Akash Tripathi and others were present in the meeting. In the review of Indore district, it was found that corona infection has been found in people coming from other states in the district.

that the patients who do not have enough isolation space at home, they should be kept in the Covid Care Centre. In the review of Betul district, it was found that there were 0 cases, 5 on 01 July and 3 cases have come today.

Tiger reserves of State to remain closed for 3 months

Though the parks will remain closed, the buffer zones will be open for tourism activities, informed the officer. The chief conservator of forest (wildlife), Alok Kumar said "The core areas of the six tiger reserves have been closed for three months. However, the buffer areas of the reserves will remain open for tourism activities. The core area will reopen on October 1."

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The famous six tiger reserves of the state have been shut down for three months due to the monsoon season. It was announced that the Kanha Tiger Reserve, Bandhavgarh National Park, Satpura Tiger Reserve, Pench National Park, Panna National Park and Sanjay-Dubri Tiger Reserve will remain shut for three months.



October 1."He further said that the tiger reserves have been shut as monsoons are the breeding season for tigers. Also during the monsoons, the reserve pathways become unmotorable due to heavy rains.

- MP is home to:
• Kanha Tiger Reserve
• Pench Tiger Reserve
• Panna Tiger Reserve
• Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve
• Satpuda Tiger Reserve
• Sanjay-Dubri Tiger Reserve

number of big cats in the country which is 526. The All India Tiger Estimation Report 2018 recorded 2967 tigers in India. Kanha Tiger Reserve here is the largest national park with a large population of big cats.

NIFT Bhopal official accused of sexual harassment

Bhopal: A First Information Report (FIR) has been registered against a top official of the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Bhopal for allegedly sexually harassing a woman employee, police said on Saturday.

Buffalo Goes On Rampage At Protest Site, Injures Agitators

In the protest time, the buffalo went on the rampage, floored a woman protester and created chaos. The protesters said they brought a buffalo to the protest site to show that their demands did not elicit a response from the government.

Bhopal: A buffalo that was brought to a protest site by owners and directors of private schools in Shajapur district went on rampage and injured a protester, a video of which has gone viral on social media. During the protest, the agitators demanded that the state government should allow the reopening of private schools.



time, the buffalo went on the rampage, floored a woman protester and created chaos. As the buffalo was brought in, people stood for the photo-op, but things changed pretty quickly. The protesters had to run to save themselves from the buffalo on the charge.

PRIVATE BUS OWNERS SEEK 200 CRORE TAX WAIVER FOR LOCKDOWN PERIOD

President of bus owners' association, Govind Sharma said a delegation of the private bus operators will meet chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and if discussions fail, the association will "seriously think" of suspending services from July 15

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Private bus owners in Madhya Pradesh have called for a waiver of permit tax for the period between April and June this year, citing the loss of revenue they experienced due to not operating their businesses during these months for coronavirus (Covid-19)-induced lockdown. Govind Sharma, president

of the Prime Route Bus Owners Association in Madhya Pradesh said that a delegation of the private bus operators is scheduled to meet Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday evening to seek waiver of Rs200 crore tax amount. Sharma pointed out that the private bus owners will "seriously think" of discontinuing services, primarily intra-state from July 15,

should discussions with the state government fail. He added that the association has to pay the monthly permit tax despite facing enormous monetary losses from the lockdown. "We don't have money to pay the tax," Sharma said. He further highlighted that private bus operators, who run nearly 35,000 buses in the state, own at least 10-40 buses each. Sharma also claimed that these own-

ers owe nearly Rs 200 crore to the state government in the form of permit tax for the last three months. Bus services in the state primarily rely on private players after the MP Road Transport Corporation (MPSRTC) was declared defunct years ago. Madhya Pradesh's capital Bhopal was put under 'corona curfew' on April 1, and the unlock phase only started from June 1.

GOVERNOR PATEL TO VISIT BHOPAL ON SUNDAY

Bhopal: Governor Anandiben Patel will visit Bhopal here on Sunday. The Governor will also participate in a tree plantation programme in Jhansi on the same day. Governor Patel will reach Datia in the morning by plane from Lucknow. She will go to Jhansi by car and will participate in tree plantation programme near Samardha Dam in Jhansi. From Jhansi via Datia, will leave for Bhopal in the afternoon.

GOVT HOSPITAL DOCTOR COMMITS SUICIDE

Bhopal: A 64-year-old doctor of a government hospital allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling of his official residence in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal city on Saturday, police said. The death came to light around 8 am, when Dr Hajjarilal Bhuria's servant spotted him hanging from the ceiling of his official resi-

dence in the campus of government-run JP Hospital, Habibganj police station in-charge Rakesh Shrivastava said. The reason behind the extreme step is yet to be ascertained and further investigation is underway, the official said, adding that the police are yet to record the statements of the deceased doctor's family members.

CM expresses satisfaction over the preparations to deal with the third wave of corona

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday thanked Team Indore for the arrangements made for the control of corona in Indore and for the achievement of vaccination. He expressed satisfaction over the preparations being made as a precaution for its control in view of the possibility of a third wave of corona. Chouhan said that if such preparations are made, then the challenges of the third wave will be easily met.



Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan thanked Team Indore for the arrangements made for the control of Corona and the achievement of vaccination.

corona, hospital, oxygen management, vaccination etc. Chouhan said that the Indore team has done amazing work for corona control and vaccination during the last months. The challenge of Corona was faced with united and cohesiveness. Corona was controlled in time. The entire Indore team deserves congratulations for achieving important achievements in the field of vaccination.

dence in government hospitals has increased. Chouhan said that public awareness and stop-toko campaign should be carried out continuously for following the Covid protocol and Covid friendly behavior. Explain to the people that they can get protection from corona by taking care and vigilance. Regarding awareness, all public representatives should spread their appeal and message through social media and other means. He said that marriage ceremonies are being organized now. In view of this, inform the organizers and other people related to the ceremony regarding the observance of the Covid protocol and get them to follow. Special precautions should be taken in marriage ceremonies. He said that special care should be taken even on the borders of the state. Efforts should be made that no person comes to the state after getting infected. Chouhan said that adequate arrangement of oxygen should be made in view of the third wave. Divisional Commissioner Pawan Kumar Sharma informed that 80 oxygen plants are being set up in the division. Giving information about the arrangements to deal with black fungus, he said that the patients of black fungus are now decreasing continuously. Collector

Manish Singh informed about the precautionary arrangements being made to deal with the third wave of corona and informed that the number of oxygenated beds has been increased. Special arrangements have been made for the treatment of pregnant women and children if they are found corona positive. PC Sethi Hospital has been specially designed. He told that in the second phase of Corona, where the number of oxygenated and ICU beds was 7,650, it has been increased to 10 thousand 250. In these, the number of beds with ICU for women and children has also been kept sufficient. For the first time in the district, four community health centers have also been converted into COVID hospitals. Arrangement of 8,434 beds has been made in 111 private sector hospitals and 1,816 beds have been arranged in various government sector hospitals. It was informed in the meeting that arrangements have been made to provide special training to doctors and nurses along with four special mother-child ambulances for pregnant women and children found to be corona positive. The training work has started. One master trainer is being prepared in each hospital. They will train doctors and nurses in their respective hospitals.

CM plants saplings on International Cooperative Day

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a sapling of Ficus on International Cooperative Day in Smart Park here today. Cooperation Minister Arvind Singh Bhadauria was also present on the occasion. While speaking, Chouhan said that this sapling planted on International Cooperative Day would develop into a 'cooperative tree' with an intention to flourish cooperative movement in the entire state, the state government is continuously active in this direction. Ficus has special importance in the decoration of gardens. This plant has the ability to clean the air, it keeps the house cool. Ficus releases ample amounts of fresh oxygen. This is also known as evergreen plant and also has a long life.



PARIS HILTON FLAUNTS 'DISNEY PRINCESS VIBES'

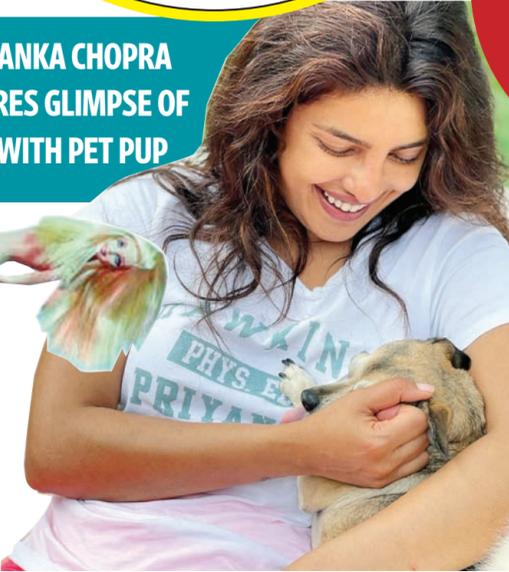
Los Angeles | Agencies

Socialite and entrepreneur Paris Hilton showcases her princess vibes in her latest post on social media. Paris posted a picture on Instagram where she is seen dressed in a yellow dress. She completes her look with minimal make-up, curled up hair and diamond drop earrings. The picture reminds of Disney princess Belle in "Beauty And The Beast". Alongside the image, she wrote: "Be kind and gracious like Cinderella, and confident and outspoken like Belle."

PRIYANKA CHOPRA SHARES GLIMPSE OF HER WITH PET PUP

London | Agencies

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas posted a picture with her pup Diana on Saturday, terming it as a reunion moment. In the picture, the actress sports a casual look wearing no make-up and sporting a white T-shirt paired with red bottoms. "Reunion #quarantinelifelife," Priyanka wrote as



caption. The actress was last seen on screen in the digital film "The White Tiger". The Ramin Bahrani directorial stars Adarsh Gourav and also features Rajkumar Rao in a pivotal role. Priyanka is currently busy with "Citadel". Helmed by "Avengers" makers Joe and Anthony Russo, "Citadel" is a spy thriller series co-starring Richard Madden slated for OTT release.

London | Agencies

Singer and Actor Rita Ora is splashing out on a Grand Designs-style makeover of her new £8million London home - complete with a panic room in case she is targeted by criminals.

The singer, who was pictured out in Los Angeles on Thursday ahead of the release of her new Sigala collaboration You For Me, was left shaken in 2015 when £200,000 of possessions were stolen from her former home in North-West London as she slept upstairs.

After buying a new six-bedroom Victorian home in the capital earlier this year, she is deter-

Rita Ora to install panic room in new £8m London home

mined to make it safe and has ordered out a security review to prevent further criminal efforts.

She has applied to the local council for planning permission to replace all security cameras with a more sophisticated hi-tech system and has earmarked two areas that could be used as panic rooms.

Other proposed works include a new shower and dressing room, a fireplace in the master bedroom and the creation of a pantry. But because it is Grade II listed, she has had to run all changes past the authorities.

An official report said: "A full security review was conducted covering the new premises, the potential safeguards that should be in place to enable the client to be at peace while residing at home, happy in the knowledge they are safe."



TOM HIDDLESTON ON WHAT 'LOKI' MAKERS HAD IN MIND FOR GOD OF MISCHIEF

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Tom Hiddleston believes that Loki needed to evolve in the new series where he stars as the God of Mischief, because the cycle of his character has been stuck in a loop of trust and betrayal. Hiddleston, who essays Loki and also serves as an executive producer on the show, said: "Loki is trusted, he betrays, he becomes a villain, he learns to trust again, he's betrayed, he becomes trusting again, he can be trusted again, then he betrays or feels betrayed. It's just this endless cycle of trust and betrayal and resistance. And the character is essentially singing the same song over and over and over again."

He added: "He is trapped on a wheel of repetition, a compulsion to repeat the same damage, the same story. But we are breaking that record. We are releasing him from that trap. In this story, we are showing that he can change, that he can grow."

"And what if the experience of that, and the journey he goes on, actually changes something internal where he can potentially become someone else, or begin from a place of understanding that, if you know who you are, then who you choose to be is a different thing," he concluded.

"Loki" also stars Owen Wilson, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Sophia Di Martino, Wunmi Mosaku and Richard E. Grant. The show airs on Disney+ Hotstar VIP and in Disney+ Hotstar Premium.



Julianna Margulies recalls unsettling encounter with Steven Seagal

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actress Julianna Margulies has recounted an upsetting encounter she had with actor Steven Seagal. "It was actually the casting director that asked me to go to his hotel room. I had a fourth and final call back the next day and she called me to say, 'He'd like to run the scene with you, he saw your tape, he thinks you're great, come to the hotel room'. And I didn't want to go because I lived in Brooklyn and I couldn't afford a cab, I was waitressing, I was broke. She said, 'Don't worry we will pay for the car, get a car service and I'll be here, we are going to run the scene'," Margulies said, recalling the incident on "The Drew Barrymore Show".

"So, I did that and when I got to his hotel room, the casting director was not there and it was a frightening moment because he asked me to sit on a couch and underneath this cushion, I jumped up because there was something hard and he pulled out a gun, and said, 'Oh I must have left my gun there'."

The actress shared that she was scared as had never seen a gun before and was just 23-years-old.

"I am 23, and I realise I am in an action star's hotel room with a gun, I had never seen a gun before and he is 6'4", and no one knows where I am. He asked me to come into the bedroom because he was tired and he asked to read my palm. He put the gun

down so I was calming down a little bit and he read my palm and told me that he was a healer and told me I had weak kidneys," she said.

Barrymore shared that they reached out to Steven Seagal, and his representatives came back saying that he denies this ever happened.

"I appreciated that story so much as someone who has been put in those situations too and it's like, 'you're absolutely kidding me, I'm walking out of here'. I just appreciated that story," Barrymore said on the show that airs on Zee Cafe in India.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kendall Jenner

Queen's Jubilee concert to feature Elton John, Ed Sheeran and Stevie Wonder

London | Agencies

Legend including Sir Elton John, Ed Sheeran and Stevie Wonder are being lined up for a musical extravaganza to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee next summer.

Her Diamond Jubilee in 2012 saw stars such as Robbie Williams, Kylie Minogue and Madness perform during a show-stopping concert at Buckingham Palace Garden, which was organised by Gary Barlow with the BBC.

Now the corporation is planning an even bigger bash to mark the new milestone.



An industry source said: "The BBC is going all out for their



Party at the Palace to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.



They have got Ed Sheeran and Stevie Wonder, who

appeared at the Diamond Jubilee celebration, on the

top of their list of performers and the organisers have already reached out."

Elton, whose songs include Rocket Man, has a scheduling clash because of his Farewell Yellow Brick Road world tour. But it's hoped he will still be able to have an input.

The last bash at the palace to mark the Queen's 60th year on the throne was a telly hit - with more than 16million people tuning in.

Sir Tom Jones, Annie Lennox and Sir Paul McCartney also performed at the three-hour gig, and hosts included Rob Brydon, Jimmy Carr and Lenny Henry.



RECORD: MITHALI BECOMES TOP RUN-GETTER IN WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL CRICKET

Worcester | Agencies

Indian women's cricket team skipper Mithali Raj became the top run-getter in international cricket across all formats, surpassing former England batter Charlotte Edwards, here on Saturday. The 38-year-old Mithali struck a boundary over England pace bowler Natalie Sciver's head when on 11 to go past the 10,273 runs scored by Charlotte. The boundary helped Mithali get to 10,277 runs. The bulk of Mithali's runs have come in ODI cricket in which she has collected over 7,200 runs. She has scored 669 runs in Test cricket and 2,364 in T20 International cricket. She is the only woman cricketer to have scored over 6,000 runs and averages over 50 in ODI cricket. Charlotte is the next best in the list of ODI run-getters with 5,992 runs. On June 26, Mithali, who was playing her 217th One-day



International here at Worcester, had become only the second international cricketer after Sachin Tendulkar to complete 22 years in

ODI cricket. After failing in the one-off Test against England last month, with two and four runs in the two innings, Mithali struck

half-centuries in the first two ODIs. She scored 72 in the first match in Bristol and 59 in the second at Taunton.

Six Gujarat players qualify for Tokyo Olympics, Paralympics

Gandhinagar | Agencies

In a remarkable feat, six female players from Gujarat have qualified for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. Ahmedabad's Maana Patel has qualified for the Olympics where she will be representing India in the 100 meters backstroke event. Maana is the first female and the third to qualify for the Olympics.

The Tokyo Olympics commences from July 23.

Maana, 21, has had over 180 medals in her kitty, including 25 international, 72 national and 82 state level achievements.

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani congratulated Maana on her qualifying for the games on his Twitter handle on Friday.

"Heartiest congratulations to Maana Patel on her quali-



fyng through Universality Quota for #Tokyo2020. Backstroke swimmer Maana Patel has become the first female and the third Indian swimmer to qualify for #Tokyo2020.

Besides, Ankita Raina has qualified for Tennis and ElavenilValarivan for Shooting. The other three females representing India have qualified for the Paralympics --

Gandhinagar's ParulParmar for badminton, Bhavina Patel for para table tennis and Sonal Patel for para Tennis. It was 60 years ago that someone from Gujarat represented the country in the Rome Olympics in 1960. GovindraoSawant played for the hockey team from India. Before that, ShankarraThorat represented India in wrestling in the 1936 Olympics.

Denmark Beat Czech Republic 2-1 To Qualify For Semi-Final

London | Agencies

Denmark sealed a place in the semi-final of Euro 2020 after a 2-1 win over Czech Republic at the Baku Olympic Stadium on Saturday.

Denmark held off a second-half rally from the Czech Republic to win 2-1 in Baku on Saturday and set up a Euro 2020 semi-final against either England or Ukraine.

First-half goals from Thomas Delaney and Kasper Dolberg put the Danes in control and they closed out a memorable victory despite Patrik Schick's fifth goal



of the competition.

It is the first time Denmark have made a major tournament semi-final since their shock tri-

umph at Euro 1992.

The winner of Czech Republic-Denmark will take on the winner of Ukraine vs England.

The heart-breaking story of 5,000m runner Parul missing Olympics

Team Absolute | New Delhi

No one comes as close to missing qualifying for the Olympic Games as ace 5,000 metres runner Parul Chaudhary did -- by a solitary ranking spot, after the Covid-stricken Uttar Pradesh athlete failed to crack the qualification timing.

The top 42 athletes according to the world rankings qualified for the Tokyo Olympics in 5,000m race before the June 29 deadline, and Parul was placed 43rd. The 42 top ranked athletes also comprised those who had cracked the qualification timing.

"My world ranking in women's 5,000m at the end



of June was 43rd while 42nd were eligible to compete in the Olympics," said the heartbroken Parul, who was dreaming of competing in her first Olympics.

Parul, 26, was earlier laid low by a bout of Covid-19 in May, which majorly hampered her preparation for the Olympic Games. That happened while she was attending a national camp at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) training centre in Bengaluru. She was

among several top athletes who tested Covid positive.

"I was inside the room for 15 long days. Even after recovering from the virus infection, it took three-four weeks to get back to normal training," she said of her disappointment.

"While the pandemic disrupted my training last year, this year a second wave of virus was another big blow to achieving good results," she pointed out.

At the 2019 Doha Asian Championships, Parul had bagged bronze in the 5,000m race with a time of 15 minutes 36.09 seconds and was considered to have the potential to achieve the Olympic Games qualification time of 15 minutes 10 seconds in the same event.

SMRITI'S DIVING CATCH LEAVES EX-CRICKETERS FLOORED

Worcester: Smriti Mandhana may have failed with the bat in the first two games, but her catch in the outfield that led to the dismissal of Natalie Sciver for 49 during the third ODI against England on Saturday, has earned her accolades.

Natalie, who was looking to take England women to a healthy total, tried to hit off-spinner Deepti Sharma over the cow's corner. The ball looked like it would cross the boundary for a four.

But Smriti ran to her left and dived full length to take a stunning catch. Natalie's dismissal brought India back into the game as they conceded only 56 runs in the remaining 57 balls to keep the target within limits.

Former India batsman WV Raman, who was replaced as Indian women team's head coach by Ramesh Powar prior to the tour of England, tweeted, "That's a stunner from @mandhana_smriti.. You little beauty Smriti.."

Former Australia women's cricketer Mel Jones also showed her appreciation, tweeting, "SmritiMandhana showing her timing in field is just as good as her batting. A classic catch on the boundary to get the key wicket of Sciver. #EngvInd".

Smriti later got Indian women off to a flying start, hammering five boundaries off the first 25 balls she faced, including three in one over from Katherine Brunt.

COPA AMERICA: 10 MAN BRAZIL SINK CHILE TO SECURE SEMIFINAL SPOT

Rio de Janeiro:

A second-half strike from substitute Lucas Paqueta gave 10-man Brazil a 1-0 victory over Chile as the Copa America hosts set up a semi-final clash with Peru.



Paqueta, who replaced the ineffective Roberto Firmino at half-time, combined with Neymar before thumping a shot past Claudio Bravo in the 46th minute on Friday, reports Xinhua. But Brazil suffered a blow two minutes later when Gabriel Jesus was shown a straight red card for kicking Eugenio Mena in the face in a reckless attempt to win an aerial duel with his right boot.

Unsurprisingly, Chile began to control the match thereafter, but the 2015 and 2016 Copa America champions were unable to find a way past goalkeeper Ederson. They came closest when Ben Brereton's header rebounded off the crossbar and Ederson showed sharp reflexes to keep out a late attempt from Jean Meneses.

Willing to sacrifice World T20 for Ashes: Steve Smith

Sydney | Agencies

Former Australian skipper Steve Smith has said he is willing to sacrifice his participation in the ICC T20 World Cup in the UAE if it can help him remain



fit for the Ashes beginning December 8. Smith had to withdraw from the current white-ball series in the West Indies and Bangladesh due to a left elbow injury, but he is hopeful of recovering in time for the T20 World Cup, scheduled to run from October 17 to November

14. "There's still a bit of time between now and (the T20 World Cup), and I'm tracking okay at the moment -- it's slow, but I'm going okay," Smith told cricket.com.au on Friday.

"I'd love to be part of the World Cup, for sure, but from my point of view, Test cricket, that's my main goal -- to be right for the Ashes and try to emulate what I've done in the last few Ashes series I've been involved in," added Smith.

Australia will look to bag the urn for a third-consecutive series for the first time since 2002-03.

SHAPOVALOV GETS BETTER OF MURRAY, SECURES 4TH-ROUND SPOT

London: World No. 12, Canada's Denis Shapovalov, held his nerve to overcome two-time former champion Andy Murray of Britain 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 in a confident showing to reach the fourth round at Wimbledon for the first time.

The Canadian has been enjoying a good run on grass this season, having reached the quarter-finals in Stuttgart and his first semi-final on the surface at The Queen's Club two weeks ago. He carried that momentum into his first-ever match on Centre Court against the home favourite Murray.

Shapovalov will face eighth seed from Spain, Roberto Bautista Agut, as he seeks to reach the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam for the second time since the 2020 US Open. Bautista Agut beat Dominik Koepfer 7-5, 6-1, 7-6(4).

Shapovalov, who has been seeded 10th here, fired 45 winners including 13 aces on Friday evening. He saved eight of the nine break points he faced en route to victory.

"I think it's probably one of my best performances, even outside of Wimbledon. I think I definitely played really flawless today and just super solid," Shapovalov told atptour.com.



Hamilton extends Mercedes contract by two years

London | Agencies

Reigning Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton has extended his contract with Mercedes till 2023. The 36-year-old British driver has won six out of his seven world titles with Mercedes since 2013.

"It is hard to believe it's been nearly nine years working with this incredible team and I'm excited we're going to continue our partnership for two more years. We've accomplished so much together but we still have a lot to achieve, both on and off the track. I'm incredibly proud and grateful of how Mercedes has supported me in my drive to improve diversity and equality in our sport," said Hamilton in a press release by the Mercedes F1 team on Saturday.

Hamilton further said, "They have held themselves accountable and made important strides in creating a more diverse team and inclusive environment. Thank you to all the dedicated and talented individuals at Mercedes whose hard work makes it all possible and the Board for their continued trust in me. We're entering a new era of car which will be challenging and exciting and I can't wait to see what else we can achieve together." In the current F1 season, Hamilton stands second behind Max Verstappen of Red Bull by 18 points.



Ranji Trophy to return, men's domestic season to begin on Oct 20

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian men's domestic cricket season, also including Ranji Trophy which was cancelled last season due to Covid-19 pandemic, will commence on October 20 and run till March 26, 2022. The multi-day Ranji Trophy will be played in a three-month window from November 16, 2021 to February 19, 2022, the Indian cricket board announced on Saturday.

"The Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy will kick-start on October 20, 2021 with the final to be played on November 12, 2021," said a statement from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

The Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, which is the national T20 tournament, will begin five days after the remainder of Indian Premier League (IPL) 2021 tournament is completed



on October 15.

"The coveted Ranji Trophy, which was cancelled last season due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will be played in a three-month window from November 16, 2021 to February 19, 2022," the statement added.

"The Vijay Hazare Trophy will take place from February 23, 2022 to March 26, 2022," it added.

A total of 2,127 domestic games will be played this season across various age groups in the men's & women's categories.

The women's tournaments will, however, start the domestic season.

"The domestic season will commence on September 21, 2021, with the Senior Women's One Day League and will be followed by the Senior Women's One Day Challenger Trophy, which will take place from October 27, 2021," the statement said.

FILM 'JUNE' ON PLANET MARATHI OTT ACCLAIMED FOR BREAKING STEREOTYPES



Team Absolute | Mumbai

On June 30, 2021, India's first-ever Marathi OTT platform came alive with their first-ever TVOD feature presentation, June.

The film June is an emotionally transforming journey of two souls who seek solace in each other. The film was successful in touching the audience with the display of raw emotions. Gently opening layer after layer inside the complex psyche of someone who has experienced loss, trauma, or pain, Nehha Pendse-Bayas, and Siddharth Menon have given exemplary performances. The film narrates a deep yet beautiful message about healing. Kiran Karmarkar, Resham Shrivardhan, Jitendra Joshi, and Nilesh Diwekar have significant roles in shaping the film's story. Suhrudd Godbole's debut direction has certainly raised the bar for Marathi filmmakers with Vaibhav Khisti adding his spark in the genre. The story penned by Nikhil Mahajan has a steady build-up that eventually unravels into a meaningful takeaway. With critical acclaim from legendary film critics like Komal Nahta, Joginder Tuteja, Anupama Chopra's Film Companion and Vinayak Chakravorty of IANS, June is making more heads turn each day. The film has been selected under the category of Indian Panorama for the 51st International Film Festival Of India. June has already shined in the Pune Film Festival, Kerala Film Festival, and New York Film Festival as well. Nehha Pendse Bayas and Siddharth Menon were nominated in the Best Performance category, where Siddharth Menon has won the award.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shweta Tripathi is over the moon to reunite with her friend Shriya Pilgaonkar in the second season of web series "The Gone Game". The two actresses had worked together in the first season of the show, as well as in "Mirzapur" season one. "I have known Shriya for what feels like forever! We first met because we both did theatre together. Theatre was the reason for how we knew each other way back before we were cast for 'Mirzapur'," Shweta said. "I

**SHWETA
EXCITED TO
REUNITE WITH
SHRIYA PILGAONKAR
IN 'THE GONE
GAME 2'**

clearly remember the first time I met her was at the screening of 'Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani', written by our common friend Hussain Dalal. Also what makes our bond more interesting -- a little trivia -- is that before Guddu and Bablu were cast, Golu and Sweetie (the character they play in 'Mirzapur') were cast!" she said. Shweta credited "Mirzapur" and said it "escalated" their bond, and they gradually became "amazing friends". "Then came 'The Gone Game' and unfortunately due to lockdown, we would miss each other so much because the entire show was shot virtually. Now, I'm excited because we will finally shoot in person together for the show and I can't wait for her to join the bio bubble," said Shweta. "The Gone Game" is an Indian psychological thriller web series directed by Nikhil Bhat, and starring Sanjay Kapoor, Shweta Tripathi, Shriya Pilgaonkar and Arjun Mathur.



**SAROJ
KHAN
BIOPIC
ANNOUNCED
ON HER FIRST
DEATH
ANNIVERSARY**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A biography of Saroj Khan was been announced on Saturday, which marks the first death anniversary of the late choreographer. The film will bring to life the story of the struggle and success of Khan, widely acknowledged as India's first female choreographer. Details about the film are yet to be officially announced.

"My mother was loved and respected by the entire industry but we have closely seen her struggle and fight to become who she was. We hope with this biopic, will be able to tell her story, her love for us, her passion for dancing, and her fondness for her actors and respect to the profession with this biopic," said Sukaina Khan, daughter of the late choreographer. Added her son Raju Khan, who is also a Bollywood choreographer, "My mother loved dancing and we all saw how she dedicated

her life towards that. I am glad I followed in her footsteps. My mother was loved and respected by the industry and it is an honour for us, her family, that the world can see her story."

Born Nirmala Kishanchand Sadhu Singh Naggal, her father advised her to change her name to Saroj Khan so that her orthodox family wouldn't get to know that their daughter was working in films. She started her career as a child artiste at the age of three with the film "Nazarana" as baby Shyama. She became a dancer at the age of 10 and an assistant choreographer at 12.

Saroj Khan passed away on July 3 last year at the age of 71 due to cardiac arrest.

HARBHAJAN SINGH TO STAR IN 'FRIENDSHIP', FILM ANNOUNCED ON HIS BIRTHDAY

Mumbai: On Harbhajan Singh's birthday on Saturday, it was announced that the cricketer is all set to make his big screen debut with a film titled "Friendship". The makers shared a poster featuring the cricketer and his friends in a "rapchik" mood, along with a lyrical video. Harbhajan, popularly known as Bhajji, has earlier done guest appearances in films "Friendship" will be his first major role. The film deals with friendship, action, sports and emotions. In the film, Bhajji, a mechanical engineering student along with friends in first year, manages a clever escape from ragging by the seniors. Stated to open later this year, the film will have a simultaneous release in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil. "Friendship" is directed by John Paul Raj and Sham Surya, produced by Kiran Reddy Mandadi, and co-produced by Ram Maddukuri.



Jassi Gill joins cast of Punjabi rom-com 'Fuffad Ji'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor-singer Jassi Gill has joined the cast of the upcoming Punjabi rom-com film "Fuffad Ji". "This film is a fantastic concoction of comedy and romance, and I feel absolutely elated to be a part of it in some way. Films like these always bring joy to the audiences and can be watched anytime by anyone. The quality makes them timeless and memorable," Jassi said. The film co-stars Binnu Dhillon, Gurnam Bullar, Sidhika Sharma, Jasmin Bajwa and Annu Chaudhary.

"Fuffad Ji" banks on a series of comedy of errors in an attempt to set up wholesome family entertainment. Shooting commenced

on June 16 in Punjab and the film is slated to release soon. The film is written by Raju Verma and directed by Pankaj Batra. "We are excited to associate with the team. Fuffad Ji is a heart-warming story with a special social message. I am confident that the audience will like the film," said Shariq Patel, CBO, Zee Studios, which has produced the film with K. Kumar Studios.



**Gautam Rode to play
Major Samar in 'State of
Siege- Temple Attack'**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Gautam Rode is seen in the recently released poster and trailer of the upcoming film, State of Siege, which is based on a Temple Attack. Gautam plays the role of an army officer who will risk his life for the sake of his

country. Speaking about his character, the actor said, "It was an absolute pleasure to play Major Samar in State of Siege. The character is an intense one and I am glad that the audiences are receiving it well. It was a physically and emotionally challenging role to play and I hope I have done justice

to the same. Army officers are our true heroes and it was an honour to play Major Samar for me."

State of Siege: Temple Attack stars Gautam Rode, Akshay Khanna and Vivek Dhayia. It has been directed by Ken Ghosh and is slated to premiere on 9th July on ZEE5.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Nupur Sanon