

# absolute india

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## EARLY STAGES' OF COVID'S THIRD WAVE, WARNS WHO CHIEF

# SURGE BEGINS

"And after 10 weeks of declines, deaths are increasing again. The virus continues to evolve, resulting in more transmissible variants. Unfortunately, we are now in the early stages of a third wave. The Delta variant is now in more than 111 countries and we expect it to soon be the dominant Covid-19 strain circulating worldwide, if it isn't already."

WHO chief stated that inequity has created a two-track pandemic -- namely, one track for countries with the greatest access to vaccines, who are lifting restrictions and reopening their societies, and a second track for those without vaccine access who are left "at the mercy of the virus".

WHO's appealed for a massive push to vaccinate at least 10 per cent of the population of every country by September, at least 40 percent by the end of 2021, and at least 70 per cent by mid-2022.



Team Absolute | Geneva

The world is now in the early stages of a third wave, amid rising cases of Covid's Delta variant, World Health Organisation Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said.

The spread of the Delta variant, along with increased social mobility and the inconsistent use of proven public health measures, is driving an increase in both case numbers and deaths, he said at the 8th meeting of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee on Wednesday. At the same time, there is "shocking disparity" in the global distribution of vaccines, and unequal

### GLOBAL COVID-19 CASELOAD TOPS 188.2 MN

Washington: The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 188.2 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 4.05 million and vaccinations soared to over 3.49 billion, according to the Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Thursday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload, death toll and the total number of vaccine doses administered stood at 188,284,090, 4,057,061 and 3,496,851,294, respectively. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 33,946,217 and 608,104, respectively, according to the CSSE.

access to life-saving tools, he lamented. Many countries still have not received any vaccines, and most have not received enough. Covax, the international vaccine-sharing initiative -- led by the WHO) and other international organisations -- has shipped just over 100 million doses, so far. Emphasising that vaccines

alone will not stop the pandemic, he also called upon countries to persist with a "tailored and consistent approach". This includes using the full array of public health and social measures, and a comprehensive risk management approach to mass gathering events.

### DON'T LOSE MOMENTUM AGAINST COVID, STATES TOLD

New Delhi: Warning that complacency in following Covid norms can lead to another surge in cases, the Union Health Ministry on Thursday urged states to take appropriate steps to ensure that the country "does not lose the invaluable momentum gained in its battle against Covid-19". In a letter to states, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan emphasised that focused and sustained high levels of testing, relentless contact tracing, comprehensive vaccination and ensuring strict adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour in all crowded places and potential super-spreader events are of essence.

## Highest number of Unvaccinated, Under-Vaccinated kids in India: UNICEF



India has the highest number of under-vaccinated or unvaccinated children worldwide at 3.5 million, an increase of 1.4 million from 2019, amid the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the UNICEF said. At nearly 4.4 million, South Asia recorded the highest number of children having failed to receive any routine vaccination in the past ten years, in 2020. "More than 3 million of these "zero-dose children" in 2020 lived in India," the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, (UNICEF) said in a statement.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Globally, the UNICEF said the data shows that just 10 countries account for 62 per cent of all under- or unvaccinated children globally. Unprotected children are those who are unvaccinated (no vaccine) or under-vaccinated (incomplete vaccination), that is, any child who has not received any or few doses of their due vaccination.

Compared with 2019, 3.5 million more children missed their first dose of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine (DTP-1) while three million more children missed their first measles dose.

The study, based on data from 160 countries, suggests that Covid-19 may likely lead to the resurgence of measles, polio and other killers as the pandemic unravels years of progress in routine immunisation and exposing millions of children to deadly, preventable diseases.

Globally, 23 million children missed out on basic vaccines through routine immunisation services in 2020 -- 3.7 million more than in 2019, the data showed. Up to 17 million of these likely did not receive a single vaccine during the year, widening already immense inequities in vaccine access.

## 'Why India need colonial law?' SC on sedition law

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday questioned the Centre on the utility of having a sedition law even after 75 years of gaining independence from the British, and also frowned on the misuse of law by the police against people. Citing the example of continued usage of Section 66A of IT Act, which was quashed, but abused to arrest thousands for airing their views, the top court pointed out that sedition law (Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code) is also not immune to misuse by police to fix persons who speak against the government. The AG replied that he completely understands the concern of the top court and submitted the court can lay down fresh guidelines to



restrict the use of the sedition provision only for protection of nation and democratic institutions. The Chief Justice said the situation on the ground is grave, and if one party does not like what the other is saying, Section 124A is used. The plea argued that a statute criminalising expres-

sion based on unconstitutionally vague definitions of 'disaffection towards government' etc. is an unreasonable restriction on the fundamental right to free expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) and causes constitutionally impermissible 'chilling effect' on the speech.

"It is a colonial law used by the British to silence Mahatma Gandhi, (Bal Gangadhar) Tilak. Still, it is necessary after 75 years of independence? I am indicating what I am thinking."

CJI to AG

### MISCREANTS SEVER HAND, LEG OF RTI ACTIVIST IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

Ramnagar: In a horrific incident, a group of miscreants severed the leg and hand of an RTI activist in broad daylight on Thursday on the outskirts of Bengaluru and fled from the scene. The gruesome incident took place in front of the public.



The RTI activist has been identified as Venkatesh. The incident took place in Tavarekere near Bengaluru, which falls under the neighboring Ramnagar district. Venkatesh, who was lying on the road bleeding profusely, was later shifted to a hospital where he is said to be undergoing intensive treatment. The miscreants attacked him with lethal weapons and severed his hand and leg. Shockingly, the spot where the incident took place is just a stone's throw away from the local police station. Venkatesh had been filing RTI applications seeking information on various departments of the state government.

## Indian economy to see 'substantial slack' in FY22 despite growth: RBI

Even with a 9.5 per cent GDP growth in 2021-22, there will be substantial slack in the economy and demand pressures may take some more time to become evident," it said.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Although the Indian economy is poised to recover and witness positive growth in the current fiscal, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has said that there will be "substantial slack" in it.

The RBI Bulletin for July 2021 noted that the economy is struggling to

regain the momentum of recovery that had started in the second half of 2020-21 but was interrupted by the second wave of Covid. The pickup in inflation is driven largely by adverse supply shocks due to disruptions caused by the pandemic, including increases in margins and taxes, it said, adding that there are also specific demand-supply mismatches as in the case of protein-rich food items, edible oils and pulses,

which are being addressed by specific supply side measures. Noting that inflation ruled above the tolerance band during June-November 2020 and has again moved above the upper tolerance threshold in May and June 2021, it said that the sense is that inflation will persist at these elevated levels for some months before easing in the third quarter of 2021-22 when the Kharif harvest arrives in markets.

### THREE MPS ASKED TO RESPOND ON PLEAS FOR DISQUALIFICATION

New Delhi: The Lok Sabha Secretariat has sought response from Trinamool Congress MPs Sisir Adhikari and Sunil Kumar Mondal, and YSR Congress MP Raghu Ramakrishna Raju on their party's petitions seeking their disqualification under the anti-defection law. Sources said that the Lok Sabha Secretariat has written to Adhikari, Mondal and Raju, seeking their response within 15 days of receipt of its letter.

The Trinamool had filed a petition seeking disqualification of Adhikari and Mondal, saying both the MPs have joined the BJP before the West Bengal Assembly polls. Sources claimed that Adhikari had joined the BJP in March while Mondal has joined the saffron party in December last year.

The YSR Congress submitted a petition saying that Raju is involved in

### Two including spy passing Army secrets to Pak, arrested

New Delhi: The Delhi Police Crime Branch on Thursday said that with the arrest of a spy, Habib-ur-Rahman from Rajasthan's Pokhran, it has busted an espionage racket and also recovered highly confidential documents containing top secret information relating to the Indian Army. He was going to pass them to his handlers in Pakistan. Addressing a press conference here, Crime Branch Special Commissioner Praveer Ranjan said that with the arrest of Rahman, the Crime Branch has busted an espionage racket. Rahman was transferring important information to his handlers in Pakistan's ISI. Ranjan said that the Crime Branch also arrested an Army official named Paramjit. He said that the Crime Branch took up the probe after it got inputs about some persons based at Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh being involved in anti-national activities and espionage.

## 9 in 10 Gen Z Indians demotivated after job rejections in Covid

Most Gen Z job seekers (nine in 10) in India are demotivated after seven in 10 of those surveyed didn't get a positive response from employers after waiting for long periods during the second Covid wave, a LinkedIn report showed on Thursday. A similar proportion (70 per cent) said their applications were either cancelled or delayed indefinitely and due to these setbacks, 90 per cent of Gen Z job applicants are left dejected.

When asked what they felt was the biggest barrier to get ahead in the pandemic, Gen Z Indians cited 'fewer opportunities', followed by 'slower recruitment' and 'higher competition' as the top three reasons affecting their job search. Other barriers in pursuing job opportunities include lack of guidance for skilling and increased familial responsibilities due to Covid-19.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The findings from the LinkedIn survey, titled 'Career Aspirations Gen Z India', done along with German research firm GfK, revealed that 72 per cent students and 65 per

cent Gen Z were professionally impacted during the second wave of Covid-19 in the country. The survey focused on insights of 1,000 Gen Z students and professionals in the age group of 18 to 24 years in the month of June. Nearly 72 per cent of students

stated that internship opportunities had also greatly reduced during the pandemic's second wave. Among those who are currently employed, 32 per cent of Gen Z Indians experienced a pay cut while 25 per cent lost a job opening because the company can-

celled the job role due to the pandemic. In fact, the survey showed, 40 per cent of those with higher academic aspirations have postponed or cancelled their plans due to safety concerns, financial constraints, and travel restrictions.

### TMC SEEKS SPEEDY BYPOLLS IN BENGAL

New Delhi: A six-member Trinamool Congress delegation met the Election Commission on Thursday and urged it to conduct bypolls in six vacant West Bengal Assembly seats at the earliest.



In a memorandum submitted to the poll panel, it stated that with the decreasing number of coronavirus cases in the state, conditions are conducive for conducting the bypolls with appropriate Covid protocols in place. Addressing media after the meeting in New Delhi, Trinamool Parliamentary Party Leader Sudip Bandopadhyay said: "We had a meeting in a cordial atmosphere and they had listened to everything very carefully. They have also apprised us of the situation and told that the Commission is keeping a close watch on the situation. We are hopeful that something positive will come out of the meeting." The byelections are of critical importance to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who lost the Assembly poll to BJP's Suwendu Adhikari in Nandigram. The Constitution allows a person to occupy a ministerial position only up to six months without getting elected to a state legislature or Parliament. It mandates that a minister who is not a member of legislature for six consecutive months shall cease to occupy the position at the expiration of that period. Thus, Banerjee needs to get elected to the Assembly by November 4 to continue as the Chief Minister.



# CENTRE SEEKS RS 23,123 CR COVID EXPENDITURE PROPOSALS FROM STATES

The Centre on Friday sought the expenditure proposals from all states and the Union Territories (UTs) at the earliest to enable expeditious approval and sanctioning of recently approved Rs 23,123 crore Emergency Covid-19 Response Package (ECRP) Phase-II.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union Health Ministry put up the demand with Health Secretaries and senior officials of all the states and UTs while reviewing preparations under the ECRP Phase-II, which aims to accelerate health system preparedness for immediate responsiveness for early prevention, detection and management with sharp focus on health infrastructure development including paediatric care and with measurable outcomes. Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister had approved the new



scheme "India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project: Phase-II" amounting to Rs 23,123 crore for 2021-22 on July 8. The scheme will be implemented from July 1 this year to March 31, 2022.

Phase-II of the ECRP has Central Sector (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) components. The scheme will help in strengthening decentralized public health actions

and public health facilities in rural, peri-urban and tribal areas.

During the review meeting, states and UTs were guided on policies and guidelines from Union Health Ministry on different aspects of Covid management which would help in strengthening their healthcare infrastructure to streamline Covid-19 response. The meeting was held via video conferencing.

Among the focus highlighted dur-

ing the meeting was need for ramping up test, track, treat and isolate strategy requirement for scaling up testing capacity; additional beds including for paediatric care and makeshift hospitals in sub-district levels; ensuring availability of critical drugs, testing kits and PPEs; enhancing Oxygen availability and strengthen home and village community isolation centres as well as Covid care centres; sustaining and enhancing skilled medical and para-medical HR in line with the new guidelines issued by the Union Health Ministry in consultation with National Medical Commission (NMC) and Indian Nursing Council (INC). It is also directed to support the states to establish dedicated paediatric care unit in all 736 districts of the country for responding to the needs of paediatric Covid-19 management as well as support to establish paediatric Centre of Excellence in each state and UT (either in State Medical Colleges or State Hospitals or Central Hospitals such as AIIMS, Institute of National Importance) for providing Tele-ICU services; mentoring and technical hand-holding to these District Paediatric units.

# Amarinder to 'lead' Cong to victory in 2022: Media advisor

Team Absolute | Chandigarh

Denying reports of his resignation, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's media advisor Raveen Thukral said on Thursday that the former would lead the Congress to victory in the Assembly elections scheduled early next year.

"Media reports of CM @capt\_amarinder resigning are humbug," Thukral informed in a tweet. "He has neither quit nor offered to do so. He'll lead @INCPunjab to victory in 2022 Assembly polls as he did in 2017. Urge media to stop speculating & spreading misinformation," he added.

The speculation of the Chief Minister's resignation came in the wake of Punjab Congress in-charge Harish Rawat's statement that it may take some time, but to balance the equation in the state, the party is working on a formula to appoint Navjot Singh Sidhu in a



prominent position, while asserting that Amarinder Singh has already said that he will abide by the party high command's decision.

"The party is working on a formula to appoint two working presidents and elections will be fought under the leadership of the Chief Minister," said Rawat.

Meanwhile, Punjab Congress is likely to get new State President in the form of Navjot Singh Sidhu along

with two other working presidents ahead of the crucial assembly elections next year.

The Congress is mulling an idea of appointing a Dalit and a Hindu as working presidents. The names of Raj Kumar Verka and Santokh Chaudhary are being considered for working president as both are Dalits and can counter the Akali Dal-BSP alliance impact.

# Efforts on to fill 50,000 vacancies in government : Telangana CM



Hyderabad | Agencies

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday said his government has started taking measures to fill 50,000 vacancies in various

departments.

Noting that the government has provided 1.30 lakh jobs during the last seven years, he said with the approval of new zonal system, measures to recruit 50,000 more employees have started. He assured

that in future, recruitment will be done as per the job calendar.

In a message on the occasion of the World Youth Skills Day, he claimed that the state government is striving to make available the fruits of Telangana to the youth and future generations, and has prepared proper plans and is implementing them.

KCR, as the Chief Minister is popularly known, said the infrastructure in all sectors, "which was destroyed under past rulers", was being rebuilt and development and welfare schemes launched.

He said the government is of the firm view that true development is when qualitative change comes in the life of all sections of people.

# CHIRAG PASWAN SLAMS BJP ON NEW POPULATION CONTROL POLICY

Patna: Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) president Chirag Paswan on Thursday slammed the BJP over the new population control policy on Thursday.

Chirag said that introducing a new policy on population control would not be effective unless and until we do not create awareness in society. "The awareness in society will come only after the education of women in the country. Forcible acts like imposing a law on them cannot help," he said. When asked whether he would meet RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, he avoided an answer and said that he only came to Patna to resume Aashirwad rally.

"Decision regarding making a political alliance generally takes place before Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha elections. We will do the same in future," he said. Reacting on LJP-Paras group's fresh appointment of leaders, Chirag said that such a development would not affect him much.

"The appointment of officials would not affect us. I have already said that the fight between me and them will go long. I am ready to fight on every platform and I know that I will win at the end," Chirag said.



# Assam varsity offers pan-India scholarship of up to Rs 1 cr

Team Absolute | Guwahati

The Assam down town University (AdtU), one of the leading private varsities of the region based in Guwahati, has launched a scholarship programme of up to Rs one crore for students across the country, stating that the institution has a variety of placement driven courses.

A statement issued by the AdtU said that students who have appeared in Higher Secondary (Class XII) exams from any stream -- arts, science or commerce -- or have already obtained their results are eligible to register for the scholarship test that is scheduled on July 25. The willing candidates can register their names free of cost on or before July 22. The 60-minute online test will carry questions in multiple choice format with no negative marking. The statement said that the English and

general knowledge sections would be compulsory for all the students, while they can opt for other papers from their respective subjects or streams.

The Chancellor of AdtU, N.N. Dutta, said: "In this pandemic-hit situation, AdtU has decided to provide an opportunity to the deserving students across the country to pursue the courses that would help them fulfil their dreams."

"The scholarship will help the meritorious students from humble backgrounds and lessen the financial burden on the parents. It is an initiative to give back to the society and make it a better place." AdtU Vice-Chancellor N.C. Talukdar said. "This is the first time that AdtU has launched such a mega scholarship programme and we plan to make it an annual affair. We will hold the Common Scholarship Test nationally so that all students get a chance to be benefitted by the programme."



# Andhra logs 2,000 more Covid cases, 24 deaths

Amaravati | Agencies

Andhra Pradesh on Thursday registered 2,526 new Covid cases, raising the state's overall tally over 19.3 lakh, even as its active caseload dropped to 25,526.

As many as 2,526 more persons recovered from the disease in the past 24 hours, raising the state's total number of recoveries over 18.9 lakh.

East Godavari district reported the highest number of cases at 404, followed by Chittoor (391), Prakasam (308), Krishna (269), West Godavari (235), Nellore (210), Guntur (178), Kadapa (157), Visakhapatnam (119), Srikakulam (91), Anantapur (80), Vizianagaram (49)



and Kurnool (35).

Except for Vizianagaram, all the other districts of Andhra Pradesh have now reported more than 1 lakh Covid cases, though Vizianagaram is also drawing closer towards that mark, just short of 19,000 cases.

East Godavari tops the chart with more than 2.7 lakh cases, followed by Chittoor with 2.2 lakh cases.

Meanwhile, 24 more persons succumbed to the virus in the past 24 hours, raising the state's overall Covid death toll to 13,081.

With 93,785 more tests conducted in the past 24 hours, the total number of tests carried out in Andhra Pradesh so far has crossed 2.3 crore.

# Fake call centre busted in Kanpur, 4 held for duping US citizens

Team Absolute | Kanpur

Four persons have been arrested for allegedly running a fake international call centre in Kakadeo locality in Kanpur and duping 12,000 US citizens of at least 9 lakh dollars (Rs 67 crore) by hacking their data.

The arrests were made on Wednesday and the gang leader is a software engineer with a degree from Pune University and an expert in mobile hacking.

The police raided the gang's call centre and recovered several phones, computer hard disks and ATM cards.

Police commissioner Asim Arun said, "The fraudsters were cheating people in the US in dollars by hacking their mobile phones through the call centre. Mastermind Munendra Sharma is a software engineer from Pune University, and a resident of Noida, Sanjeev, a resident of Firozabad, Zikrulla, a native of Pratapgarh, and Suraj Suman, a resident of Bihar are the others in the gang."

Police have recovered 27 hard disks, six ATM cards of different banks, passport, Aadhar card, driving licence, five Android phones, American Express Bank debit card, two PAN cards, Hotel Taj membership card from their possession, said the official.



# Hyd couple tries selling kidneys to clear debts, duped of Rs 40L

A couple from Hyderabad looking to sell their kidneys to pay off huge debts, was duped of Rs 40 lakh by an international gang of Cyber fraudsters, police said.



Hyderabad | Agencies

The fraudsters, promising to pay Rs 5 crore for organ sale, lured the couple into depositing Rs 40 lakh into their bank accounts towards various charges.

M. Venkatesh and Lavnya, residents of Khairatabad area in the city, approached cybercrime

police station two days ago after they realized they had been cheated.

The couple, running a stationery and bangles shop, had taken bank loan for construction of a four-storied building. As the business was affected by Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, their debts mounted to Rs 1.5 crore.

With no option but to borrow

from any other source and pressure mounting from financial institutions to repay the debts, the couple decided to sell their kidneys to clear the debts.

According to Assistant Commissioner of Police K.V.M. Prasad, the couple started looking for prospective buyers on the Internet.

In March, they found the con-

tact number of a person posing as an employee at a UK hospital and sent him a message. The fraudster offered Rs 5 crore but made the couple believe that they have to first pay charges to complete the entire process.

Believing him, the couple deposited Rs 10 lakh in his bank account towards registration charges, processing fee, currency exchange charges, visa fee and insurance.

When he demanded more money, they contacted another person and transferred Rs 12 lakh to his account. They also approached two other persons over the Internet.

One of them promised that on payment of registration half of the price for their kidneys will be paid to them as advance amount. He asked them to meet his representative at a lodge in Bengaluru to collect the advance amount.

Trusting him, they went to Bengaluru and met the agent. Here they encountered even big-

ger hocus-pocus. The agent gave them black papers, saying they are currency notes of Rs 2,000.

When the couple grew suspicious, he took out an unknown chemical and turned a few papers into currency notes and made them believe that this was done to maintain secrecy.

He gave them an entire lot of black papers with the chemical and asked them to use the chemical after 48 hours. He also made them to transfer another Rs 14 lakh to his account.

The couple later found that the chemical was not turning the black papers into currency notes. They realized they have been cheated.

As the person they were in touch with to sell their kidneys also did not respond to their calls, they lodged a complaint with the cybercrime police.

The couple told police that they arranged the money from private lenders by keeping their gold jewellery as collateral.

# MAOIST CARRYING RS 15L BOUNTY KILLED IN JHARKHAND

Ranchi: Security forces on Friday neutralised a dreaded Maoist

carrying a Rs 15 lakh reward on his head in a fierce shootout in the densely forested Krurmgrah area in Jharkhand's

Gumla district. The Maoist was wanted for his involvement in at least 53 criminal offences including 20 murders and more than a dozen cases of attempt to murder.

A joint team of the Central Reserve Police Force's (CRPF) 209 Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) unit and Jharkhand Police neutralised notorious Maoist Budeshwar Oraon. "The security forces were persistently tracking Budeshwar who had terrorised the area and had been chargesheeted and named in at least 53 criminal offences including 20 murders and more than a dozen cases of attempt to murder," the CRPF said. The Jharkhand government had announced a reward of Rs 15 lakh on his head, it said. Oraon and his team of armed Maoists were surrounded by the security forces based on intelligence inputs. The shootout started when the Maoists opened heavy fire on the troopers from well entrenched positions.

"The troopers retaliated and in the ensuing gun battle, Budeshwar Oraon alias Lullha, 45, was neutralised."

As the firing subsided for a short while, the troopers recovered the body of the Maoist along with an AK-47 rifle. The CRPF said that the "operation is still on".





# STATE GOVERNMENT IS ALERT ABOUT THE THIRD WAVE: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the government is fully aware and alert about the possible third wave of corona. He appealed to the people of the state not to be careless towards Corona at all, Corona has not gone yet. Chouhan said that the effect of corona infection has reduced considerably. Keeping this in view, concessions have been given in many areas, but we have to adopt covid friendly behaviour with caution.

Chouhan said that at present the number of active cases of corona in the state is 253. Today on July 15, 20 new positive cases have been found and the positivity rate is 0.02 percent. Today, 36 patients were discharged after getting healthy and 76 thousand 201 tests have been done in the state. 1687 fever clinics are active in the state. Tele-consultation of 51 thousand 94 patients has been done on helpline numbers 104 and 181.

Chouhan said that even before the third wave, medical infrastructure is being constructed in the state with rapid expansion of health facilities. Oxygen plants are being set up to ensure availability of oxygen especially with increasing number of ICU beds in hospi-



tals. Chouhan said that under the action plan prepared for supply of oxygen in all the districts of the state, oxygen plants have been started in many districts. Along with the administration, national level companies and social workers of the state have contributed a lot in this work. Chief Minister said that the campaign which has been started to make Madhya Pradesh self-sufficient in terms of oxygen production, will be continued continuously. It will be our endeavour

that the availability of oxygen for the treatment of patients in all hospitals should be ensured in the hospital itself.

Chouhan has said that adequate arrangements for beds, medicines, oxygen, CT scan, ICU, PICU, doctors, staff etc. are being ensured in all necessary preparations for the possible third wave of corona in the state. At present, more than 68 thousand beds have been identified in Madhya Pradesh for the treatment of corona, out of which 54 thousand are in government

and more than 13 thousand in private hospitals. Under these, 4 thousand beds are identified in private medical colleges. A total of 31 thousand 11 beds are marked in government and private hospitals under Ayushman Yojana. Chouhan informed that a detailed protocol guideline for the treatment of infants has been issued after a thorough study by the committee of experts in the state. Instructions have also been issued for the parents to stay in the ward with the children.

# New guidelines to unlock state announced

Team Absolute | Bhopal

As the Covid-19 cases continue to decline in Madhya Pradesh, more unlock measures have been announced.

As per the new guidelines announced by the state government, not more than six people will be allowed to worship at a time at religious places. Public gathering at all social, political, sports, entertainment, cultural, religious events, fairs etc will remain prohibited.

So far as opening of schools and colleges is concerned, separate orders are being issued by the concerned departments. Schools and colleges will remain closed for the time being. All coaching institutes will also remain closed. Online classes can be held. Training programs can be conducted to the extent of 50 per cent capacity of the hall.

All religious places of worship can open, but not more than six people will be allowed to be present at a time and those present will have to follow the Covid protocol.

All types of shops, commercial establishments, private offices, shopping malls,



gyms can open till their stipulated time. Cinema halls and theaters can operate up to the limit of 50 per cent of the total capacity. Apart from this, medium, small and micro industries (MSME) will be allowed to work at their full capacity and construction activities can go on without any restrictions.

Gyms and fitness centers will can open at 50 per cent capacity following the Covid protocol. All sports stadiums can host events but without spectators. All restaurants and clubs are allowed to open at full capacity till 10

p.m. following the Covid protocol. According to the new guidelines, the maximum number of attendees in marriage functions cannot exceed more than 100. It will be necessary for the organizer to give a list of the names of the guests who can attend marriage functions to the district administration before the event.

The last rites will be allowed with a maximum of 50 people. Apart from this, there will be a ban on the gathering of more than six people at any place.

# Complete preparations of urban body elections within time limit

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Complete the preparations of the urban body elections within the time limit.

Make a list of the remaining works related to the election and do each work on time. Once the preparations are complete, the process of election will be started. State Election Commissioner Basant Pratap Singh gave these instructions during the review of the preparations for the upcoming elections of urban bodies and three-tier panchayats.

Singh said that in view of the effective control of corona infection and vaccination status in the state, it is possible to conduct elections at present. He said that the elections are already very late due to Corona. Singh said that first the elections of urban bodies would be conducted.

Singh reviewed the works of each section. He said that orders to purchase new indelible ink should be issued soon. Arrange for installation of CCTV cameras in strong rooms to be built in urban bodies. Covid appropriate behaviour should be followed at every level. It was informed in the meeting that there are a total of 407 urban bodies in the state. Of these, elections are to be held in 347. Voting will be held in two phases. Polling will be conducted in 155 urban bodies in the first phase and 192



in the second phase. The election of the Mayor/President will be through indirect system. These 347 urban bodies include all 16 municipal corporations. A total of 19 thousand 955 polling stations have been set up. A total of 60 urban bodies have their tenure left. The final publication of the voter list has been done on 3 March 2021. Voting in urban bodies will be done through EVMs. Panchayat elections will be conducted in 3 phases. In three-tier panchayats, elections will be held for 3 lakh 77 thousand 551 posts of panch, 23 thousand 912 of sarpanch, 6 thousand 833 of janpad panchayat member, 904 of district panchayat member, 23 thousand 912 of deputy sarpanch, 313 of janpad panchayat president and vice-president and 52 posts of district panchayat president and vice-president.

# Kamal Nath meets Sonia Gandhi amid crisis in states

Senior Congress leader Kamal Nath met party president Sonia Gandhi at her residence, 10 Janpath, here on Thursday. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was also present in the meeting, which lasted for more than an hour but there is no official word on it.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The meeting has taken place amid crisis the party is facing in many states including Rajasthan, Punjab, Karnataka and Uttarakhand. Sources say the top Congress leaders discussed the political situation in various states and issues related to the party in view of the upcoming elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab among others early next year.

Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath is also scheduled to address press conference on the issue of inflation and fuel price hike in Lucknow, as part of a series of press conferences the party is holding



on the issue. Priyanka Gandhi will be on a three-day visit to Lucknow from Friday onwards and will meet leaders of the party to chalk out strategy for upcoming elections. Priyanka Gandhi during her



Lucknow visit will be meeting with all Pradesh Committees, including all district and city presidents, and is also slated to meet various farmer unions as well. She will interact with groups of unemployed youth who are fight-

ing various recruitment issues. Priyanka will also discuss the making of a manifesto for the next Assembly elections with the state Congress leaders. This will be the first physical meet of the Congress general secretary in the state after the second wave of the pandemic. On Monday, she met with the advisory council of her party in Uttar Pradesh and expressed concern over the large-scale violence in the Block Parmukh elections. The Congress says it has been protesting against the fuel hike and rising inflation in the country. The party is trying to corner the BJP government by raising people's issues, including law and order.

# Rifts emerge in Team Shivraj in MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The rifts between Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ministers in Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led Madhya Pradesh government, are continuing to emerge. According to media reports, even during cabinet meetings the ministers are indulging in altercations with one another. However, the ministers have denied any rift between them.

The latest instance of heated exchanges was between YashodharaRajeScindia and Arvind Bhadauria. According to media reports, the controversy started over the dress of Forest Minister Vijay Shah who wore a kurta pyjama in such a way that YashodharaRaje sitting behind him got angry. Arvind Bhadauria taunted Vijay Shah saying, "Shahji you are the king, and she is the Maharaja."

There was a heated exchange between the Sports Minister and the



Cooperatives Minister before the arrival of CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan who was not present in the meeting during the spat. Earlier, there was a spat between ministers Pradyuman Singh Tomar and YashodharaRajeScindia during a meeting. Scindia had expressed her opinion regarding the working style of Pradyuman Singh which ended in a confrontation. Later, both the ministers denied the controversy when the matter surfaced in the media.

The fight between Tomar and Scindia was taken seriously by the party organi-

zation and Tomar was also summoned to the party office. The Congress has taken a jibe at the spat between the BJP ministers. Congress State unit President Kamal Nath's media coordinator Narendra Saluja said, "Union Minister JyotiradityaScindia's aunt is picking up fights with ruling party's ministers in the state. After the spat with BJP minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar, Vijay Shah and Arvind Bhadauria, this is just the beginning of the rift between BJP's old guard and the young brigade leaders."

Political analysts believe that the image of the government gets affected by the controversies that emerge during the meeting of ministers. Similarly, the inconsistencies revealed during the handling of Covid-19 have impacted the image of the government and now with such controversies emerging in the open, it sends a message that the state government is not working properly. The opposition, too, gets an ideal opportunity to attack the ruling party.

# "Live streaming of Court proceedings at MP High Court Jabalpur and its Bench at Indore and Gwalior"

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The live streaming of courtroom proceedings has been a much debated topic around the world but has been largely settled of late, with judicial establishments in most countries, especially with democratic dispensations, ruling in the favour of the same. In India the Hon'ble Supreme Court, in a judgment in the Swapnil Tripathi case, has also vocally advocated a move towards greater transparency of and in the courtroom by telecasting the proceedings live. The judgment can be considered landmark not only for its far-sightedness but also for the extent of the research and



deliberations that have gone into pronouncing it.

"Indisputably, open trials and access to the public during hearing of cases before the Court is an accepted proposition." In order to imbue greater transparency, inclusivity and foster access to justice, it was proposed to enable live-streaming of court proceedings to all the Stake

holders. The High Court of Madhya Pradesh, Jabalpur has taken initiatives for live streaming of court proceedings of the High Court and pilot of Live streaming started from 21.06.2021 in the Court of Hon'ble the Chief Justice and from 28.06.2021 onwards the final Live streaming of court proceedings of the High Court has been started from

Division Bench-I of Hon'ble Shri Justice Mohammad Rafiq, Chief Justice High Court of Madhya Pradesh. The live streaming of Court proceedings are available through website of the High Court using digital platform "YouTube" and giving benefits to all respective stake holders. As on 15.07.2021, total 10 courts number of Court proceedings are live streamed at High Court of Madhya Pradesh, Jabalpur and Bench at Indore and Gwalior and plan has been made that by the month end of July, 2021 Court proceedings of all the Courts of the High Court of M.P., Jabalpur and its Bench at Indore and Gwalior shall be live streamed.

# CRISP Bhopal organised an Embroidery workshop

Team Absolute | Bhopal

State awardee Asma Ali came to CRISP to give a workshop on embroidery to the students, she shared her experience and wisdom of work with the students.

She even shared that she never uses the exact tools for the embroidery; instead she does a free hand embroidery on any piece of fabric, she shared her miniature designs of animals and flowers, telling about the intricate details of hand embroidery. She is inspired by nature and incorporates natural elements in her art. From combinations to style! Students were mesmerized by her embroidery details and got to learn the freestyle as well. Fashion design faculty Rani Malviya was present there to help out the students with the details. For interior design students they got to learn about the importance of Hand embroidery in Home furnishings. Centre for Research and Industrial Staff Performance, (CRISP), Bhopal has been established in the year 1997 as a premier



service providing institution in Hi-tech areas. The institution has an autonomous status as Society under the bilateral cooperation between the Govt of Madhya Pradesh and the Federal Republic of Germany under their Indo-German Technical Cooperation agreement therein the Ministry of SME, Government of India was the line Ministry. The Department of Technical Education & Skill Development, Government of Madhya

Pradesh and German Technical Cooperation agency (GIZ) were the implementation partners. The Society has representation from the industry, the academia, Government and the German partners. The Headquarter of CRISP spreads over 2.5 Acres of Land and is located in Central India, in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, It has established its centres at several national & international locations. Students learned about design conceptualization, working different stitches, adding 3D effect, filling work, design explorations and much more. Asma Ali also explained how to create 3D effects, geometrical, natural and embossed designs as well as making appropriate use of accessories and space throughout a design. Talking about colour combinations, she said that when working with brighter colours as the base, thread selection becomes very important to enhance a design. A muting or balancing colour must be used within the design to balance it. She also spoke about the technique of merging and muting embroidery.

# Twelve tourism units get Trip Advisors Annual Travelers Choice Award

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Twelve units of Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation have bagged the Trip Advisors Annual Travelers Award for the year 2021 and Gwalior based unit of corporation Tansen Residency has received the Trip Advisors Traveler's Choice Category "Best of the Best" Award 2021. The world-renowned tourist guide organization 'Trip Advisor' United States of America has announced these awards.

The 12 units of State Tourism Development Corporation that have received the Trip Advisors Annual Travelers Award are Palash Residency Bhopal,

Bagheera Jungle Resort Mocha, Betwa Retreat Orchha, Bison Resort Madhai, Holiday Homes, Amarkantak, Jungle Camp, Panna, Kiplings Court Pench, Marble Rocks Bhedaghat, Safari Lodge, Mukki, Sheeshmahal Orchha, White Tiger Forest Lodge Bandhavgarh. Managing Director of the Corporation Shri S. Vishwanathan while expressing happiness over the world class awards being given to 12 units of the corporation, said that this matter is a proud achievement not only for Madhya Pradesh tourism but also for the entire Madhya Pradesh. Efficient management and guidance of all the senior managers of the units and all the staff working in the units

have made maximum contribution for this achievement. Madhya Pradesh Tourism expressed its gratitude to the corporation family and the staff of all the units and all the tourists visiting Madhya Pradesh for voting for the above achievement.

Every year, this award is given to the tourists on the basis of the reports received from the tourists visiting various places all over the world by the 'Trip Advisor' company, which provides guidance regarding all tourist destinations at the global level. Travellers' Choice Awards are given on the basis of ratings given by the tourists from around the world to various cities, hotels, restaurants and places.



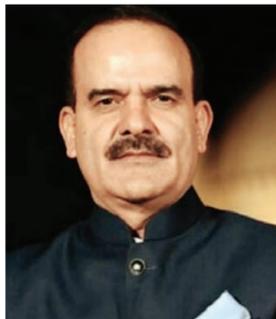
# MAHA ACB TO PROBE EX-MUMBAI TOP COP PARAM BIR SINGH

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Fresh trouble was brewing for former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh as the Maharashtra government on Thursday ordered the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to investigate corruption charges levelled against him by a junior officer.

Currently the Commandant General of Home Guards, Singh has earlier served as city police chief of both Mumbai and Thane, and is reported to be on medical leave since over two months.

Following a complaint by Mumbai Police Inspector Anup Dange alleging that he was approached by a person claiming to be a relative of Singh and sought gratification of Rs 2 crore to reinstate him, the ACB had sought the state government's clearance for an open enquiry against the ex-top cop. Dange, who was previously attached to Gamdevi Police Station



and later Mumbai Police Control Room (South Region), had been suspended during Singh's tenure.

He said in his detailed complaint that after he had taken action against a bar owner in 2019, Singh had ordered his suspension, and also accused him of trying to shield some elements with mafia links when he

was the DG, ACB.

With the state government's green signal given last Monday, the ACB is now likely summon Singh to record his statement and submit its report on the open enquiry to the Home Department.

The controversial Singh already has a first information report lodged against him for alleged wrongs committed when he was Thane Police chief and is named as one of the witnesses in the cases pertaining to the SUV with gelatin sticks planted near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's home, and the subsequent death of vehicle owner Mansukh Hiran.

After his sensational 'letter-bomb' of April targeting then state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, which embarrassed the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi government, the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate recorded his statements.

## PATIENT BEATS DOCTOR WITH AT COVID CENTRE

Mumbai: The police said the doctor sustained severe injuries and has been admitted to the ICU.

A 55-year-old Covid-19 patient attacked a doctor with a saline stand at a government hospital in Alibag, Raigad on Wednesday. The police said the doctor sustained severe injuries and has been admitted to the ICU. The incident took place around 4.30 am at the Covid-19 care centre at Alibag District General Hospital, where the patient was admitted four days ago. The police said Dr Swapnadeep Thale, who was on duty, was sitting on a chair when the patient came from behind and started hitting him on the head with a saline stand. "The patient has been booked for assault. The patient, however, has not revealed the reason behind the attack," said an officer.

# Maharashtra govt. says pleas by Bhima Koregaon accused are 'fallacious'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Thursday told the Bombay High Court that the plea challenging the order of extending the period of filing a chargesheet in the Bhima Koregaon violence case by the Sessions Court is "fallacious."

Advocate General (A-G) Ashutosh Kumbhakoni was arguing before a Division Bench of Justice S.S. Shinde and NJ Jamadar. The court was hearing a petition filed by Sudha Bharadwaj along with other accused in the case alleging that the Pune Sessions Court Judge KD Wadane was not authorised to take cognisance of the supplementary chargesheet and to grant an extension to Pune Police for filing the chargesheet.

Kumbhakoni pointed out that on May 17, 2018, provi-

sions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) were added to the case, and on January 24, 2020, the Centre passed an order to transfer the probe to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). He said the petitioners' contention is that the special NIA court comes into the picture after the UAPA is added. But just because a Special Court has been constituted does not mean the NIA court will come into the picture in the case, he added.

The Bench asked: Special Courts have been constituted, then why not take the case before the Special Courts? The A-G replied that the Special Courts come into the picture only after the NIA comes into the picture. He also said the special NIA court had no jurisdiction to try and decide any pre-trial proceedings, and under the UAPA, the prosecution has

no option but to go to the Sessions Court.

The arguments will continue on July 23. In the last hearing, advocate Yug Chaudhry representing Bharadwaj, who is lodged at the Byculla jail, had pointed out that Wadane passed two significant orders, the first of which was on November 26, 2018, when he granted an extension of 180 days' time period to the Pune police for filing the chargesheet in the case, as opposed to the mandated 90 days according to the Code of Criminal Procedure. He said that on December 21, 2019, Wadane had received the chargesheet, taken cognisance of it, and issued processes. Chaudhry also said that Wadane had acted outside of his jurisdiction and was not authorised to do so.

# Maha Cong takes out bicycle rally to protest fuel price hike

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra Congress took out a bicycle rally in Mumbai and other parts of the state to protest against the galloping fuel prices, here on Thursday.

State Congress President Nana Patole, Mumbai party chief Bhai Jagtap, ministers, legislators and other senior leaders pedaled their way from Hanging Garden to Raj Bhavan in Malabar Hill in south Mumbai.

While some carried banners or posters, the others raised slogans attacking the Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre for its failure to control the spiraling prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas. Later, the Congress leaders called on



Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari to apprise him of the issue which has created havoc with the common man and led to runaway inflation affecting all sectors of the economy, said a party spokesperson. The delegation submitted a memorandum to the Governor highlighting the demands and the problems of very survival encountered by the ordinary masses due to the fuel price

hikes that has led to a cascading effect on prices of all other commodities or services. Today's agitation was part of the 10-day long drive organised by the Congress all over Maharashtra to create public awareness on the issue with bullock-cart processions, bicycle rallies, foot-marches, social media campaigns, mass-contact programs, etc, said the spokesperson.

# Work on India's longest road tunnel to start in Mumbai from March 2022

Team Absolute | Mumbai

With the detailed project report completed and land acquisition started, the work on building India's longest (11.80 km) road tunnel linking Thane-Borivali - passing beneath the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) - will start from March 2022, Maharashtra PWD Minister Eknath Gaikwad said on Thursday.

The Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) project, which will comprise a 10.25 km double tunnel and 1.55 km junction, is slated to cost around Rs 11,235 crore and expected to be completed in about 66 months. The 6-lane twin tunnel (3 lanes in each direction) will enable vehicles to zip at 80-kmph and slash the travel time, from the current 60 minutes to barely 15 minutes, between Borivali on the Western



Express Highway to Thane, besides decongesting the Ghodbunder Road, Shinde said. The twin tunnel will run underneath the lush green SGNP for which the MSRDC is taking special

precautions to avoid causing harm to its biodiversity or its flora and fauna, which includes leopards, spotted deer, Sambar, civets, different types of monkeys, Indian flying fox, pythons

and other snakes, big and small reptiles including crocodiles, birds, insects, thousands of plant species, etc.

For this, the MSRDC will deploy Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) - similar to the ones deployed for digging the underground sections of Mumbai Metro projects - to cause minimum disturbances to wildlife in the 87-square km SGNP.

The first inter-district road tunnel project in the state, it will entail acquiring 16.54 hectares private and 40.46 hectare of SGNP lands and will connect Borivali WEH in Mumbai with the Tikuj-ni-Wadi on the Thane side. The project will have cross-tunnels every 300 metres, drainage systems, smoke detector, and jet fan to keep the air clean and fresh, will result in fuel savings of over a million lakh tonnes and reduce emissions by 36 per cent, the minister said.

# 'Sharad Pawar = Remote Control': Maharashtra Congress Leader's Latest Dig

As the comment against a senior ally spurred questions, Nana Patole tried to tamp down the negative connotations of the term "remote control".

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Congress leader Nana Patole described NCP chief Sharad Pawar as "the remote control" of the state's coalition government in his latest digs at allies before trying to temper it with an explanation.

"There is no doubt that Sharad Pawar is the remote control (of the Maharashtra government). We (Congress) do not make statements against any big leader, but any outsider should look into one's own party before making statements," Nana Patole said today.

As the comment against a senior ally spurred questions, Patole tried to tamp down the negative connotations of the term "remote control".

"Sharad Pawar is the NCP chief. I am the Congress chief, so we want to strengthen our parties respectively. He is the remote control but he has a bigger role in making this MVA (Maha Vikas Aghadi) government. Sharad Pawar gives us guidance and therefore he is a remote control," he said.

In a stream of unfiltered statements over the past few days, Nana Patole has goaded both the Shiv Sena of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) to alternate between public retorts and damage control.

It all began with his comments declaring that the Congress would contest the next assembly election in Maharashtra separately. The comments caused disquiet in the ideologically disparate alliance of parties who came together in 2019 to keep the BJP out of power in the state.

Both the Shiv Sena and NCP dismissed the statements, but Patole did not stop repeating it. Instead, he justified the comment saying the Congress is rising in Maharashtra and would make a comeback on its own.

Last week, Patole accused his own government of spying on him. But he later retracted, saying he was "misinterpreted" and accusing the BJP of trying to create a rift in the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress alliance.

"The Congress is coming back in Maharashtra...have been saying it will be number one party in 2024. The result is BJP is trying to create problems in Maha Vikas Aghadi government. But the government will complete its full term," the Congress leader told reporters.

Sharad Pawar had a trenchant response to Patole's comments: "I don't want to talk about minor people. If Sonia Gandhi would have said something, I would have reacted."

Yesterday, Patole struck again, taking a swipe at the NCP over the 2014 election. He said the Congress was "cheated" in 2014 as the NCP decided to contest alone. "The decision to contest the 2024 Maharashtra assembly election alone will be taken by the party... Like NCP took the decision in 2014, we have our own strategy," said Patole.

## HM SEEKS REPORT ON HOW DISMISSED COP WAS REINSTATED

Mumbai: After being dismissed from the force for threatening and demanding a bribe of Rs 22 lakh from a liquor shopowner in January 2019, Inspector Anand Bhoir was reinstated and posted at the police control room two months ago. Home Minister Dilip Walse Patil has asked his department to submit a report on how a dismissed police officer was reinstated in the Mumbai Police in May. After being dismissed from the force for threatening and demanding a bribe of Rs 22 lakh from a liquor shopowner in January 2019, Inspector Anand Bhoir was reinstated and posted at the police control room two months ago. Bhoir was caught red-handed by the personnel of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, who were approached by the shopowner. Following a departmental inquiry, he was dismissed by then Mumbai Police commissioner Sanjay Barve last September.

# Liquor Has Become Cheaper Than Fuel During BJP Regime

Former Maharashtra chief minister Ashok Chavan led a protest march against rising prices from Old Mondha area to the district collector's office.



Team Absolute | Nanded

Thanks to price hikes, liquor has become cheaper than petrol and diesel in the country, Congress leader and Maharashtra PWD minister Ashok Chavan said here on Thursday.

The former chief minister led a protest march against rising prices from Old Mondha area to the district collector's office.

"Earlier, during our government, when fuel prices went up by a rupee or two, opposition leaders would

launch agitations. Today they are in power and the per litre fuel prices have crossed ₹ 100 and LPG cylinder prices have tripled," he said, addressing the protesters.

This has led to the price of every commodity going up and transportation costs rising, the Congress leader said.

"During the BJP regime, liquor has become cheaper than fuel," he added. He also said that it was up

to the Union government to give reservation to Maratha, Dhangan and OBC communities.

"Since the issue is before the central government, BJP leaders in Maharashtra are quiet," Chavan alleged.

During the protest march, a cycle rickshaw on which Mayor Abdul Sattar and his supporters were standing overturned, but nobody was injured in the incident.

# Maharashtra expected to ease few curbs, relax shop timings

Chiefminister Uddhav Thackeray may take a decision in consultation with the state-appointed task force in the next few days.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government is expected to take a call on relaxations from the ongoing Covid-19-enforced lockdown in the next few days. Besides the relaxations from mandatory RT-PCR tests for domestic fliers, the state is expected to extend the timings of shops and establishments. Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray may take a decision in consultation with the state-appointed task force in the next few days.

State health minister Rajesh Tope said the government is positive about relaxations for shops and restaurants, and a decision is likely to be taken soon. Commercial establishments have been demanding for relaxations in their operation timings and have said that they were ready to follow the compulsion of vaccinating staff. Tope said the final decision over it will be taken by the CM, who heads the state disaster management authority. "There was a detailed presentation made in the state cabinet on Wednesday, but no decision was taken over the relaxations. We have decided to do away with the mandatory RT-PCR [tests] for the domestic fliers coming in from other states if they are fully vaccinated. Similarly, shopkeepers and restaurants have been demand-



ing more relaxations for the operators fully vaccinated. The final decision will be taken by the CM," he said.

Tope said 92% of the 104,000 active patients are in 10 districts, with the remaining 26 districts having only 8% active patients. "The daily caseload has been below 9,000 over the past more than one month. The growth rate in Maharashtra is much lower than other states. Although there are instructions by the Centre about third wave, there are no signs of

immediate third wave. The decision about relaxations is expected to be taken soon," he said. According to officials from Mantralaya, the state-appointed task force has submitted its report to the chief minister. The task force of leading doctors has reportedly recommended the relaxations in the districts with test positivity rate of less than 5%, high vaccination cover of more than 70% and where the Covid-appropriate behaviour is strictly followed. The state government is also of the opinion that since there was no significant surge in cases in districts and cities like Nagpur, Navi Mumbai, Thane, which had implemented level 1 and 2 relaxations for some time last month, a few relaxations can be given. "We have completed 100 days of lockdown after starting roll-out on April 5 after second wave hit. With various reports, including that from INSACOG, over the infection scare from the Delta Plus variant, there is no reason to continue the curbs. We will have to go for relaxations in the next few days," another official said. The task force and the officials from departments involved in Covid-19 management are strictly against the opening up of the local trains in MMR for general public. They point at the fact that the second wave hit MMR only after the local trains were opened for all. "The state will have to take very cautious approach, while unlocking the

activities. The Centre has already alerted all states about the potential third wave and advised to avoid crowding at public places. The percentage of the oxygen-occupied beds has again increased to 14% over the past few days. In such a backdrop, the lenient unlocking may cost us dear. Chief minister is in favour of graded relaxations," he said. Meanwhile, Tope said that they expect the supply of 42 million doses of vaccine by the central government in August. "The centre is expecting the supply of 420 million doses from the manufacturers' next months. If distributed to the states in the proportion of the population, 10% of it should be supplied to Maharashtra. We are also talking to the private hospitals and corporate houses requesting them to procure maximum of 25% stock allotted to them from the vaccines manufactured in the country. Presently, we have been able to vaccinate around 300,000 people daily on an average owing to the short supply by the Centre," he said. Tope also announced to recruit 1,000 doctors in the next few days as part of the preparedness ahead of the potential third wave. State cabinet on Wednesday also decided to extend the retirement age of the doctors and medical officials in government services by one year, taking it to 62 years.



EDITOR'S SPECS

'Unscientific' tree plantation

Even as Uttar Pradesh undertakes a massive tree plantation drive, a retired scientist and river engineer from the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has warned against 'unscientific plantation of trees which could aggravate flood threat'.

OUTLIERS: A MACRO AND BOND UPDATE

Suyash Choudhary

A persistent theme of India's bond curve is its very attractive steepness even up to mid-duration points. This has allowed for substantial carry plus roll down benefits from a portfolio standpoint.



growth recovery. Even as he referred to being watchful on inflation momentum, the reading received in June hadn't apparently upset the 'appreciat' of preferences so to speak.

mately 5 bps a month will holding cash outperform holding the bond. Hence, a portfolio hedge cannot have an indefinite shelf life.

ment of monsoon delay locally to contend with. But these are within the realm of modellable risks (unless crude oil prices spike substantially again) and seem consistent with an underlying view of a gradual increase in bond yields.

Yoga to keep stress in-check

N. Lothungbeni Humtsoe

Yoga can help you manage stress, and the best part is it does not take a lot of time. You don't have to spend hours on the mat or invest years in learning complicated postures.



By changing the speed, pace, and quality of your breath, you can calm down your nervous system, thereby moving your body from a state of stress to one of relaxation.

doors, you can also look far into the distance. Taking a few moments to look outside, preferably at some greenery or standing by the window and looking outside in natural light, is also very helpful.

anytime you're on an empty stomach. Just remember not to become overly conscious of the breath and start forcing it to breathe deeply.

international

Indian seaman makes \$1mn in Dubai sitting at home

Joy Chakravarty | Dubai
An Indian citizen, who purchased his ticket online from Thane, won the \$1 million first prize in the latest Dubai Duty Free Millennium Millionaire draw.



And Indians have been pretty lucky, having won the raffle 181 times out of 363 times it has been held since 1999.

child's education. So, the list is long. The prize money will serve all these purposes.

Bush calls troops withdrawal from Af 'a mistake'

Maine (US): Former US President George W. Bush has labelled the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan "a mistake", in an interview with DW.



Myanmar army kills 16 members of civilian resistance group

Anwsha Bhaumik | Naypyitaw/Kolkata | Agencies

The residents of Kani township in Myanmar's Sagaing Division have paid a heavy price for resisting the entry of Burmese soldiers into the town last month.



and the other from another region. Nothing is known of the whereabouts and fate of the others who were rounded up.

'Israel should abide by peace agreements with Palestine'

The Prime Minister made the appeal during a meeting on Wednesday with former US Representative Robert Wexler in the West Bank city of Ramallah, according to a statement issued by Ishtayé's office.

preceded by confidence-building measures that have to be taken by the Israeli government, Xinhua news agency quoted the statement as saying.

Iran capable of producing 90% enriched uranium: Rouhani



Tehran: Outgoing Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that the country is capable of producing enriched uranium of 90 per cent purity.

Death toll from severe winter storm in Texas reaches 210

The death toll from the severe winter storm that hit the US state of Texas in February has reached 210, local media reported Wednesday.

Houston | Agencies

Fifty-nine storm-related fatalities were added to the overall tally, according to the new update from the Texas Department of State Health Services issued on Wednesday.



could grow further as more death records are reviewed and more information is gathered, officials said.

EU UNVEILS 'FIT FOR 55' CLIMATE PACKAGE



Brussels: The European Commission has unveiled a comprehensive roadmap for realising the European Union's (EU) ambitious target of reducing its net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030 and to become climate-neutral by 2050.



## Lady Victoria Hervey wows in a glittering pink gown at Cannes

London | Agencies

Lady Victoria Hervey looked sensational in a glittering pink gown with a thigh high slit at the premiere of *The Story of My Wife* during Cannes Film Festival on Wednesday.

Her gown was embellished with a silver webbed pattern and sparkly rhinestones on her corseted bodice. The beauty elongated her long legs even further with stylish caged silver heels.

Her blonde locks were styled in loose curls and her glam make-up enhanced her flawless features. She accessorised with silver moon shaped earrings and an elegant bracelet. Injecting yet more colour, Victoria toted a small gold clutch bag that comple-

mented her silver shoes.

*The Story of My Wife* is an adaptation of Milan Fust's 1942 novel. The story is set in the 1920s and sees sea captain Jakob Storr makes a bet with a friend that he will marry the first woman who enters the cafe they are sat in - just as character Lizzy arrives, according to Variety.

The novel was first published in Hungary in 1942, but not translated into English until the late 1980s.

Lea Seydoux plays the lead role of Lizzy, however she has tested positive for Covid-19 and had to skip the festival.



## Britney Spears cartwheels while celebrating conservatorship victory

Los Angeles | Agencies

Britney Spears cartwheeled in her new Instagram post to celebrate her latest conservatorship hearing victory and called to "Free Britney" for the first time EVER. Britney, 39, broke her silence on the fan-led movement that's been supporting her for years as she was riding on a horse on her new Instagram video. The pop star had her hair pulled up and wore a white top as she galloped on the horse. In the second half of the video, the Crossroads actress appeared to be near a lake and woods.

The pop singer cartwheeled across while wearing blue shorts.

Britney captioned the video: "Coming along, folks...coming along! New with real representation today. I feel GRATITUDE and BLESSED! Thank you to my fans who are supporting me. You have no idea what it means to me to be supported by such awesome fans!"

"God bless you all! Pssss this is me celebrating by horseback riding and doing cartwheels today!!!! #FreeBritney!"



## FREDDIE HIGHMORE REVEALS HE RESEARCHED FOR 'THE GOOD DOCTOR' ROLE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Freddie Highmore has opened up about how much research work went into his role in the upcoming fourth season of "The Good Doctor". In the American medical drama television series, Highmore stars as Shaun Murphy, a young autistic savant surgical resident at the fictional San Jose St. Bonaventure Hospital.

"For playing a role with autism, I think the research was incredibly important. Probably the most important thing of all when researching this part, was making sure that we portrayed autism as authentically as possible," Highmore said.

He added: "In terms of that research, we have a consultant who's on board the show full time and there are people in my life that I know who have autism. And documentaries, books, pieces of literature that David Shore and I would share back and forth as we tried to come up with this character of Shaun." Talking about his character, he said: "At the same time, we were aware that Shaun was never going to be able to represent everyone who is on the spectrum. He is his own individual, and we're telling his own individual story, and so we kind of focused on that as well." He shared about the "unexpected return" of Dr. Melendez, played by Nicholas Gonzalez, in the first two episodes of season four. Highmore said it felt "right emotionally". "The Good Doctor" season 4 airs on Colors Infinity.

## Candice Brown finds love with rugby player Nicky Mercer

London | Agencies

Candice Brown steps out with her new hunky rugby player boyfriend as they hold hands while walking their dogs.

The Great British Bake Off 2016 winner, 36, has moved on with TUI regional pilot manager Nicky Mercer after she split from her husband last year.

She wore denim shorts with a blue t-shirt and sunglasses as she carried her Pomeranian Sybil in a sling. Nicky accompanied her for the romantic stroll in East London and held her other dog, a pug called Dennis, on a lead. He wore a classic England shirt that showed off his arm tattoos, with sunglasses, a chain and ripped jeans. Nicky is normally seen donning the pink and black strip of his beloved Aylesbury Rugby Football Club, Bucks, which he plays centre for.

It comes after she and her tree surgeon husband Liam Macaulay revealed they were going their separate ways, less than two years on from their wedding day.



## Kate Ferdinand admits parenting struggle

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kate Ferdinand who is married to Rio Ferdinand admitted to a very common parenting struggle - as she failed to get a snap without a glimpse of son Cree's toys. She told her followers: "Given up with trying to hide the babies toys, they are everywhere. (sic)"

In the image Kate is seen wearing a slinky grey outfit, which showed off her figure perfectly, while behind her Cree's jumperoo could be seen. The former Towie star gave birth to adorable baby Cree last December. She is also step-mum to Lorenz, 14, Tate, 12, and Tia,

who Rio shared with his late wife Rebecca. Kate recently said she would be a "madwoman" to have another baby. She told the MailOnline: "I think four is enough, there's already a lot going on and lots of crying. It's a busy house. So I think I'd be a madwoman if I wanted any more! Four is plenty for now." The reality TV star went on to say how becoming a mum has changed her outlook on many things. Now she no longer puts so much pressure on herself. She explained that most of the time she doesn't look glamorous like she does on Instagram and instead spends her days make-up free, running after the kids.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Michael B. Jordan has garnered a major fanbase all across the globe with his screen presence in films like "Fruitvale Station", "Creed" and as the comicbook supervillain Erik Killmonger in "Black Panther". He has opened up about his thoughts on working in Hindi cinema. Over the years, several international stars including Sylvester Stallone, Will Smith, Denise Richards, Clive Standen, Ben Kingsley and Toby Stephens among others have trekked Bollywood, in full fledged roles or cameo appearances. Has Jordan, who has a whopping fan following of over 17.7 million on Instagram and 1.3 million on Twitter, ever thought of working in a Hindi film? Pat came the reply from Jordan: "I actually have." "In the sense I have thought about it. I love people. India is some place I never had the opportunity to go to just yet. But (I) would love to work on a project over there. Like a joint production on something, I think that would be pretty cool," the actor added. Jordan's latest release was "Without Remorse", on OTT in April. The film takes him into the world of bestselling author Tom Clancy's espionage and military-ops. Directed by Stefano Sollima, the film revolves around Clancy's 1993 novel of the same name and casts him as John Clark. The film also stars Guy Pearce, Jamie Bell, Jodie Turner-Smith, Luke Mitchell, Brett Gelman, Colman Domingo, Lauren London and Jacob Scipio in pivotal roles. It was released on Amazon Prime Video.

## MICHAEL B. JORDAN OPENS UP ON WORKING ON A PROJECT IN INDIA

### ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Amber Turner



# T20 SERIES: DANIELLE POWERS ENGLAND TO WIN OVER INDIA

Chelmsford | Agencies

Opener Danielle Wyatt, who shot to limelight seven years ago for proposing Virat Kohli on Twitter, smashed an unbeaten 89 off 56 balls late Wednesday night to help England Women beat India Women by eight wickets in the third and final T20. The win helped England win the T20 series 2-1 and clinch the all-format series 10-6. England had earlier won the ODI series by the same 2-1 margin while the one-off Test at the start of the tour had ended in a draw. The 30-year-old Danielle hammered 12 fours and a six in her 56-ball knock as England overhauled the 153/6 that India had made after electing to bat first. Opener Smriti Mandhana, who has blown hot and cold through the tour, made 70 off 51 deliveries (8x4s, 2x6s) to carry the Indian batting. Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur hit 36 off 26 deliveries while Richa Ghosh chipped in with 20 off 13 balls. Left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone continued with her good form, picking three wickets for 35.



India managed to remove Tammy Beaumont (11) early, with the score on 20, but then faced an onslaught from Danielle and Natalie Sciver (42 off 36, 4x4s), who both added 112 runs for the second wicket in 12.5

overs. The win was England Women's 50th at home. They are the only team to achieve such a feat.

**Brief scores**  
India Women 153/6 in 20 overs (Smriti Mandhana 70, Harmanpreet Kaur 36, Sophie Ecclestone 3/35, K Brunt 2/27) lost to England Women 154/2 in 18.4 overs (Danielle Wyatt 89 not out, Natalie Sciver 42).

# Pant tests positive for Covid-19, BCCI under scrutiny

London | Agencies

Indian cricket board's decision to allow players to visit sporting venues as well as other public places in England and mingle with crowd during their three-week break has come under spotlight after it emerged that wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant has tested positive for Covid-19. Pant's training assistant-cum-net bowler Dayanand Garani has tested positive for Covid-19 in England where the Test squad is preparing for a five-Test series. The cricketer had visited the Euro 2020 pre-quarter final between England and Germany on June 29 and had later tweeted pictures of himself with a few of his friends sitting in the crowd.

Hanuma Vihari and Jasprit Bumrah are the other players to have visited the Wembley to watch Euro 2020 football. Team coach Ravi Shastri and premier off-spinner Ashwin, who played a County Championship match for Surrey this week, had visited Wimbledon in the break. Pant, who had not stayed in the team hotel during the break period, tested positive on July 8. He is asymptomatic and currently undergoing self-isolation at the place where he reported positive. He is being closely monitored by the BCCI Medical Team and is on his way to recovery. He will be able to join the squad in Durham after returning



two negative RT-PCR tests," said a statement from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). The Board has also put in isolation three members of the squad who came in close contact with Garani.

"The BCCI medical team have identified B. Arun, bowling coach, [wicketkeeper] Wriddhiman Saha and Abhimanyu Easwaran as close contacts of Garani, who was in the team hotel when he tested positive following RT-PCR tests on 14th July. The four personnel will undergo 10-day isolation and will remain in their respective rooms in the team hotel in London," added the statement.

"The entire Indian contingent including travelling family members and caretakers were administered with the second dose of Covid vaccine earlier this month in London. To mitigate any further risks, the Indian contingent is taking the Lateral Flow Test on a daily basis," said the statement further. Pant will not be joining the team in the camp in Durham that begins on Thursday.

The Indian team, which plays the first of five Tests against England from August 4, will begin preparations for the series England with a three-day warm-up game at Riverside ground against a County XI from July 20.

# GOKULAM KERALA TO PLAY IN AFC WOMEN'S CLUB C'SHIP

New Delhi:

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has nominated Gokulam Kerala FC (GKFC) to represent India in the AFC Women's Club Championship 2020-21. The winners of the Indian Women's League compete in the AFC Women's Club Championship. But since the fifth edition of the tournament was not held, the AIFF has nominated the GKFC, the champions of the fourth edition. "We would like to inform you that after having a discussion with the local organising committee (Odisha Sports), the AIFF has decided to postpone the fifth edition of the IWL for a few months, keeping in mind the monsoon, and an expected third wave of infections," said AIFF general secretary Kushal Das in a letter addressed to AFC general secretary Dato Windsor John. The fifth edition of the IWL was originally to be held in Bhubaneswar by Odisha Sports in coordination with the AIFF. But it was postponed due to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Keeping the options open, the league committee then took a decision to conduct it later, subject to health parameters. "We will continue investing in women's football. We are happy that our women's team will play the continental championship before our men's team. We want our women to lift the AFC trophy first and set an example for our men's team," said GKFC chairman Gokulam Gopalan. The 2019-20 season win was the first ever title triumph for the Gokulam Kerala FC.



# India to host Australia, New Zealand in next WTC cycle

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian cricket team will play two tough away series at the start of their 2021-2023 World Test Championship 2 (WTC) campaign, beginning with a five-Test series in England from August 4 and then in South Africa, also this year.

However, beyond that India will have it a bit easy as they play Bangladesh away while New Zealand, Australia and Sri Lanka will come to play.

Like in the previous WTC cycle, India and Pakistan are not scheduled to play any series.

In the previous cycle, which was also the inaugural cycle of the WTC India had played New Zealand and Australia away and also visited West Indies. While India lost both the Tests in New Zealand, they won the Test series in West Indies and Australia. In the final played last month, India lost to New Zealand at Southampton by eight wickets.

Australia are scheduled to play all their away series against sub-continent teams. They will face India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the overseas legs.

At home, they host England this year,



and then South Africa and West Indies.

England, on the other hand, will play their away series against Australia, West Indies and Pakistan. They host India, South Africa, and New Zealand.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed the changed points system for the second edition of the WTC.

Each match of the upcoming WTC will now be contested for the same number of points -- 12 for a win, four for a draw, and six for a tie, a change from the previous system where the same number of points were allocated to each

series, divided across the number of matches played. "We received feedback that the previous points system needed to be simplified. The Cricket Committee took this into consideration when proposing a new, standardised points system for each match," said ICC acting Chief Executive Geoff Allardice in an ICC statement.

As in the first edition of the championship, the nine teams will play six series each, three home and three away with the cut-off date being March 31, 2023.

# 'RS 10 LAKH 6 GUJ WOMEN PLAYERS HEADING FOR OLYMPICS, PARALYMPICS': VIJAY RUPANI

Gandhinagar: Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani on Wednesday announced a financial aid of Rs 10 lakh each of the six women players participating in the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, which commence on July 23.

In the entire history of the state, this is the first time that six women players from it are representing the country in the sports mega event.

To incentivise these players, the Gujarat government decided to financially aid them with Rs 10 lakh each.

Rupani also sent his best wishes to "all the six daughters of Gujarat" and hoped that they bring glory to the state.

Ahmedabad's Maana Patel will be representing India in the 100 metres backstroke event.

The 21-year-old has over 180 medals in her kitty, including 25 international, 72 national and 82 state level achievements. Ankita Raina has qualified for tennis and Elavenil Valarivan for shooting.

The other three women have qualified for the Paralympics. Gandhinagar's Parul Parmar for badminton, Bhavina Patel for para table tennis and Sonal Patel for para tennis. Gujarat's last representative in the games had been hockey player Govindrao Sawant in the 1960 Rome Olympics. Before that, Shankarrao Thorat represented India in wrestling in the 1936 Olympics.



# Chiellini claims 'Kiricocho' curse on Saka in Euro final penalty

Rome | Agencies

Italian defender Giorgio Chiellini has claimed that he put the 'Kiricocho' curse on England's Bukayo Saka, who missed the last penalty in the Euro 2020 final shootout at the Wembley Stadium on Sunday. Saka's spot-kick was saved by goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, handing Italy the Euro 2020 title 3-2 on penalties after the two teams were level on 1-1 in 120 minutes. Just before Saka took the kick, Chiellini screamed "Kiricocho" -- a word that has been used by footballers for decades to inflict bad luck on



the opposition. Responding to a question from ESPN Argentina, Chiellini responded in Italian: "Hello Christian, I confirm everything! Kiricocho!". There was a video uploaded by

UEFA on its Twitter handle where Chiellini was spotted mouthing something as Saka began his run-up. The words have now been identified as 'Kiricocho'. The origins of the curse are

very interesting. Juan Carlos 'Kiricocho', or Quiricocho, according to some versions of the tale, was a die-hard supporter of Argentinian club Estudiantes de la Plata in the 1980s. The fan used to attend some of the club's training sessions. "Kiricocho was a kid from La Plata who was always with us, and since that year we were champions (in 1982), we adopted him as our mascot," Bilardo once said. The legend of Kiricocho has since expanded, especially in the Spanish-speaking world. The players now utter the word whenever they wish to put a curse on an opposition player.

# 4th T20I: Aussies prevail over Windies in last ball thriller

Gros Islet (St Lucia) | Agencies

Mitchell Marsh's 75 off 44 balls (4x4s, 6x6s) and Aaron Finch's 53 off 37 deliveries (5x4s, 3x6s) helped Australia register a four-run win over West Indies in the fourth T20 International here late on Wednesday night. Australia, who won the toss and elected to bat, scored 189/6 in 20 overs. Finch and Marsh shared a 114-run partnership for the second wicket to lead Australia to their strong total.

West Indies took off quickly towards the target, reaching 75/1 in the first six overs of power-play

with openers Evin Lewis (31 off 14) and Lendl Simmons (72 off 48) hammering Aussie bowlers. However, the visiting team bounced back by picking wickets regularly. At 132/5, West Indies faced an uphill task, needing 68 off 27 deliveries. Andre Russell (24 off 13 balls) and Fabian Allen (29 off 14) kept Windies in the hunt adding 47 for the sixth wicket in 3.3 overs. The 26-year-old Allen hit three sixes while Russell hit one off Riley

Meredith's fourth over -- the innings' 19th -- to take 25 runs and leave the home side with just 11 to get in the final over bowled by Starc. With Allen out on the last ball of Meredith's over and bowler Hayden Walsh in at non-striker's end for the final over, Russell refused to take singles and instead tried to hit big sixes. But Starc's low full tosses were difficult to get away and Russell managed a six only on the last delivery.

## Tokyo Countdown

# The sword girl of India hopes for Olympic medal

Team Absolute | Chennai

If you think India's sword girl or the Tokyo Olympic bound fencing champion C.A. Bhavani Devi was inspired to wield the weapon seeing some historical/James Bond movies, reading about Rani Jhansi or watching TV serial Mahabharat, then scrap that thought. "When a teacher in her Muruga Dhanushkodi Girls' Higher Secondary School, Tondiarpet here had asked the students to sign up for sports Bhavani signed for squash and fencing just to be away from the classroom," remarked her mother C.A. Ramani. That small girl who wanted to be away from her class despite being a bright student is now 26 year old, an MBA graduate and is largely outside India training with a target to win a medal in the Olympics.

She is also the first Indian fencer to qualify for the Olympics. "She is now in Italy and training. She scored good marks in 10th class

and 12th. She has completed MBA," Ramani added proudly.

Born into a big family - Bhavani as she is called has two brothers and two sisters - her father C. Anandha Sundhararaman was a purohit. The middle class family initially found it very difficult to educate the five children and also meet Bhavani's costly sport.

"Fencing is a very costly sport. The dress itself would cost a bomb. Initially the cost was bearable as we got her the local gear. But once she started progressing to state and national level then the sports dress itself cost about Rs.1.5 lakh," Ramani said.

The sabre fencer Bhavani started winning medals at international events.

But there came a point when Ramani herself felt it was not possible to support her daughter's sporting expenses-international travel, training and others.

The GoSports Foundation, Bengaluru came to her rescue. "It was in 2016 Tamil Nadu late



Chief Minister J Jayalithaa included Bhavani under the Special Scholarship Scheme for Elite Sports Persons. Under the scheme a sports person will get an annual financial assistance of Rs.25 lakh for training," Ramani remarked.

A year earlier, Jayalithaa had announced Rs. 3 lakh incentive to Bhavani to train in the US. According to Ramani, the financial burden got reduced after that as she was able to draw an advance under the scheme towards expenses to be incurred.

Till her national level, Bhavani was trained by Sports Authority of India's (SAI) coach Sagar Suresh Lahu and now she is trained by Nicola Zanotti.

"It is seventeen years of hard work for Bhavani. I am sure that she would win an Olympic medal. Even as a school girl, she was disciplined to get up early and go for training and then to school," Ramani the proud and confident mother signed off.

# DUTCH 2010 WORLD CUP FINALIST ROBBEN ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

Amsterdam | Agencies

Former Netherlands, Bayern Munich and Chelsea star Arjen Robben announced his retirement from professional football at the age of 37.

Robben had decided to hang his boots in 2019 after his final season with Bayern Munich. But the star footballer took a U-turn a year later by returning to play for Dutch club Groningen, where he began his career in 2000. But Robben made just seven appearances for the club in the 2020-21 season due to calf injury. Through a social media post on Thursday, Robben has now decided to call time on his career permanently.

"Dear football friends, I have decided to stop my active football career. A very difficult choice. I want to thank everyone for all the heart-warming support!" wrote Robben. In his peak days, Robben was one of Europe's most feared forwards. He ends his career with an impressive trophy haul. Robben won eight Bundesliga titles and five German Cups in a decade with Bayern Munich before choosing to announce retirement, albeit for a short period of time. Before coming to Munich, Robben had spent time with Chelsea for three years. He lifted two Premier League titles, two League Cups and the FA Cup, scoring 19 goals in 109 appearances. After Chelsea, he spent two years at Real Madrid, where he was a member of the 2008 La Liga and Spanish Super Cup winning team.

## Taapsee Pannu turns producer with self-starring film 'Blurr'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**B**ollywood actress Taapsee Pannu will be seen in the upcoming film "Blurr", which will be bankrolled by her newly-announced production company Outsider Films. The film will be helmed by director Ajay Bahl, best known for his 2019 release, "Section 375". "Blurr" is jointly written by Pawan Sony and Ajay Bahl.

Taapsee said, "Blurr" is the just kind of script I was waiting for. I'm delighted to be finally turning a producer with this film and with the support of co-producers and team, I am sure it's going to be an enriching journey."

She added, "Collaborating with Ajay is as exciting as it gets as I've seen his work. He is the best to bring the gripping story of Blurr on-screen."

Bahl said "Blurr" is a thought-provoking and intriguing story. "With the massive scale it promises and the narrative it brings along, I believe 'Blurr' will not only be a power-packed entertainer, but it will stay with the audience too. The reason being, it is not only an arresting psychological thriller but it also has an intriguing social context," he added.

Zee Studios in association with Outsiders Films and Echelon Productions unveil the first look of the film on Thursday.

The film will go on the floors soon.



### Kriti Sanon opens up about weight gain in 'Mimi'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**K**riti Sanon says she chose a realistic approach while portraying the various stages of pregnancy in the upcoming film "Mimi".

"Being blessed with a great metabolism, I've always been able to eat whatever I want. Owing to this, it wasn't easy for me to put on the kilos. From devouring the oiliest possible breakfast, to gorging on the sugariest of sweets, I had to stuff myself with way more food than normal," Kriti recalled. The actress added, "Every two hours, I needed to snack on something even when I was not hungry. After a while, this whole buffet of junk food got nauseating. I also wasn't allowed to do any kind of workout including yoga, which led me to feel really unfit." Director Laxman Utekar praises Kriti's dedication. He said, "There is a difference between playing a character and becoming the character. Kriti has taken a deep dive into this role and it literally shows."

The director turned out to be the perfect "friend in need", sending the actress lots of high-calorie dishes.

"I remember sending across hampers loaded with sinfully delicious items that were sure to shock the weighing machine, but it was all to make her look convincing on screen," he shares. "Mimi" also stars Pankaj Tripathi, Sai Tamhankar, Supriya Pathak and Manoj Pahwa. The film streams July 30 onwards on Jio Cinema and Netflix.

## Ram Charan, Jr NTR share a glimpse of 'RRR'

Hyderabad | Agencies

**T**elugu stars Ram Charan and Jr NTR took to social media on Thursday to share a making-of-the-film video of their upcoming pan-India project "RRR".

Ram Charan posted the video titled "Roar Of RRR", and captioned it: "An experience that is the result of the hard work of many! Excited to share a glimpse of @RRRMovie, a labour of

love of hundreds of cast and crew members." Jr NTR uploaded the video with the caption: "We hustle, we have fun! It has been such an exciting experience to work with this team for @RRRMovie. A journey I will forever cherish. Happy to share a glimpse into the making of @RRRMovie."

The film, which is directed by "Bahubali" maker SS Rajamouli, also stars Alia Bhatt and Ajay Devgn, and is slated to release on October 13.



## Sequel of 'Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara'?

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**Z**oya Akhtar's "Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara" turned 10 on Thursday, and the filmmaker marked the occasion sharing a picture of the blue convertible car that featured in the multistarrer hit. It was her caption on the Instagram post that excited fans, because it seems to hint at a sequel.

"Time To Take The Car Out Again #znmd #10years #blueconvertible #spanishsky #ontheroad #onlyhappy memories #whereditthetimego Thank You to the best Cast and Crew EVAH!" wrote Zoya Akhtar.

The picture uploaded is of the 1949

Buick super convertible blue, loaded on a crane truck.

The road trip coming-of-age drama "Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara" released on July 15, 2011. The film starring Hrithik Roshan, Katrina Kaif, Abhay Deol, Kalki Koechlin and Farhan Akhtar went onto become a hit and is regarded as one of Zoya's most accomplished works.

Several among Zoya's Bollywood friends and colleagues commented on her post.

Hrithik Roshan commented: "Hahaha yeah baby!" Katrina Kaif wrote: "Amazing."



### 'Shershaah' to release digitally on August 12

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**T**he war drama "Shershaah" has been confirmed for an OTT release on August 12, ahead of Independence Day. The film stars Sidharth Malhotra as Kargil war hero and Param Vir Chakra recipient, Captain Vikram Batra. The film is Amazon Prime Video's ninth direct-to-service Bollywood offering. "Shershaah" is the true story of a war hero whose indomitable spirit and bravery brought victory to our nation. His sacrifices are invaluable and his life is an inspiration for generations to come. "Shershaah" is our homage to the valour of our soldiers, and I hope every viewer's heart swells with pride watching this film," said filmmaker Karan Johar.

Directed by Vishnu Varadhan and jointly produced by Johar's Dharma Productions and Kaash Entertainment, "Shershaah" also stars Kiara Advani, Shiv Panditt, Raj Arjun, Pranay Pachauri, Himmanshu Ashok Malhotra, Nikitin Dheer, Anika Goraya, Anil Charanjeet, Sahil Vaid, Shataf Figar and Pawan Chopra. "We are certain that this film will be a moving experience for our customers and a jubilant ode to braveheart Kargil war hero, Captain Vikram Batra (PVC), and the unmatched valour of our armed forces," said Vijay Subramaniam, Director and Head, Content, Amazon Prime Video.

## MITHUN SET FOR CAMEO DANCE IN SON NAMASHI'S DEBUT 'BAD BOY'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**M**ithun Chakraborty will feature in a dance number composed by Himesh Reshammiya in Rajkumar Santoshi's upcoming directorial "Bad Boy", which introduces the eighties superstar's son Namashi Chakraborty in Bollywood. Director Santoshi shared about the delay in the release of the film: "Covid has disturbed the schedule of release, however we hope to release the film as soon as possible. Mithun Chakraborty is a legend. Having him in the song will only add that pinch of extra tadka."

The movie is produced by Sajid Qureshi and also features the producer's daughter Amrin Qureshi. Mithun will be seen performing in the song titled "Janab-e-Ali". Namashi is emotional about sharing screen space with dad Mithun. "Today I worked with my idol not only on screen, but also off-screen. The greatest actor of all time with an experience of 360 films and three national film awards blessed me and my debut film. What else can a newcomer with dreams ever ask for? It really made me emotional and eternally grateful to be with him in the same frame," Namashi said. Amrin added: "I am so glad to be working with the legend. Mithun uncle is an epitome of dance and has been my favourite. It is indeed a moment to cherish that I got an opportunity to work with him for my first movie."



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Neha Sharma