

absolute india

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SUPREME COURT ASKS UP TO RECONSIDER KANWAR YATRA

HEALTH OF CITIZENS, RIGHT TO LIFE PARAMOUNT

A bench comprising Justices R.F. Nariman and B.R. Gavai insisted that authorities should reconsider whether to hold physical Kanwar Yatra at all, otherwise court will pass order in the matter.

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The Supreme Court on Friday pointed out that fear of a third Covid wave looms large over all Indians as it asked the Uttar Pradesh government to reconsider its decision on a physical Kanwar Yatra. On the Yogi Adityanath government's symbolic Kanwar Yatra proposal, the court replied, "The right to life is paramount" and asked the government to reconsider its

position on even a symbolic annual ritual that annually registers a heavy movement of pilgrims across states in the northern belt. Senior advocate C.S. Vaidyanathan, representing the UP government, said, "We have submitted affidavit from UP government. We just want a symbolic yatra". However, the bench insisted that the UP government should reconsider it. Justice Nariman said: "We can give you one more opportunity to consider holding yatra physically at all. This or else we pass an order." Uttar Pradesh counsel pointed out that the government has completely banned any physical form of the yatra on June 30. The top court has scheduled the matter for further hearing on Monday. On July 14, the top court took suo moto cognizance of the Uttar Pradesh government's decision to allow Kanwar Yatra amid the ongoing Covid pandemic.

Only courageous people are welcome in Congress: Rahul

Bahut sare log Congress ke bahar hai jo dar nahin rahein hain, unko andar lao. Jo hamare yahan dar rahein hain, unko bahar nikalo (There are many outside the party who are not scared. Bring them into the Congress. Remove those from the party who are scared). We need brave and courageous people, this is our ideology.



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Addressing the party's social media volunteers virtually on Friday, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi said that the party only needs courageous people, and not those who are afraid of the BJP. Rahul Gandhi's clear message comes in the wake of many state leaders flexing their muscles. It is also an indication that the party will not give in to arm twisting. Some feel that the Congress leader was reacting to Jitin Prasad leaving the Congress for the BJP recently. Prasad was considered close to the Gandhi family. The comments came at a

PRIYANKA BLAMES UP GOVT FOR 'CHAOS'

Lucknow: Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra called off her 'maun vrat' after two-and-a-half hours and said that it was in protest against the chaos prevailing in Uttar Pradesh, here on Friday. Talking briefly to reporters, Priyanka said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his visit to Varanasi on Thursday, had said that Yogi Adityanath has successfully handled the Covid-19 pandemic and UP is now moving ahead on the path of development. Priyanka further said that chaos was spread by the state government and it was surprising that it had the approval of the Prime Minister.

time when the Congress is busy handling the Punjab crisis, besides managing infighting in the party in a number of states, a year before six states -- Uttarakhand, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Manipur and Gujarat -- go to the polls.

'PRISONERS RELEASED AMID COVID SHOULDN'T ASKED TO SURRENDER NOW'

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered that all prisoners, released by the High-Powered Committee (HPC) of various state governments following its order in May last year, shouldn't be asked to surrender until further orders. Against the backdrop of an unprecedented Covid-19 crisis prevailing in the country, the top court had passed a slew of directions to decongest prisons and ordered forthwith release of all those prisoners who were granted bail or parole last year due to the pandemic. On Friday, a bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana also directed all states to submit a report before it by next Friday detailing the implementation and criteria adopted by the HPCs to release prisoners on emergency parole.

'IN INTERNET AGE, WHY LOOK AT SKIES FOR PIGEONS'

The Supreme Court on Friday wondered why in the era of Internet, jail authorities continue to rely on ancient modes of communication to receive bail orders. The apex court also emphasised that it will soon develop a secure electronic transmission mechanism for the jail authorities to access orders, for expeditious release of prisoners. A bench of Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and Justices L. Nageswara Rao and A.S. Bopanna made the observation during the hearing on a suo motu case in connection with the delay in releasing convicts by prison authorities even after being granted bail by courts. The Chief Justice expressed surprise that the prison officials are waiting for the Supreme Court orders to be sent by post. "We had ordered release in some matters, and they were not released since they

(jail authorities) did not receive authentic copy of orders. This is too much," he added.

NEXT 100-125 DAYS CRITICAL: NITI AAYOG

The next 100-125 days are critical in the fight against COVID-19, the government said today. The fall in Covid cases after the peak of the second deadly wave two months ago has slowed down, and this should be taken as a warning sign, NITI Aayog member on health Dr VK Paul told reporters. "Fall in cases has slowed down. It's a warning signal. Next 100 to 125 days are critical for fight against Covid in India," said Dr Paul. Several states have been cautiously easing restrictions after the second wave appeared to have waned. The country is, however, preparing for the possibility of a third wave.

STATES REPORTING MORE CASES SHOULD TAKE PROACTIVE MEASURES TO PREVENT THIRD WAVE: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday interacted with the chief ministers and pointed out that the increase in cases in Maharashtra and Kerala is a matter of concern. He said that the states reporting a higher number of cases should take proactive measures to prevent any possibility of a third wave. "It is necessary to take effective steps to prevent the third wave," Modi emphasised. The Prime Minister said, "We have to move forward with a focused strategy of Test, Track, Treat and Vaccine."



We are of the view that this is a matter which concerns everyone of us as citizens of India, and goes to the very heart of Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which has a pride of place in the fundamental rights chapter of our Constitution. The health of the citizenry of India and their right to 'life' are paramount. All other sentiments, albeit religious, are subservient to this most basic fundamental right. - SC

Indian photojournalist Danish Siddiqui killed in Afghanistan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian photojournalist Danish Siddiqui, a Pulitzer Prize winner, was killed in Afghanistan while on a reporting assignment, Afghan ambassador Farid Mamundzay said on Friday. A resident of Delhi, Siddiqui was on a reporting assignment with the Afghan security forces when he was killed. Afghanistan's ambassador to India, Farid Mamundzay, tweeted, "Deeply disturbed by the sad news of the killing of a friend, Danish Seddiqi in Kandahar last night. He was embedded with Afghan security forces. Condolences to his family & Reuters." Danish Siddiqui was constantly capturing Afghan happenings in his camera, and was informing people through his social media posts. Siddiqui was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2018 for his coverage of the Rohingya issue. He was a student of Jamia University and his father has been a professor at the university.



ANTI-INDIAN VIOLENCE WAS PLANNED: SA PREZ

Cape Town: The violence and looting against people with Indian origin in South Africa over the past week were planned, South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa alleged during his first visit to the worst-affected KwaZulu-Natal province. As many as 121 people, mostly of Indian origin, have died in the country's worst post-apartheid era violence in the past week. But he did not specifically blame any party or group, only saying that his government has arrested more than 2,200 troublemakers, including several 'instigators'. He said that Indian origin people are 'very important' to the country, its economy and society.



Civil suit filed against Champat Rai over Fakire Ram temple purchase

Team Absolute | Ayodhya

A civil suit has been filed against the Ram Temple Trust secretary Champat Rai in a Faizabad district court by Kashi seer, Shankaracharya Avi Mukteshwaranand and Shiv Sena leader Santosh Dubey, seeking scrapping of the sale deed of 30,830 sq ft of the 350-year-old Fakire Ram Mandir, adjacent to the Ram Janmabhoomi site. The land in question was bought by the Ram Temple Trust for Rs 3.71 crore on March 27, a day after mutation was ordered in favour of Mahant Raghuvhar Sharan by sub-district magistrate, Sadar tehsil. Faizabad civil judge, senior division, Sanjeev Tripathi, on Thursday, issued notices to Champat Rai, Mahant



Raghuvhar Sharan, who sold the temple premises to the Trust, priest Kripa Shankar Das and patron Ram Kishore Singh. The court summoned all parties, including Champat Rai, the Kashi seer and Santosh Dubey, formerly a Babri demolition accused, on August 6. The Fakire Ram temple is likely to be demolished in keeping with the expansion plan of the Ram Janambhoomi complex.

IMPORTANCE OF TEMPLE

The 300-year-old Fakire Ram temple campus with 50 rooms and a vast area on the north-eastern flank of Ram Janmabhoomi site was the same shrine where the idol of Ram Lalla was hastily shifted when the Babri mosque domes were being demolished on December 6, 1992. Its mythological importance comes from the fact that Lord Ram is believed to have stayed here for a night before proceeding on his 14-year exile.

ACTRESS SUREKHA SIKRI-REGE PASSES AWAY AT 76



Mumbai: Three-time National Award-winner actress Surekha Sikri-Rege, who excelled equally on stage, films, television and web series, passed away following a cardiac arrest early on Friday, an aide said here. She was 76 and breathed her last surrounded by her family members and caregivers. The family requested for privacy in their hour of grief. A former sister-in-law of veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah, Sikri had lost her husband Hemant Rege around 12 years ago and is survived by their son Rahul Sikri. Sikri had been ailing for the past few years after having suffered a paralytic stroke in 2018, followed by a brain haemorrhage in 2020.

AstraZeneca Covid vaccine protection may last a lifetime

The Oxford-AstraZeneca jab gives powerful protection that may last a whole lifetime, a new study has found. Apart from generating virus-busting antibodies, the vaccine also creates "training camps" in the body for search-and-destroy T-cells which can kill even the new variants, The Sun, UK, reported. It means the body can continue making these vital cells long after the antibodies have waned, as possibly for the rest of your life, it said.

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Scientists from Oxford, the UK, and Switzerland, writing in the journal 'Nature', said that T-cell protection is a "key feature" of adenovirus vaccines like the Oxford and J&J jabs. As per the report, researcher Burkhard Ludewig from Cantonal Hospital in Switzerland said: "The T-cells that come from these cellular training camps appear to have a very high level of fitness." "Hopefully we can put this to good use in designing new vaccines targeting other diseases like TB, HIV, hepatitis C and cancer." The researchers found that adenoviruses are able to get into long-lived tissue cells, known as fibroblastic reticular cells, which act as "training grounds" for T-cells. Previous studies have shown that the Oxford jab is more effective in



generating T-cells than mRNA vaccines like Pfizer and Moderna. T-cell levels are difficult to measure, but the new study gives hope that they may last a lifetime, the report said.

STATUTORY NOD FOR ZYDUS CADILA VAX FOR 12-18 AGE-GROUP SOON

The Centre has informed the Delhi High Court that Zydus Cadila, which is developing DNA vaccines has concluded its clinical trial for the age group of 12 to 18. The affidavit filed by under secretary, Department of Health and Family Welfare, said: "It is submitted that Zydus Cadila, which is developing DNA vaccines has concluded its clinical trial for between the age group of 12 to 18 and subject to the statutory permissions, the same may be available in near future for children of the age group of 12 to 18 years of age".

Taliban fired mortars on Salma Dam, symbol of Afghan-India friendship



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Taliban militants have fired dozens of mortars on the Salma Dam, a major source of electricity and irrigation in the Cheshat district of Herat province in Afghanistan. The Afghan National Water Authority has said that the agency had warned of catastrophic fallouts of the continued Taliban attacks. It said that a large number of Afghan citizens would suffer losses if the Salma Dam is damaged as the lives and livelihoods of many in eight districts of Herat province depend on the water reservoir of Salma Dam. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, however, has denied any involvement, saying, "We did not shoot at Salma Dam at all." Salma Dam is located in the upper reaches of Harirod River near Cheshat district. It is 107m high and 550m long. The Afghan-India Friendship Dam is a multi-purpose project planned for generating 42 MW power, irrigating 75,000 hectares of land, providing water supply and other benefits to the people of Afghanistan.



Heavy rainfall likely over North India in 6-7 days: IMD



Following the revival of the Southwest Monsoon, several parts of the country, including the northern region, will witness heavy to very heavy rainfall over the next six-seven days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday.

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The IMD said rainfall activity is very likely to increase with fairly widespread to widespread rainfall with heavy to very heavy falls over the western Himalayan region and Uttar Pradesh from July 17 to 20.

Heavy falls are also expected over Punjab, Haryana, east Rajasthan and north Madhya Pradesh from July 18 to 20 and isolated heavy rainfall over Delhi on July 18, it said.

Isolated extremely heavy falls are also likely over Uttar Pradesh on July 18, Jammu on July 19, and Uttarakhand on July 18 and 19, it added.

Moderate to severe thunderstorm with lightning very likely at isolated places over Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and south

Rajasthan during next 24 hours. They may cause injuries leading to casualties to people and animals staying outdoor," the IMD said. Widespread rainfall with isolated heavy falls are also very likely to continue over the west coast and remaining parts of west peninsular India except over Gujarat during the next six-seven days.

Heavy to very heavy falls are very likely over Konkan, Goa, ghat areas of central Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and Mahe during same period, the IMD said. Heavy rainfall is also expected over northeast India, it added.

Widespread rainfall with isolated heavy falls is likely over northeast India and sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim till July 19 which will decrease in intensity and distribution thereafter, the IMD said.

NHRC terming Trinamool leaders as 'goons' in report stirs row

Team Absolute | Kolkata

In its report on post-poll violence in West Bengal submitted to the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) labelled several Trinamool Congress MLAs, councillors and leaders as "notorious criminals/goons", triggering a political controversy in the state with several leaders threatening to take legal action against the rights body.

The leaders not only questioned the integrity of the commission, but also accused it of showing vindictive attitude.

In the annexure 'K' attached with the original report submitted before the HC, the NHRC has placed 102 persons across 16 broad regions of West Bengal, including state minister Jyotipriya Mullick, prominent leader and former MLA Udayan Guha, Naihati MLA Partha Bhowmick, Canning East MLA Saikat Molla, Trinamool South 24 Parganas youth leader Jahangir Khan,



former councillor Jiban Saha and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's chief election agent in Nandigram, Sheikh Sufiyan, under the 'list of notorious criminals/goons'.

Banerjee has already questioned the integrity and honesty of the commission, alleging that the report has been deliberately leaked to the media to embarrass the Trinamool Congress. Meanwhile, the NHRC has refuted the allegations of leakage of the report to the media.

BJP PLANS TO MOVE COURT FOR MUKUL ROY'S DISQUALIFICATION

Kolkata: Displeased with the "brief" hearing at the West Bengal Assembly by Speaker Biman Banerjee on Friday, the BJP is thinking of moving the court on demand for disqualification of Mukul Roy as legislator under the anti-defection law. Addressing the media after the meeting, Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari said: "No law of the land is followed in Bengal. There is audio and video evidence, Twitter posts as well as statements made by people which prove that anti-defection law is applicable against Roy. Despite that, he was made chairman of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). The Speaker is not following established laws. We are planning to move the court."

NITISH RUNNING PARALLEL LIQUOR ECONOMY: LALU



Patna: After nine deaths due to poisonous liquor in Bihar's West Champaran district, RJD chief Lalu Prasad on Friday alleged that the Nitish Kumar government has developed Rs 20,000 crore illegal business of liquor smuggling, procuring and trading in the state. "Due to liquor ban, thousands of people are dying every year in Bihar and ruling party leaders are running a parallel economy of Rs 20,000 crore in Bihar. The Bihar government is targeting poor and Dalit people in liquor trade and sending them to jail. Bihar Police turns out corrupt and torturous," he tweeted. The political temperature in Bihar rose after 9 persons of different villages in Lauria block of West Champaran died and over two dozen others are in critical condition after consuming poisonous liquor in the last two days. Villagers in the region said that they had consumed liquor on Tuesday evening and became ill. Some of the victims also lost their eyesight. The villagers claimed that people of Deurawa village allegedly sell liquor and residents of adjoining villages came there to buy it.

Amid online boom, industry bigwigs on shopping spree for internet-based companies

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The past one year has witnessed dynamic changes in several aspects and internet and mobile penetration has been a major phenomenon. This growth in the online space has led to major growth of internet-based companies in India, in turn, making them attractive for bigger, deep-pocketed businesses.

Several mega acquisitions have taken place in the past one year, the latest being the announcement made by Reliance Retail of acquiring controlling stake in the home-grown online search engine platform Just Dial for Rs 3,497 crore. Recently, Tata Sons' subsidiary Tata Digital acquired a majority stake in Supermarket Grocery Supplies Private Ltd, the company which is better known as BigBasket. Further, Tata Digital and Reliance Retail have acquired majority



stakes in digital health companies IMG Technologies Private Ltd (IMG) and Vitalic Health Pvt Ltd and its subsidiaries, collectively known as Netmeds, respectively.

Both the business houses which are betting big on the e-commerce space are adding these online companies to strengthen their respective online offerings.

Onus on Centre, not states to bring down fuel prices: Tharoor

Chennai: Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Friday said that the onus to reduce fuel prices is with the Central government and the states are not expected to cut fuel taxes.

Addressing reporters at the party's Tamil Nadu headquarters, Satyamorthy Bhavan on Friday, he said that Tamil Nadu Finance Minister P.T.R Thiagarajan had informed him that the Central government is levying a cess on fuel prices and that 96 per cent of the cess collected is retained by the Centre. "Cess is a very divisive idea as it is not divisible or shared with the states. When the Centre keeps 96 per cent of the cess by itself, then the onus is on it to reduce the taxes on fuel and bring down prices, and not on the state governments," he said.

Tharoor said that since May 2 after the state election results were announced, fuel prices were hiked 40 times. He noted that when fuel prices are increased, there is a corresponding increase in the prices of all essential commodities, like vegetables, fruits, pulses and other household items.

ADOPT ONE-CHILD POLICY, SAYS RAJASTHAN HEALTH MINISTER

Team Absolute | Jaipur

Rajasthan Health Minister Raghu Sharma on Friday said according to the Sample Registration Survey (SRS) 2018, the fertility rate of Rajasthan is 2.5 per cent whereas the national average is 2.2 per cent. According to Millennium Development Goals, the fertility rate is to be brought down to 2.1 per cent by the target year 2025. For this, we have to adopt the policy of 'Hum Do, Humare Ek' (We Two, Ours One), he added. The Minister was addressing a Family Welfare Promotion prize distribution function. He said the problem of increasing population is getting frightening not only in India but in the entire world. The balance



of nature is continuously deteriorating due to increasing population. This is causing problems in food grains, drinking water, housing, education, health and employment.

'Population Stabilisation' fortnight is being observed from July 11 to 24, Sharma added. The theme of the fortnight is 'Aapda me bhi parivar niyojan ki taiyari, saksam rashtira aur parivar ki poori jimmedari' (Preparation of family planning even during crisis for the complete responsibility of nation and family) and this message is being carried to villages and hamlets. He said nearly 2.5 lakh sterilisations are done every year in the state under the family planning programme.

J&K to retire 'ineffective' staff after 22 years of service or 48 years of age



Team Absolute | Srinagar

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday asked administrative secretaries to initiate a process to identify the employees who are "ineffective in work or not fit to continue" after completion of 22 years of service or those having attained 48 years of age. In October last year, the government had amended Article 226 (2) of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Service

Regulations for a provision to retire at any time any government servant after he/she completes 22 years of service or attains 48 years of age. The appropriate authority has to give either three months' prior notice or three months' salary to retire any employee, according to the notification issued by the then Financial Commissioner.

Setting the time schedule to be followed, the notification stated that "the exercise of review of performance of the government servants will be initiated for each government servant for the first time after her/his completion of 22 years of government service or attaining 48 years of age and any time subsequently, as may be required."

On Thursday, a fresh circular was issued by the incumbent Chief Secretary, Arun Kumar Mehta, which said, "It has been observed that the departments have not initiated any exercise for reviewing the performance government servants.

2 LASHKAR TERRORISTS KILLED IN KASHMIR ENCOUNTER

Team Absolute | Srinagar

Two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists were killed in an encounter with the security forces at Alamdar colony in Srinagar on Friday, officials said. Police said acting on a specific information generated by the Srinagar police about the presence of terrorists in Alamdar Colony in Srinagar's Danmar area, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by the police and CRPF in the said area. "During the search operation as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given repeated opportunities to surrender, however, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter in the wee hours," police said.

"In the ensuing encounter, two terrorists of proscribed terror outfit LeT (self claimed TRF) were killed and their bodies were retrieved from the site of encounter." They have been identified as Irfan Ahmad Sofi and Bilal Ahmad Bhat, both residents of Natipora, Srinagar and active since December, 2020, police said.



Fake GST invoicing worth Rs 641 cr cracked in Odisha; 2 held

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

The GST enforcement wing of Odisha has unearthed a racket that issued fake invoices to the tune of Rs 641 crore and arrested two persons for their involvement in availing and passing of bogus input tax credit (ITC) of Rs 115.10 crore, said an official here on Friday. The two arrested masterminds of have been identified as Gurdit Dang, managing partner of Tirupati Traders and authorised representative of Satguru Metals and Power Pvt Ltd, Rourkela, and Sujay Maitra, director of Smartageis Trade Venture Pvt Ltd, Rourkela, said S.K. Lohani, state GST Commissioner.

While Dang was arrested from Rourkela, Maitra was captured from Bhubaneswar on Friday

morning, he said.

The two masterminds, in collusion with others, availed bogus ITC raising fake purchase invoices in the name of 16 fictitious/non-existent business entities located in Angul, Rourkela, Banai, Ersama, Tirtol, Riamal and Sundargarh, Lohani said.

During investigation, the GST enforcement wing found that the duo had obtained identity documents like PAN, Aadhaar, bank passbooks etc. of innocent people such as plumbers, drivers, electrical mechanics, gas distributing boys, unemployed youth and people below poverty line from areas like Panikoiili, Baripada, Rasgovindpur, Bargarh, Puri, Balasore and also Jharkhand.

They had availed the documents in the pretext of engaging them in



different companies and in some cases to provide regular monthly income of Rs 5,000, and then misused the documents for the purpose of obtaining GST registration, sources said.

The investigating sleuths also found that goods weighing in tonnes were shown to have been transported through two-wheelers, cars, three-wheelers and scooters on many occasions.

GOA CM'S FB ACCOUNT HACKED, COMPLAINT FILED

Panaji: A day before Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's old Facebook account was hacked, the hackers asked a social media user to send across money through Unified

Payments Interface (UPI) payment mode. Sawant on Friday said a police complaint had been filed in the matter but the man targeted by the hackers, Pramesh Asolkar, said he is still in shock that the state Chief Minister's social media account had been tapped into. The hacker himself posed as Sawant and requested Asolkar to immediately send across Rs 30,000 which would be returned in two hours.

"At nearly 9.30 p.m. Thursday night, I received a friend request notification from Pramod Sawant. The profile had the Goa Chief Minister's photo and lotus symbol of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). I was sure it was genuine," Asolkar added. It was only when the hacker asked him for money that Asolkar realised that something was amiss.

"People need to be careful with their social media accounts, especially when the Chief Minister's account itself has been hacked," Asolkar said.

The Chief Minister also confirmed hacking of his old Facebook account. "My old Facebook account has been hacked. I have filed a complaint," Sawant said.





GANJ BASODA INCIDENT IS UNFORTUNATE: CHIEF MINISTER SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN

Rs 5 lakh to kin of deceased and Rs 50 thousand aid and free treatment to injured victims
CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan monitors rescue work from Situation Room at Mantralaya



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh will be given to the families of those who died in the unfortunate incident of Ganj Basoda. Rs 50 thousand will be provided to the injured and arrangements will be made for their free treatment. So far three bodies have been fished out while 19 others have been rescued safely. The injured are being treated at hospitals in Vidisha and Ganj Basoda. It is a matter of relief that all these people are out of danger. Instructions have been given for a high-level inquiry into the incident of Lal Pathar village of Ganj Basoda in Vidisha district and to provide all possible medical assistance to the victims. The

administration is engaged in relief and rescue operations. Chouhan monitored the rescue operation being undertaken at Ganj Basoda from the Situation Room at Mantralaya. Chief Minister interacted virtually with the district administration staff engaged in relief and rescue work, SDRF, NDRF teams, doctors and villagers. Home Minister Narottam Mishra, Additional Chief Secretary Home Rajesh Rajaura, Director General of Police Vivek Johri were present in the Situation Room. Minister of Medical Education and in-charge of Vidisha district Vishwas Sarang informed about the updated status of relief and rescue work from the site. Sarang is present at the site of the incident since last

night as the representative of the State government and is coordinating the relief and rescue operations. This is the first time that Chief Minister got the chance to monitor the incident from the Situation Room started recently for Disaster Management. Chouhan said that the government stands with the families of the victims. If any further assistance is required, all support will be extended to these families. Adequate Hydra and Poclain machines are removing the soil at the site of the incident. Friable soil is causing the debris to fall again and again. The number of pumps is being increased to remove water from the well. NDRF and SDRF teams have been working since night. A team of

NDRF has also arrived from Varanasi for rescue work. Five SDRF teams from Ashoknagar, Vidisha, Raisen and Bhopal are engaged in rescue operations.. The teams are being changed to ensure that the rescue work is completed soon. While giving rest to the teams which were working in the night, new teams have been pressed into relief and rescue operations since this morning. Chouhan said that the teams engaged in relief and rescue work are working non stop. SDRF team members and a tractor got crushed under the debris, but were rescued. Commissioner, Collector, DGP, SP are all at the spot. Efforts are made to complete the rescue work as soon as possible.

Entire staff including Chief Minister gathered in relief and rescue

Assistance of 5 lakh each provided to kin of 3 people who died in Lalpathar accident

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Relief and rescue work is going on in the Lal Pathar area of Ganjbasoda in Vidisha district with full seriousness and capacity since Thursday evening. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is constantly monitoring the relief and rescue operations from the Control Room and the Situation Room. The Chief Minister is also giving guidelines to the officers. Chouhan has announced Rs 5 lakh each for the families of the dead and Rs 50,000 each for the injured. He has also given instructions to get complete treatment of the injured by the government

free of cost. The rescue team has so far saved 20 lives. After initial treatment, 17 persons have been safely taken to their homes. Three persons have been admitted to the district hospital Vidisha for treatment after they received injuries. Four persons have died in this incident of well sinking. Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang and Revenue and Transport Minister Govind Singh Rajput, who have been monitoring the relief and rescue site since Thursday night, visited the homes of the three deceased and gave cheques of an amount of Rs. 5 lakh each to their family members as announced by the Chief Minister. This amount has been given to the family members of Narayan Singh, son of Jalam Singh, Sunil, son of Sohan and Shivam, son of Sunil. On receiving information about the incident late on Thursday, Chief

Minister sent Vidisha district in-charge minister Vishwas Sarang to the spot. Along with this, the team of Commissioner, IG, Collector, SP and NDRF and SDRF were engaged in relief and rescue work. The Chief Minister left the marriage ceremony of his adopted daughters, immediately established a control room in Vidisha and is continuously monitoring the relief and rescue work and giving instructions to the teams. Two teams of NDRF and SDRF are still engaged in relief and rescue work along with the staff of district and police administration at the accident site, Lal Pathar, Ganjbasoda. In view of the difficulty in rescue work as the surrounding land is friable, three Poclaine and 2 JCB machines are continuously working. Four pumps have also been installed to remove the excess water from the well, which is taking out the water uninterruptedly.

Governor discusses Ganjbasoda accident Relief works with CM

Bhopal: Governor Mangubhai Patel has expressed deep condolences to the accident victims of village-Lal Pathar, Ganjbasoda in Vidisha district. He apprised himself of ongoing relief and rehabilitation works over telephone from Chief Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Vidisha district in-charge Minister Vishwas Sarang from New Delhi on Friday. He has given instructions over phone to Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains and Vidisha Collector for better treatment arrangements for the injured and to carry out relief and rehabilitation works at a faster pace. He has prayed for peace to the departed souls and strength to their families to bear this profound loss and for speedy recovery of the injured.

MP ready with spiritual and wellness tourism destination for Lebanese tourists: Shukla

Team Absolute | Bhopal

With the aim of bringing Madhya Pradesh tourism on the world stage and attracting the tourists of Lebanon country to Madhya Pradesh, an online webinar on the topic 'Incredible India - Your Favorite Tourist Destination - Madhya Pradesh' was organized by the Embassy of India in Beirut. Referring to the heritage, wellness, wildlife and natural tourism destinations of Madhya Pradesh, Principal Secretary Tourism and Managing Director Tourism Board Sheo Shekhar Shukla said that This webinar will prove to be an important initiative for India and Lebanon to provided a common platform for tourism based activities after the Corona crisis. Madhya Pradesh is always ready to provide Lebanese Tourism Lovers, Leading Travel Agents and Tour Operators with Spiritual, Wellness, Rural, and Natural Tourism along with Luxury and Comfortable Tourism. The state of Rajasthan also participated in the webinar. Ambassador of India to

Lebanon, SuhelAjaz Khan, Second Secretary (Consular and Commercial) Embassy of India P Pattabhi, Commercial Section Moderator Ms. Rana Zeitouni, President of Association of Travel and Tourism Agents in Lebanon (ATTAL) Mr. Jean Abboud, Deputy Director Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board Yuvraj Padole and other prominent business representatives from Lebanon also attended the webinar. India's Ambassador to Lebanon SuhelAjaz Khan said that Lebanese citizens visit India in large numbers for tourism, education and other activities. There is Lebanon in every corner of the world, in which about 5 million people live and 15 million are settled in different regions of the whole world. There is a lot of enthusiasm among Lebanese citizens for the developed Rural tourism in Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh has a unique amalgamation of culture, heritage, natural diversity, wildlife with luxury and wellness tourism, which is not found anywhere else in the world. Madhya Pradesh is a tourist friendly state and there are tour pack-

ages available in every budget. The Indian Embassy in Beirut will provide all necessary assistance to Lebanese citizens to travel to India. Deputy Director Tourism Yuvraj Padole gave a presentation of Madhya Pradesh Tourism through video film in the webinar. He informed about Rural Tourism, Adventure Tourism, workation in MP and various Cultural, Music and Dance Festivals being organized in Madhya Pradesh with tourism features of World Heritage Sites (Khajuraho, Bhimbetka and Sanchi), National Parks and Sanctuaries located in Madhya Pradesh. President of Association of Travel and Tourism Agents in Lebanon (ATTAL) Jean Abboud said that tourism activities will get a boost after the world after the Corona crisis. Tourism friendly behavior and attractive tourist destination of Madhya Pradesh will definitely attract tourists from Lebanon. India will always get the support of Lebanon country to bring Madhya Pradesh tourism on the world stage.

Poor Infrastructure, Laidback Attitude Behind Madhya Pradesh Well Tragedy

Locals accused the village sarpanch and janpadpanahayat of indifference in repairing the well that serves the entire population of the village.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Vidisha well accident, in which five people have lost their lives, and eight others are still trapped, has brought to fore several aspects of slackness and indifference of the local public representatives. The rescue operation is still underway, 24 hours since the incident took place. Five bodies have been fished out while eight others are missing, an officer said on Friday. In total, 19 people were injured in the mishap and are recuperating in different hospitals. Meanwhile, locals of Lal Pathar village in Ganjbasoda in Vidisha district where the fateful incident took place, have alleged gross slackness of the administration and local public representatives. One of the injured said that close to 50 locals had gathered close to the well after the 13-year-old Ravi Ahirwar fell inside on Thursday, at around 6 pm. After three locals went inside the well to save the boy, a small crowd gathered in the next half an hour. All of

them fell inside as the dilapidated RCC structure of the well could not sustain the people. A woman who lives nearby the accident site said that the well had caved in twice in the past and when it happened the second time in the month of June, the local sarpanch was apprised of the matter, but no action was taken. A Congress leader from Ganjbasoda said that he had called the local SHO after the accident but he did not pick call and locals also kept dialling Dial 100 number of the police but the number was persistently busy. In all the rescue was late by around three hours. Local native Mohan Ahirwar claimed that the entire population of 7,000-odd people of the village depend on the well for potable water. The sarpanch and janpad panchayat were requested for repairs around 20 days ago but nothing came out of it. Locals also claimed that SDRF and NDRF teams had reached the site by 9.30 pm and started emptying the well. A tractor carrying five home guard jawans also had fallen

into the well; three escaped unhurt while two others sustained injuries. They also alleged that high powered water pumps took almost 17 hours to reach the accident site from Bhopal. These pumps were used to empty the well when locally available pumps weren't available for the task. After several hours of the rescue operation, the local officers realised that resources were insufficient and contacted Bhopal municipal corporation which sent six employees, five pumps and other equipment. Drone cameras were installed on the site so that senior officers and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan could monitor the rescue live. Chouhan told the media that the soil is fragile, which is why a tractor carrying rescuers had fallen into the well. "We are carrying on rescue cautiously so that those trapped in the debris aren't harmed," he added. Chouhan had ordered a high-level probe into the incident. He however claimed that the SDRF team had reached the site immediately.

The Home Minister, commenting on the rescue operation, said that five bodies were recovered and eight others were missing. Mishra claimed that villagers had informed the administration late and tried to rescue the fallen persons themselves for a while. He shielded CM Chouhan, who did not visit the site despite being in Vidisha, saying his visit could have diverted the attention of the administration. PCC chief Kamal Nath who formed a three-member enquiry committee into the mishap alleged that administrative officers and public representatives reached at accident late by around four hours which is why the mishap took place. A timely action could have saved the locals, he claimed. The locals were forced to fetch water from dilapidated well as it was the only source of water in the village, said Nath who questioned why CM Chouhan did not visit the site despite being so close. The rescue operation was on till reports last came in.

Expansion of air services will boost investment and tourism: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that expansion of air services, will create a better environment for investment in the state and for new opportunities for development and progress. With JyotiradityaScindia as the new Union Civil Aviation Minister, the expectations of the people of the state have increased from the aviation sector. The expansion of air services will boost tourism activities in the state. There is also ample scope for expansion of Aviation Academy and in the Maintenance and Repair Operations sector in the state. Chouhan was addressing the virtual inauguration of the new air services by SpiceJet from Gwalior and Jabalpur from Mantralaya. Union Civil Aviation Minister JyotiradityaScindia joined the programme from Delhi. Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar and Jabalpur MP Rakesh Singh participated from New Delhi. State Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar and Water Resources Minister TulsiSilavat and Gwalior MP Vivek Narayan Shejwalkar were present in the programme organized in Gwalior. SpiceJet air services were launched by Chief Minister Chouhan and Union Minister Scindia from Gwalior to Pune, Ahmedabad and Mumbai and from Jabalpur to Surat. The airline will operate three days a week from Gwalior to Pune and four days a week between Gwalior to Ahmedabad and Mumbai. Air service facility will be available between Jabalpur and Surat for three days a week. Chouhan said that there is an urgent need of international connectivity for Indore and Bhopal, later it can be extended



to Gwalior and Jabalpur. With the increase of air services, tourism activities in Khajuraho, Mandu, Bhimbaitika, Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Maihar, Datia, Chitrakoot etc. will get a boost in the state. Helicopter service are needed for Pachmarhi and national parks. The citizens of the country will benefit from the UDAN Yojana launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to operate flights from small cities. Chouhan said that with the rapid development of air

services, there is a need for trained pilots, engineers and trained youth for Maintenance and Repair Operations (MRO). An attractive policy has been implemented in the state for setting up Aviation Academy and MRO Unit (Maintenance and Repair Operations) in Madhya Pradesh. The state has the best climate and other conditions favorable for training of pilots. Every year about 150 trained pilots emerge from the state's aviation academies. Chouhan said that there is a need to expand these activities in the state. The state government will always extend cooperation in the development plans of the Aviation Department. Scindia said that transport is important for the economy. The Aviation sector provides momentum to the process of development. SpiceJet's Jabalpur-Delhi-Jabalpur flight service will start on July 18, in addition to the airlines started today for Gwalior and Jabalpur. Khajuraho-Delhi-Khajuraho airline will be started in the month of October. Air connectivity between Rewa, Khajuraho, Datia, Bhopal, Jabalpur will be increased. According to the target given by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, 100 airports and one thousand air routes are to be developed in the country by the year 2024. Work in this direction is progressing rapidly. Air services play an important role in connecting the country. Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has started the operation of UDAN Yojana in the country with the goal of 'UdeDesh ka Aam Nagrik.' With the responsibility of Ministry of Aviation having been entrusted to Scindia, the state will become a carbo hub and the air connectivity of the cities of the state will increase.

Kamal Nath Unlikely To Leave state

Kamal Nath has been entrusted with the task of reducing the tension in the MahaAghadi government in Maharashtra and will also play an important role in the Uttar Pradesh elections.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Senior Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath has refused to leave Madhya Pradesh and has decided to serve a central role. According to sources, Kamal Nath was proposed to serve a bigger role at the centre by Congress leadership while there were speculations that he is likely to be made the working President of the party. But party sources in the grand old party informed that Kamal Nath has

refused to leave Madhya Pradesh. According to sources, Kamal Nath has told the central leadership that he does not want to leave Madhya Pradesh and will continue to serve his role for Delhi. He said that he will be available for leadership, whenever the Gandhi family needs him in any state. So, in the coming days, Kamal Nath will most likely not be seen playing the role of the working President but can serve as a political advisor to the Gandhi family. According to the sources, Kamal Nath has been entrusted with the task of reducing the tension in the MahaAghadi government in Maharashtra and will stand in the Uttar Pradesh elections as well. It is worth noting that recently Sonia Gandhi's talks with the rebel Congress group, G23 were also taken up on the suggestion of Kamal Nath.



GUV MUST ACCEPT MLC NOMINATIONS REGARDLESS OF POLITICAL ISSUE: MAHARASHTRA

The Maharashtra government on Friday told the Bombay High Court that the governor ought to accept the nomination of persons to the Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC)

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Friday told the Bombay High Court that the governor ought to accept the nomination of persons to the Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC) submitted as per the aid and advice of the council of ministers irrespective of any political issues.



may not have with the chief minister. "The governor cannot just sit tight on the file. It has been a year since the posts (MLCs) are lying vacant. Is complete inaction open to the governor, Dada argued.

The bench was hearing a petition filed by Nashik-resident Ratan Soli Luth

seeking a direction to the governor to decide on the state government recommending 12 names in November last year.

Dada said that the state government had sought that the governor take a decision on the same within a period of 15 days.

The HC on Friday impleaded the Union government as a party respondent in the petition and directed Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh to do some research and assist the court on the issue. We would like to know what happens when there is inaction by the governor, the court said, and posted the matter for further hearing on July 19.

Level three restrictions to continue in Pune

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said the government has decided to continue the level three restrictions in the Pune region as the weekly positivity rate of the Pune district is 5.7%

Team Absolute | Pune

Covid restrictions will not be immediately relaxed in Pune as the positivity rate is still high, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said on Friday.

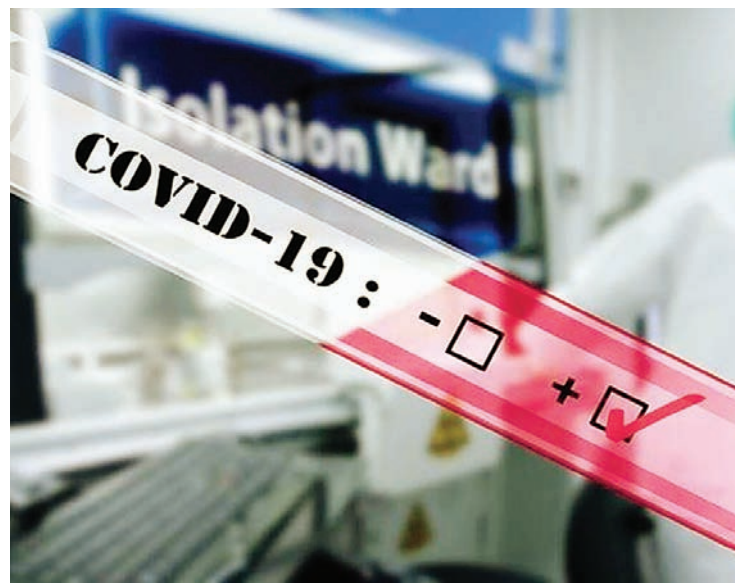
Pawar, who is also the guardian minister for Pune, said the government has decided to continue the level three restrictions in the district. Maharashtra government has devised five levels of restrictions, the fifth level being the harshest, depending on the severity of the pandemic in a given area.

Shops in Pune will, thus, be allowed to operate till only 4 pm, he said. "The weekly positivity rate of Pune district is 5.7 percent. The recovery rate is 97.30 percent," Pawar said.

In the Pune district, 2,528 new COVID-19 cases took the tally to 14,58,157, while 49 fatalities took the death toll to 12,757.

Apart from Pune there are few other districts where the COVID positivity rate continues to be high and the curbs in these are will not be eased immediately.

Speaking to reporters, the Maharashtra deputy chief minister



also said, "In some districts the positivity rate has come down to zero per cent, however, in some districts such as Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli, Solapur, Pune, Raigad and Ahmednagar, the positivity rate has not declined as much as it should have, so the current restrictions will remain in force."

He also said, "The positivity rate has come down (to around five per cent) but the graph has stagnated at one point. According to experts, it should go down further, the way it has declined in some areas to zero. If that happens, we will offer more relaxation." The district administration is increasing the number of hos-

pital beds to prepare for a possible third wave, he said.

On vaccine supply, he said the state government was told that the supply of doses will increase by June-end. "There has been no instance when the vaccine was available on all seven days of a week.

There were times when the vaccination had to be stopped for a day or two during a week. It means they (the Union government) does not have that much stock," Pawar said.

Maharashtra's coronavirus case-load rose to 61,89,257 with the addition of 8,010 new infections on Thursday, while the death toll reached 1,26,560 after 170 patients succumbed to the respiratory illness, a health department official said.

The state witnessed a drop in the daily COVID-19 cases, while the fatalities remained the same as compared to Wednesday, when it had reported 8,602 new infections and 170 deaths. Significantly, Parbhani and Jalgaon cities did not report any new coronavirus infections in the last 24 hours, the official said. As many as 7,391 patients were discharged from hospitals in the last 24 hours, pushing the number of recovered cases to 59,52,192.

ED slaps attachment orders on Anil Deshmukh family's Rs 4.21 cr assets

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a major jolt, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached assets worth around Rs 4.21 crore belonging to former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh and his family, officials said here on Friday.

The ED action came a day after the Maharashtra government ordered a probe by the state Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) against former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, who had written a letter in April alleging corrupt activities by Deshmukh.

In Friday's ED action, the assets attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) are held in the name of Deshmukh's wife Aarti Deshmukh and a company, Premier Port Links Pvt. Ltd.

They include a residential flat in Worli worth Rs 1.54 crore, 25 land parcels worth Rs 2.67 crore at Dhutum village in Raigad district adjoining Mumbai, as part of the



probe into money-laundering lodged against them. It may be recalled that following a first information report registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the ED had started a probe into money laundering by several persons including Deshmukh, a senior Nationalist Congress Party leader. The CBI lodged its FIR following Singh's letter and allegations by a junior police official Sachin Vaze, alleging that Deshmukh had set a target to collect Rs 100 crore per month from various restaurants and bars in Mumbai. The ED contended that

when he was the home minister, Deshmukh, 72, allegedly received bribes worth Rs 4.70 crore in cash from various bars through Vaze, which sparked off a major political controversy in the state and ultimately led to the minister's resignation.

Using dummy companies based in Delhi, the Deshmukh family had allegedly laundered the tainted Rs 4.18 crore and showed it as an amount received by a trust, the Shri Sai Shikshan Sanstha.

Further investigations by the ED revealed that a flat in the posh Worli

area owned by Deshmukh was registered in his wife's (Aarti) name, with the entire payment made in cash in 2004, but the sale deed was made in February 2020, when he was the state home minister. The ED stated that the Deshmukh family had acquired 50 percent ownership of Premier Port Links Pvt. Ltd. including its assets like land and shops, valued around Rs 5.34 crore, by paying merely Rs 17.95 lakhs after a substantial gap.

The agency added that further investigations are underway against Deshmukh and others for attempting to obtain undue advantage for improper and dishonest performance of their public duty.

Meanwhile, Deshmukh has skipped at least three summons by the ED, and his wife and son Hrishikesh have also not yet appeared before the probe agency.

Charging the ED action against him and his family as unjustified and a political vendetta, the embattled Deshmukh has moved the Supreme Court in the matter.

Heavy rains pound Mumbai, local trains hit

Water-logging was reported from chronic spots of Dadar, Parel, Wadala, Sion, besides low-lying areas in Malad, Santacruz, Dahisar. While the suburban services on the Central Railway were hit badly with delays of over 30-minutes due to speed restrictions, Western Railway traffic has not been affected.



though flight operation at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport was normal. Water-logging was reported from chronic spots of Dadar, Parel, Wadala, Sion, besides low-lying areas in Malad, Santacruz, Dahisar.

While the suburban services on the Central Railway were hit badly with delays of over 30-minutes due to speed restrictions, Western Railway traffic has not been affected.

KS Hosalkar, Head of Climate Research and Services, Pune shared the latest satellite images at 8.30 a.m. indicating intense clouds over Mumbai sub-

urbs and Thane leading to some very intense spells in the last 3-4 hours. He said the entire coastal Konkan is covered with clouds and North Konkan-Mumbai needs to watch out. The BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation is on an alert mode and the water levels of Mothi River are being monitored.

The entire North Konkan area comprising the twin districts of Mumbai City and Mumbai Suburban, neighbouring districts of Palghar, Thane and Raigad which comprise the MMR is getting heavy rainfall.

Helicopter Crashes in Jalgaon, One Dead, Another Injured

Team Absolute | Mumbai

One occupant was killed and another was injured as a helicopter crashed on Friday evening in the Jalgaon district. A pilot died and another was injured in a helicopter crash in Maharashtra's Jalgaon.

The aircraft belonged to the NMIMS Academy of Aviation, Maharashtra, and two pilots were on board when it crashed around 4 PM. Police and other authorities are at the site, while relief and rescue work

is ongoing. The incident took place near Wardi village in the district's Chopda area which is part of the Satpura mountain ranges, and information was received by authorities around 5:15pm, police said. "One occupant was declared dead on arrival by hospital authorities while the second person has sustained injuries," an official said. One of the occupants was a woman but it was not yet clear who was piloting the helicopter, he added.

Two pilots, including a woman pilot, were on board

the plane when it crashed around 4 PM, they said. The injured woman pilot has been rushed to a nearby hospital, officials said.

Union Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia said he was shocked to hear about the tragic crash. "An investigation team is being rushed to the site. Unfortunately, we lost the flight instructor and the trainee is severely injured. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prayers for the trainee's quick recovery," he said in a tweet.

Businessman tries to order pizza online, loses Rs 65,000

Soon after the transactions, the businessman received a phone call from his credit card company that was tracking his transactions and he was asked to immediately approach the local police station in order to recover the money.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A 59-year-old businessman, who stays on Nargis Dutt Road in Pali Hill, tried to order a pizza online but a cyber-fraudster impersonating the pizza shop manager tricked him into transferring Rs 65,000. Soon after the transactions, the businessman received a phone call from his credit card company that was tracking his transactions and he was asked to immediately approach the local police station in order to recover the money. A Khar police official confirmed the registration of an FIR in the matter and said efforts were



being made to recover the money. The incident took place at around 7 pm on July 12 when the businessman searched Google and got the number of Francisco pizza places. The businessman did not know that many fraudsters give their own numbers on Google as a number of popular brands, customer services to dupe unsuspecting customers.

The businessman called up on the number and the fraudster said he will call back from another number. Another fraudster personating as the man-

ager called back and asked him to send an advance payment and sent him a link. The businessman filled in the details on the link and received an OTP. Soon after sharing the OTP, Rs 20,000 got debited from his account. The businessman questioned the fraudster as to how such a big amount got deducted just for a pizza. But the fraudster apologized and said it happened by mistake and he would return the money and asked for another OTP. The businessman again shared the OTP and again Rs 20,000 got debited from his account. The fraudster somehow convinced the businessman that it was a technical error and made him send the OTP two more times and a total of Rs 65,000 got debited from his account. Soon after the fourth transaction, the credit card company called him and asked him if he was making the payments. When the businessman denied it, the company official asked him to approach the local police to lodge a complaint. The Khar police have lodged an FIR and a probe is on to find the accused.

Special Marriage Act:

Implement Allahabad HC order in Maharashtra, activists write to Kunte

Recently, a woman approached the Khar police saying she was getting married to a person from another religion, and after learning about her marriage, few men allegedly humiliated her parents.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A group of social activists has written to Maharashtra Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte to implement in the state an order of the Allahabad High Court, which states it would be optional and not mandatory for a couple getting married under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 to publish a notice about their intended marriage 30 days before it is solemnized.

Recently, a woman from Khar (West) approached the Khar police saying she was getting married to a person from another religion, and after learning about her marriage, few unknown men allegedly entered her housing society and humiliated her parents in front of their neighbour.

Some days prior to the incident, the woman and her partner had gone to the registrar of marriage office in Khar (West) to register their marriage under the Special Marriage Act. They suspect their personal information was leaked from the office after their notice was published on a board there and on the government website. The Khar police has promised to ensure no further harassment to the couple or their families. Vasant Pingle, Assistant



Commissioner of Police of Khar Police Station said, "We have warned the men not to bother the woman's family. We have also provided the woman with the number of our police officer in case she faces any further trouble." In order to ensure such incidents do not repeat in future, two organisations - the Citizens of Justice and Peace (CJP), a human rights movement, and Dhanak of Humanity, a non-profit organisation founded by interfaith couples - have written a letter to Kunte asking him to ensure that the January 8, 2021 order of the Allahabad HC is implemented. On behalf of CJP, activist

Teesta Setalvad said, "We first took up the issue in January by writing a letter to then chief secretary Sanjay Kumar, but no action was taken. After this incident, we wrote to Kunte on July 14 asking him to implement the Allahabad HC order in the matter of Safiya Sultana v. State of Uttar Pradesh [Habeas Corpus No. - 16907], delivered on January 12, 2021, by the Hon'ble Allahabad High Court, in response to a habeas corpus writ petition which contended that the requirement to publish a notice of intended marriage for 30 days as well as the ability of any person to object to the intended union as stated by Sections 5, 6 and 7 of The Special Marriage Act, 1954, respectively, was an invasion of privacy and would cause unnecessary social pressure/interference in their free choice with regard to their marriage." Setalvad added, "It is also important to note that the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Kusum Ingots & Alloys v. Union of India [(2004) 6 SCC 254] mandated that 'an order passed on a writ petition questioning the constitutionality of a parliamentary Act, whether interim or final keeping in view the provisions contained in clause (2) of Article 226 of the Constitution of India, will have effect throughout the territory of India subject of course to the applicability of the Act.'"

Maha SSC Result 2021 Declared

Mumbai: Maharashtra SSC or Class 10 final results has been declared today. The link to download Maharashtra SSC result 2021 will be made available at the official website at 1 pm. All students can download their results from Maharashtra SSC result websites - mahresult.nic.in and maharashtraeducation.com. There was no board exam in Maharashtra this year. Instead, results have been prepared using students' performance in past exams.

As per Maharashtra SSC assessment criteria, students will be evaluated on the basis of their performances in Class 9 and Class 10. Out of the total 100 marks, 50 per cent marks will be derived from their performance in Class 9, thirty per cent from year-long internal assessments of Class 10 and 20 marks has been assigned to practical or homework or assignments.



EDITOR'S SPECS

New Bills in Monsoon Session

The government is going to introduce 17 new Bills in the Monsoon Session of Parliament, which begins on July 19. With the much awaited Cabinet reshuffle finally done and dusted, it is time for governance again. The bills include changes in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) replacing the Ordinance enabling prepackaged resolution schemes for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and allowing corporate debtors to propose a resolution plan for the stressed company. Besides, the Centre will also introduce the Deposit Insurance Bill, increase insurance cover to Rs 5 lakh. However, the much-awaited cryptocurrency Bill has been delayed and is not listed in the Lok Sabha Bulletin of the session. Of the 17 new bills lined up for the session are amendments in Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Act, the Electricity Act and the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act, apart from others. According to the Lok Sabha bulletin, the amendment in the IBC is to replace the April Ordinance, which was promulgated to provide speedier, cost effective, semi-formal and less disruptive framework for insolvency resolution of corporate debtors in distress. The minimum threshold of default will be announced as part of the regulation. The prepackaged scheme has given a semi-formal structure to the pre-insolvency stage. The crucial amendment to the LLP Act, 2008, will also be taken up. The government is planning to decriminalise 12 compoundable offences that deal with procedural and technical violations. This is to ensure ease of doing business for law abiding LLPs. Another Bill on top of the agenda is the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Amendment Bill, 2021. Land acquired under the Act shall be utilised for coal mining operations and allied or ancillary activities and to make provisions for acquisition of lignite bearing areas under the CBA Act.

TALIBAN'S NEXT STOP:

KABUL, KASHMIR AND KERALA

Amjad Ayub Mirza

The speedy advance of the Taliban from northern Afghanistan to Kabul in the eastern section of the country could not have been achieved without the active support of the Pakistani Army. This has been confirmed by none other than the Afghan First Vice President Amrullah Saleh. The question is whether the people of Afghanistan, India and neighbouring countries will allow Taliban to capture Kabul? India is faced with a very tricky situation. Despite the Afghan government's appeals to India to immediately send fighter jets and gunship helicopters India remains hesitant, and not without reason. India fears that at this stage in the war in Afghanistan between the Taliban and the government of President Ashraf Ghani if she openly takes sides with the later then Indian interests in Afghanistan will become the target of Taliban violence and destruction. Hence, the India's backdoor channel talks with the Taliban have been reportedly taking place. If one takes a closer look at the chain of events of the past few months it becomes even clearer that Pakistan has been deceiving India and the wider world when it comes to her war policy regarding Afghanistan. The ceasefire between India and Pakistan that came into force after the DG MOs meeting of respective countries took place on February 25, uncannily, coincides with the beginning of the second round of talks between Afghan and Taliban negotiators in Doha on January 9 which took place in the back drop of former US President Donald Trump's announcement that al Afghan troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by May 1. Then came the bombshell announcement by US President Joe Biden that the troops will be completely withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 11. Between May and June Pakistan has been acting as Taliban's Foreign Affairs Ministry trying to build a soft image of Taliban. Pakistani federal ministers now



publically claim that the Taliban might wear baggy dresses but they have intelligent brains (Shah Mahmood Qureshi's statement) and that the current Taliban leadership is a moderate one (statement of Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed) compared to the Taliban of 1996 when they publicly displayed the bodies of the slain Afghan president Najeeb Ulla and his brother. Most notably Imran Khan refused to allow US airspace to attack Taliban if they become a challenge for Ghani. In June, Pakistan began to send drones to confuse as a warning to India of Pakistan army's preparedness in case India thought that all was hunky dory. The purpose was to keep India engaged on the LoC and keep her busy deciphering the purpose of drone attacks. Meanwhile Pakistani generals began to redeploy its troops to northern parts of the country. On Friday, according to the Saleh, Pakistan is guiding the Taliban advancing troops from anti-terrorist-cells based in Peshawar and Quetta. And the Ghani government is in panic. The defense of Kabul has now become a top priority. Yet a comprehensive strategy to win the war against Pakistan sponsored Taliban seems to be found nowhere. Under the current circumstances the only way to secure a possible victory for the Afghan people and the government in Kabul would be to transform the patchy resistance offered to the Taliban by armed peoples militias into a full-fledged civil war. Arming every Afghan citizen to fight the medieval Islamic jihadi evil could lead to the final triumph of good over evil. Secondly, given the evidence of Pakistan's involvement in providing

logistic and strategic support to the Taliban against the legitimate government of Afghanistan, Ghani should declare war on Pakistan without further delay and send troops into both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Baluchistan simultaneously declaring the Durand line a falsely divide between Afghanistan with Pakistan occupied KPK and call for the reunification of the forcefully separated Pashtun people. Meanwhile, the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement in KP led by Manzoor Pashteen, Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir should step forward an up the game of freedom from Pakistan by joining the Afghan armies in the same way that the Pakistan army is collaborating with the Taliban. The Baloch liberation forces should also be facilitated to join the extended war against Pakistani military occupation. India must become aware of the fact that Pakistan sponsored game being played by the use of Taliban will not stop at Kabul and that their next stop will be Kashmir and Kerala. Pakistan will make sure that no stone remains unturned in its endeavour to renew insurgency in Kashmir. The Talibanisation of Kerala over the past years is not a matter of coincidence but a well thought out strategy of Pakistani jihadi military. Once the Taliban take over Kabul, jihadis in Kerala could conveniently be used by Pakistan as a tool to stretch Indian security beyond their capacity by launching country-wide acts of jihadi terrorism. What we witnessed during West Bengal elections when jihadis were attacking the BJP supporters could very easily be repeated all over Hindustan. Hence, India must consider the withdrawal of US troops and the rapid advance of the Pakistan sponsored Taliban as a warning of what might come. And in a pincer movement both India and Afghanistan should confront Pakistan and ensure safeguard of not only their own people but also of the wider regional community. (Amjad Ayub Mirza is an author and a human rights activist from Mirpur in Pakistani Occupied Jammu Kashmir. He currently lives in exile in the UK)

Is your child riding the emotional roller coaster of anger?

N. Lothungbeni Humtsoe

The emotional rollercoaster is one that we ride for life. And sometimes it's a lot less fun than the physical amusement park kind. But over time, we learn to navigate the ups and downs, the twists and turns, and even the loops. Our kids, however, are still new to this ride. So, as the all-knowing, holding-the-secrets-to-life parents, it's our job to hold their hand and help them navigate it. Here are some handy tips and tricks by Manoj Jain, Director, Scram Kidswear, that cover some of the more common emotions one might come across on this rollercoaster. On today's ride, let's talk about anger. Anger is instinctual and probably the easiest to surface, especially when you're a tiny human. It's a feeling that our kids will face often, just like we do. It's mostly viewed as a negative emotion and our instinct is to tell our kids that it's bad. But it's as natural as the rest of them. Instead of repressing it, we'd rather teach them how to express it effectively and communicate their feelings, whatever they may be. Step one: Identify the emotion For children, recognising emotions isn't as straightforward as it is for us. That's why the first step is to identify the feeling. When you think they're mad, try mimicking their facial expressions and asking them if that's what they're feeling. If it's not, let them tell you how they're feeling about a situation because sometimes they might not be mad at all. In this way, you'll understand their emotions better without invalidating them. And it'll give your little one a chance to correct you if you're wrong (which is going to happen from time to time so don't worry about it). Step two: Explain the feeling After both of you are on the same page, explain the feeling to them and the correct ways in which to express it. Try asking them to put their feelings into words instead of actions. Like for example, "I didn't like it when my friend took my toy from me" instead of going full Chucky on their butts (which is pretty fun to watch, if we're being completely honest). But regardless of the reason, gently remind them it's fine to feel this way and their feelings are important to you. A handy tip to make this easier is to ask them to spot these emotions in the books they read or the things that they watch. Not only will it be a lot more fun, but it'll also help them set a reference point for themselves that they can relate to. These things take time and patience and a lot of repetition. There will definitely be a few bumps in the road along the way. But that's a part of the ride. Rollercoasters wouldn't be as fun without all the twists and turns, would they?

Flooding in Germany kills 80 people

Berlin | Agencies

Flooding in the German states of Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia due to torrential rainfall has left at least 80 people dead and dozens missing, local media reported on Friday. The death toll in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate has increased to 50, and "the fear is that there will be more", said a police spokesman in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate. According to figures previously released by the Interior Department of North Rhine-Westphalia, at least 30 people died in the state as a result of the disastrous weather. Xinhua news agency. The town of "Schuld an der Ahr" in the Rhineland-Palatinate state was the worst hit, with some houses destroyed by the floods, and



several other counties have also been badly affected, according to the report. The Rhineland-Palatinate state's Interior Department previously told the media that "the fate of 40 to 60 people remains unclear". In North Rhine-Westphalia, 23 districts have been affected. Clean-up and recovery work is still underway and soldiers have arrived in the affected areas to support rescue efforts.

4 Afghan security personnel, 63 Taliban militants dead in recent violence

Kabul | Agencies

At least four Afghan security personnel and 63 Taliban militants have been killed in the recent violence raging across the country, sources said on Friday. In Samangan province, four security forces were killed in a Taliban attack on the Rabatak security checkpoint on Thursday night. Reduction in Violence, a local independent monitoring group, said on social media. Also on Thursday night, the Afghan Air Force (AAF) targeted a Taliban gathering on the outskirts of Sari Pul city, capital of northern Sari Pul province, killing 11 militants and destroying two vehicles, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement. Earlier on Thursday, "20 Taliban militants were killed and 20 others were wounded in airstrikes conducted by the AAF in Shuhada district in Badakhshan province" the ministry. Those among the killed was a Taliban's deputy shadow district chief for Shuhada, the statement said, adding



six militants' vehicles and some amount of their ammunition were destroyed. Besides, 32 Taliban militants were killed and 10 others were wounded in a clean-up operation conducted by Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) with the support of the AAF on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, the capital city of Helmand province, according to Ministry. Earlier on Friday, Taliban spokesman

Zabihullah Mujahid said on social media that they have destroyed a helicopter of the government forces in a tactical attack in Kunduz province. He posted a photo on his social media account. However, Afghan military officials have not commented on the report so far. As the US and NATO troops have been leaving the country, violence in Afghanistan is on the rise.

US Treasury Secy expects 'several more months of rapid inflation'

Washington | Agencies

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said that she expects "several more months of rapid inflation" before moderating to normal levels. "I think we will have several more months of rapid inflation. So I'm not saying that this is a one-month phenomenon," Xinhua news agency reported on Friday citing Yellen as saying in an interview with CNBC. "But I think over the medium term, we'll see inflation decline back toward normal levels. But, of course, we have to keep a careful eye on it," she said. Yellen noted that measures of inflation expectations still "look quite well contained" over the medium term and those expectations are actually a driver of price setting behaviour. "So it is impor-



tant that we monitor it carefully. But I believe fundamentally, you know, that this is something that will settle down," she said. US consumer prices jumped 0.9 per cent in June, recording the largest one-month increase and largest 12-month increase in roughly 13 years, the Labour Department reported on Tuesday. Over the last 12 months, the consumer price index soared 5.4 per cent, the largest 12-month increase since a 5.4 per cent increase for the period ending August 2008

Indian-origin residents in S.Africa arm to defend themselves

Indian-origin residents in South Africa have organised armed groups to defend their families and businesses following the ongoing black mob violence in the country since July 7.

Durban | Agencies

We are forced to buy weapons and organise defence groups to protect our neighbourhoods. We are successful in business and professions and many locals are jealous of us. They just wanted an opportunity to loot us," said doctor Pritam Naidu (name changed for security reasons) from Durban, a city that is home to one million Indian-origin residents. Naidu said the local police has just been spectators and in some cases even joined the "loot-all, burn-all" mobs, who asked the Indians to leave. "We are here for several generations. Now some Zulu vigilantes are asking us to leave saying this is not your country," said Rajesh Patel, who runs a chain of grocery stores in Gauteng, one of the two worst affected provinces along with KwaZulu Natal (KZN). In Durban alone, 50,000 businesses, mostly owned by Indian-origin people, have been destroyed. Losses are estimated to be around 16 billion Rands, said Zanele Khomo of the Durban Chamber of Commerce. The South African government said Thursday night the army has been deployed in the violence-hit areas and reservists have been called up. It admitted that 117 persons, mostly Indian-origin people, have died in the vio-



lence. It claimed normalcy is returning to Johannesburg, but the situation was still tense in Durban. "We will shoot to kill if the mobs come again," said trader Joseph Kamath (name changed). "They pillaged our localities, our shops and malls were destroyed, but if they come for our houses now, we will fight and die to preserve family honour," he told IANS over messaging apps. South Africa is in a state of chaos and unrest ever since the arrest of former President Jacob Zuma on July 7. Zuma, once known for his fight against apartheid, was imprisoned in the Estcourt Correctional Centre for 15 months for disobeying court orders. He did not testify before the judicial commission that was investigating accusations of corruption against him between 2009-2018.

Several South Africans hit the streets to protest against the incarceration of Zuma and soon, those demonstrations turned violent against Indian-origin people. Images and videos of rampant arson, shooting and loot emerged as the violence engulfed the streets of Gauteng and KZN provinces. Interestingly, two-thirds of the 1.4 million strong Indian-origin population of South Africa lives and works in KZN, mostly in Durban. Some images also show how Indians had armed themselves to defend themselves and their property. They are organising neighbourhood watches and night patrols, fully armed and equipped with walkie-talkies. As the violence continued unabated, South Africans took to Twitter to attack the Indian community, specially the Gupta Brothers, long blamed for corruption with Zuma's backing. A South African man was found inciting violence through a tweet, asking his brothers to remember how "Jacob Zuma sold the country to Indian Monopoly Capital". The picture that accompanied this tweet was of the Gupta Brothers. The Gupta brothers, Ajay, Atul, and Rajesh, as well as Atul's nephews Varun and US-based Ashish and Amol, are a family that hails from Uttar Pradesh, Saharanpur. They migrated to South Africa only in 1993.

117 killed in violent protests in SAfrica

She said the government was concerned over the supply chain and movement of goods from Durban and Richards Bay ports to various destinations for the main routes have been blocked by protesters with stones and other dangerous items over the past few days.

Johannesburg | Agencies

A total of 117 people have lost their lives during violent protests which have been taking place for a week in South Africa, said Acting Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni. Addressing reporters on Thursday, Ntshavheni said 26 deaths had been recorded in Gauteng, while 91 lives were lost in KwaZulu-Natal,



reports Xinhua news agency. She said the situation is improving in Gauteng province while KwaZulu-Natal is still volatile but was slowly moving toward stability. A total of 2,203 arrests were made in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Among them, 725 were in Gauteng and 1,478 in KZN. She said the government was concerned over the supply chain and movement of goods from Durban and Richards Bay ports to various destinations for the main routes have been blocked by protesters with stones and other dangerous items over the past few days. "SAPS (South African Police Service) are providing escorts for the transportation of the supplies of oxygen, medicines and other key goods that have to reach all parts of the country," said Ntshavheni. She said police have arrested one of the 12 people who were suspected of inciting people to commit crime. "The South African Police Service tracking team has increased the surveillance of the remaining 11," she added. With regards to the deployment of 25,000 soldiers, 10,000 were on the ground as of Thursday.

Britney's new lawyer positive to free her from conservatorship

Los Angeles | Agencies

BRITNEY Spears' new lawyer Matthew Rosengart has said he is "confident" he will free the singer from her "abusive" conservatorship amidst her second court hearing, a source has exclusively claimed to The Sun.

The pop star's conservatorship will be discussed again Wednesday, July 14th in order to address further petitions against her appointed guardianship.

A source close to Britney's new lawyer Matthew Rosengart alleged he is "confident" that he will be able to free her from her situation.

They claimed, "He's absolutely confident he will get Britney out of this mess. He would not have taken this case if he wasn't positive they'd win. He knows it's going to be a challenge but he fully believes they have enough evidence to prove Britney no longer needs a conservatorship."

Britney returned to court on Wednesday to continue her fight in ending the "abusive" conservatorship run by her father Jamie, 69 - although it's been said she will not personally address the court like she did during her hearing three weeks ago.

Judge Brenda Penny has led the charge in considering Britney's request for new representation, along with several other petitions in the case.



'Kimberley Garner'ing attention at Cannes

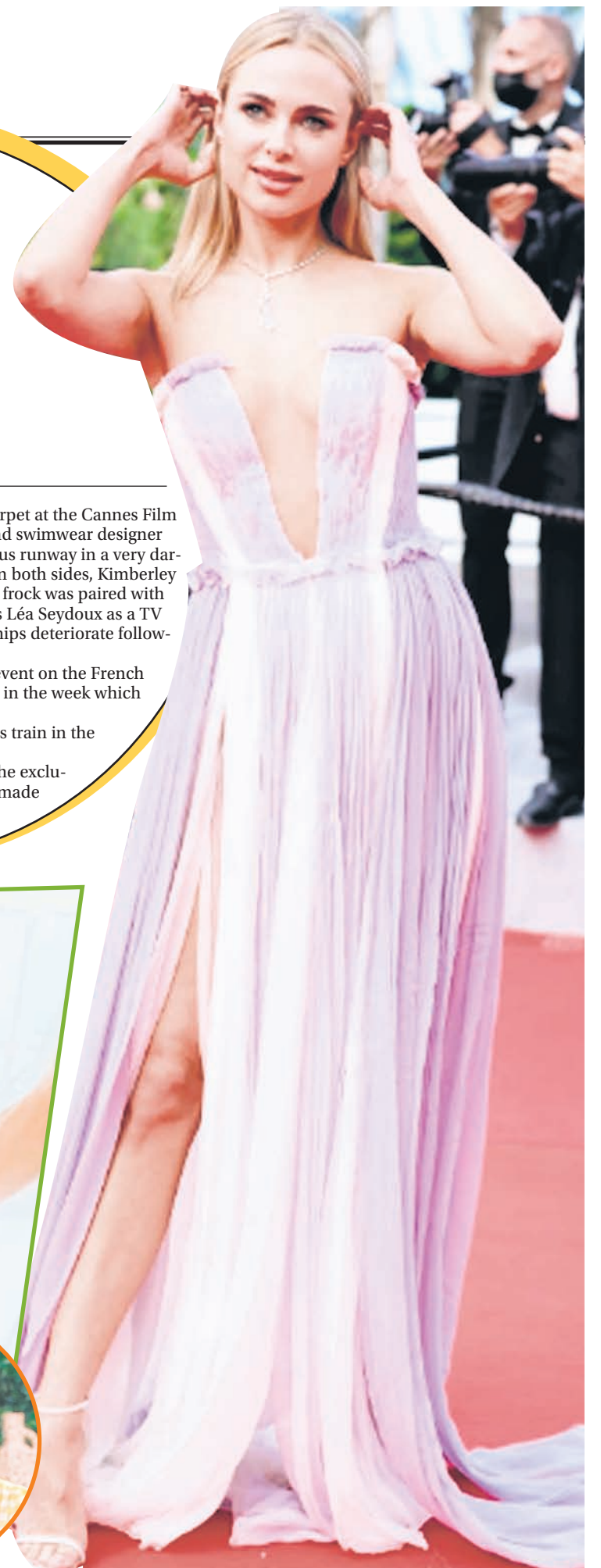
Los Angeles | Agencies

Kimberley Garner was in a cheeky mood on the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival today. The former Made In Chelsea star and swimwear designer ensured all eyes were on her as she walked the famous runway in a very daring dress. With a plunging neckline and thigh-high splits on both sides, Kimberley revealed plenty of her athletic figure. The lilac and white frock was paired with white stilettos for the screening of France. The film stars Léa Seydoux as a TV news anchor whose mental health and family relationships deteriorate following a motorbike accident.

Kimberley is making the most of the prestigious event on the French Riviera. She rocked a glittering gold number earlier in the week which impressed her fans.

The dress was so big she struggled fitting its train in the back of her luxury car.

The ex reality star has been staying at the exclusive Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc and has made the most of its beautiful coastal setting.



Holly Willoughby's emotional message to Emma after secret wedding

Los Angeles | Agencies

Holly Willoughby has congratulated her old friend Emma Bunton in an emotional message after she finally got married.

This Morning host Holly, 40, who is not thought to have been at the service, wrote: "Awww my beautiful Baby! Stand up Mrs Jones... love you both." The Spice Girls star, 45, married long-time fiancé Jade Jones in a secret ceremony at Soho Farmhouse in Oxfordshire. The pair, who have been engaged since 2011, announced the news with a snap of them

together writing: "Mr and Mrs Jones!"

The only guests at the wedding were Emma and Jade's mothers, their two children - Beau, 13, and Tate, ten - and two close friends as witnesses.

Spice Girls Victoria Beckham, 47, who lives less than mile away from the venue, Mel B, 46, Geri Horner, 48, and Melanie C, 47, later sent congratulatory messages. Holly and Emma are very close and often hang out together on nights out and at one another's birthday parties. They have even shared a snog - a story Emma admitted after her Spice Girls co-star Mel B let it slip on Celebrity Juice.

Gigi Hadid talks about anxiety issues during pregnancy

Los Angeles | Agencies

Model Gigi Hadid has shared that she worried about being a good mother while she was pregnant with her first child Khai. The 26-year-old model opened up about how she kept a good journal and a bad journal which she thinks she might give to her daughter Khai one day, reports dailymail.co.uk.

Hadid also spoke about how well her beau and musician Zayn Malik has fitted into her family. On her pregnancy anxieties, Gigi said in the August issue of Harper's Bazaar: "During my pregnancy, I had one journal that I called my good journal and one journal that I called my bad journal. They weren't that literal, but one was more for the memories, for Khai. Maybe one day I'll give her the bad journal just to be real about it."

Talking about what was inside the bad journal, she said: "Anxieties and days where I felt like, 'Am I good enough to be a mom?' I didn't want to feel guilty about feeling those things or writing those things down. I just liked the separation. I also have sketch pads where I'll water colour-sketch, and sometimes I end up writing there too. I write on the back of receipts and keep those in a notebook."

She added: "I'm not particular about it, and my journals are everywhere around the house. I just pick up whichever one is closest to me and write."



Ed Sheeran to isolate after being at Wembley

London | Agencies

Singer Ed Sheeran to isolate again as he's pinged after being at Wembley with Kate Middleton, Prince William and David Beckham. He has been forced into Covid self-isolation for the second time in just a few weeks.

The star, 30, was ordered to head home after being notified that he had come into close contact with a Covid case.

He only recently left a spell of travel-related quarantine after flying home from New York where he went on James Corden's chat show.

It comes as millions of Brits continue to be clobbered by the Test and Trace system which ministers have admitted is overzealous.

Sources say it is unclear if singer Ed is self-isolating after being pinged by the NHS app or contacted by Test and Trace staff.

It is not known where the Covid contact took place. Shape of You star Ed was in Wembley's Royal Box near to Prince William, Kate and Prince George, and David Beckham for England's match with Germany 16 days ago.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Meghan Fox

STUCK TOGETHER

Ben Affleck gazes JLo adoringly as the couple stuck in LA's traffic jam

Los Angeles | Agencies

Ben Affleck has been spotted gazing adoringly towards Jennifer Lopez as the couple sat in their car while stuck in an LA traffic jam.

The pop star got back together with the Academy Award-winner, after breaking off her engagement to Alex Rodriguez in April.

Actor Ben, 48, and singer JLo, 51, first got together in 2002 but broke up and called off their engagement just two years later. Now, they're back

together and have been an official item since the end of May - and have been seen lovingly gazing at one another. Sat side-by-side in the car while stuck in traffic on the Freeway, Ben gazed in the direction of his girlfriend while keeping a hand on the wheel. Jennifer looked to be enjoying herself as she rested her head back on the seat and let out a slight smile as she closed her eyes.

Looking glamorous in a pair of dark sunglasses, the star had her hair styled into an up-do as she appeared to go make-up free in the snaps.





INDIA YET TO PLAN AGAINST UNKNOWN SRI LANKAN SIDE: BHUVNESHWAR

Colombo | Agencies

Sri Lanka, plagued by suspension of players due to breaching of Covid-19 protocol and injury withdrawals, are an unknown quantity that the Indian team here hasn't yet planned against for the six limited-overs games this month, said vice-captain Bhuvneshwar Kumar on Friday.

"We don't know what their squad will be. But what I saw in England [is that] they have a talented squad. [A] few performed well. We want to win the series. We don't know what their team will be. Once we know we can plan on that," said the new-ball bowler Kumar in a virtual media interaction on Friday.

The 20-member Indian squad and reserve players have spent 17 days here. They, however,

remain unsure of the Sri Lankan team they will face in the first ODI on Sunday.

Sri Lanka Cricket is yet to announce the squad for the series, comprising three ODIs and three T20s.

The series was supposed to start on July 13 but was delayed after a couple of Sri Lankan backroom staff members, including batting coach Grant Flower, tested positive for Covid-19.

That pushed the Sri Lankan limited-overs squad returning from England this month into quarantine.

More than that, the Sri Lankans will miss key players. Three of the key players - wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella and batsmen Kusal Mendis and Danushka Gunathilaka - have been suspended for disciplinary reasons while batsman Kusal Perera and bowler Binura Fernando are injured.

Kumar though said that the series

would be important to prepare for the T20 World Cup, which will take place in October-November.

"The T20 World Cup is around the corner. We want to do well in these matches. We have just three matches, so you know individually, it is not only about performing. It is also about how you want to execute your skills. Sometimes you do well with the execution part but won't get wickets. Of course, you want to win, which will help us get going into that tournament, i.e. we would have won the last international series before the T20 World Cup," added Kumar.

Calling the experience of working with Indian white-ball team coach Rahul Dravid 'very good', Kumar said, "It has been very good. Spent 14 days in quarantine in Mumbai. After seven days we were out practicing, we met him there first."

T20 World Cup: India and Pakistan in the same group

Dubai | Agencies

India and Pakistan have been drawn together in Super 12, or the second stage, of the men's T20 World Cup as the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Friday announced the groups for the tournament to be played from October 17 to November 14 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman.



Round 1 will have eight teams, including automatic qualifiers Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, playing against the six teams who booked their spot through a qualifying event in 2019 in the UAE.

Ireland, the Netherlands and Namibia join Sri Lanka in Group A. Group B has Oman, PNG and Scotland are joined by Bangladesh.

Top two teams from both groups will progress to the Super 12 stage.

The two groups for Super 12 were created on the basis of team rankings as of 20 March 2021.

India enjoys a 5-0 superiority against Pakistan across all editions of the T20 World Cup.

"We are delighted to announce the groups for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021. There are some great match ups offered by the groups and it starts to bring the event to life for our fans as our first multi-team event since the onset of the global pandemic draws closer," said ICC's acting CEO Geoff Allardice.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly was delighted upon Oman being part of the mega event. "It is good to get Oman in the frame of world cricket with the hosting of the ICC men's T20 World Cup. It will help a lot of young players take an interest in the game. We know it will be a world class event in this part of the world."

The tournament schedule will be announced later.

'Sports For All' named official partner of Indian Olympic team

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has roped in Sports For All (SFA) as the official partner of the Indian Olympic contingent for the Tokyo Olympics.

Founded in 2015, SFA has formulated a fully-integrated physical (combination of online and on-ground) platform that enables on-ground competitions as well as sports education through technology. This helps identify, nurture and empower athletes across 30 disciplines with the right set of experiences and tools.

"We are very excited to have SFA as our official sports EdTech Partner. SFA, with its technology driven platform and mega-scale, on-ground



multi-sport competitions at school and college level, will empower and enable our children and youth to pursue their best sporting potential and thereby, fuel India's Olympic

dreams," said Rajeev Mehta, secretary-general, IOA. "Our association with IOA and Team India is strongly rooted in our belief that by providing the children of India with the finest

sporting platform at the earliest stages of their sporting journey, we can fuel their progress towards representing and taking India to the top of the global sporting map in the years to come," said Rishikesh Joshi and Vishwas Choksi, founders of SFA, in a statement on Friday. Joshi, who has been a national level swimmer, said, "India has the potential to be a global sporting superpower.

We need to build a strong ecosystem to enable sports to become a viable career option. Our platform will enable coaches and academics to connect with children who want to learn any sport. This will create the foundation for our future champions in a systematic and strategic manner."

Messi close to agreeing new contract with Barca: Reports

Madrid | Agencies

FC Barcelona is on the verge of agreeing a deal with Lionel Messi for the Argentinean to remain at the club for a further five years, reports the Spanish media.

Messi is currently out of contract after his last deal with the club expired on June 30th, with talks over a new deal dragging on, reports Xinhua.

The main problem with the negotiations was finding a formula that would keep Messi at the club, while ensuring his wages would not breach wage ceiling requirements imposed on Barca by La Liga. That conundrum looks now to have been solved with Messi agreeing to a new five-year contract, with wage cut of around 50 percent on his previous deal. The player has reportedly accepted a net income reported to be in the region of 20 million euros (about 23.7 million US dollars) a year, plus a bonus for agreeing to put pen to paper. The length of the contract is



surprising given that Messi is 34 years old, but there is also the chance the contract will include a

clause allowing him to leave Barca after a further two or three years.

Barcelona president Joan Laporta will view the agreement as an important personal success after replacing Josep Maria Bartomeu as the head of the club in March, promising to keep Messi at the club after the Argentinean had publicly said he wanted to leave last summer. Messi is currently on holiday after leading Argentina to victory in the recent Copa America, but the media speculate the new contract will be made public before the end of the week.

DJOKOVIC DECIDES TO COMPETE AT THE OLYMPICS

Tokyo | Agencies

World No. 1 tennis player, Novak Djokovic of Serbia, has ended the uncertainty over his Olympics participation, confirming on Friday that he would be boarding the flight to Tokyo.

In a message posted on social media, Djokovic, who will now aim for a golden slam -- four Grand Slams and Olympic gold in a calendar year -- wrote, "I am very proud to pack for Tokyo and join our national team in the fight for the brightest medals on the Olympic arenas.

"For me, the game for Serbia has always been a special joy and motivation and I will do my best to make us all happy! Let's go (Flexed biceps sign)."

The 34-year-old, who recently won the Wimbledon, to add to his Australian Open and French Open crowns, added, "Cannot disappoint my little friend Kojirou. I booked my flight for Tokyo and will proudly be joining #TeamSerbia for the Olympics."

Djokovic also posted a video of him interacting with a six-year-old child named Kojiro Owaki.

Tokyo2020, the official twitter handle of the Games, wrote, "@DjokerNole is looking to continue his fine form into #Tokyo2020 after winning three Grand Slams in 2021. The world No.1 won bronze at Beijing 2008 and is looking to add to his collection (Clapping hands sign)."

Soon after winning the Wimbledon, Djokovic had said he was undecided about his participation at the Olympics, adding that it was a "50-50" thing as there "are going to be a lot of restrictions within the (Games) Village".

"My plan was always to go to Olympic Games, but right now I'm a little bit divided. I also hear that there's going to be a lot of restrictions within the Village. Possibly you would not be able to see other athletes perform live. I can't even have my stringer that is very important part of my team. I can't have a stringer. I'm limited with the amount of people I can take in my team as well," Djokovic had said.



Final training sessions for shooters before Tokyo flight

Team Absolute | Mumbai

With their departure for Tokyo set for Friday, the Indian shooters had a rigorous training session in Zagreb, Croatia. The shooters, who had failed miserably and returned empty handed from Rio Olympics, are expected to win a few medals for India as their performance has been impressive in the last two three years. It was a lengthy session taking up the entire morning as the shooters did their stuff one final time before they leave Croatia for Japan. The shooters have been in Croatia since the middle of June and though they were expected to return home before leaving for Tokyo, decided to extend their stay to avoid the extra quarantine

ordered for India and 13 other countries, if their athletes were reaching Japan from home country. India has a record number of participants in Tokyo this time -- 15. The extra quarantine was not applicable for all those that have spent 14 days or more in a foreign country and were reaching Tokyo directly. The shooters, who had competed in a World Cup in Croatia during the camp, utilised the final day of training to put the final touches on their work. The Sports Authority of India (SAI) released some photographs and videos of their final training session in Zagreb on Thursday.

Among those who trained on Thursday were pistol shooters Rahi Sarnobat and Manu Bhaker. Rahi, the Asian Games gold

medallist, won a gold medal in 25m pistol event at the ISSF World Cup in Osijek, Croatia. That would have given the shooter from Kolhapur plenty of confidence ahead of the Olympics.

Sarnobat had also won a bronze in the 10m pistol team event along with Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Manu Bhaker. Though that event is not part of the Olympics programme, all three pistol shooters came up with good scores.

The 50 metre 3-position shooters -- Aishwary Prapat Singh Tomar and Tejaswini Sawant -- also made the most of this opportunity before they leave for Tokyo as did rifle shooter Divyansh Singh Panwar and pistol ace Saurabh Chaudhary.

SANIA MIRZA, SHOAB MALIK GRANTED UAE GOLDEN VISA

Dubai: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has granted Indian tennis ace Sania Mirza and her husband and Pakistan cricket star Shoaib Malik the much-coveted 10-year UAE Golden Visa. Mirza, 34, who hails from Hyderabad, and Malik, 39, a native of Sialkot in Pakistan, got married in 2010 and have been residents of Dubai for the past several years. The much-loved sports couple has a three-year-old son named Izaan.

The Golden Visa was instituted by the UAE government in 2019 as a new system for long-term residence visas. It enabled foreigners to live, work and study in the country without the need of a national sponsor and with 100 per cent ownership of their business on the UAE mainland. These visas are for a period of five or 10 years and are renewed automatically. The UAE Cabinet Resolution No. 56 of Organisation of Residence

Permits allows investors (minimum of AED 10 million) entrepreneurs and professional and specialised talents like in the field of science and knowledge to apply for it. On Thursday, Mirza and Malik issued a brief press release that said: "Both Sania and Shoaib are excited to spend time in the UAE with their son and explore the country. They are keen on launching their own entrepreneurial venture in the sports industry starting with Dubai." Other sportspersons who have been granted the Golden Visa include footballers Cristiano Ronaldo and Luis Figo and reigning tennis world No. 1 Novak Djokovic. From the entertainment industry, Bollywood stars Shah Rukh Khan and Sanjay Dutt have received this visa.



OLYMPIC COUNTDOWN Will it be 'third-time a charm' for Deepika?

Tokyo | Agencies

At 16, Deepika Kumari had established herself as the country's ace recurve archer, winning gold in individual and team events at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi.

At 18, the daughter of an auto driver and nurse in the Ranchi Medical College was the winner of world cup gold. She was then the top-ranked archer in the world, aiming to become the country's youngest sportsperson to win an Olympic medal in 2012 London.

However, nerves, strong winds, and poor health saw Deepika make a quick exit, bowing out in the opening round to a home team archer. Since then, Deepika has been at the

forefront of Indian archery, seamlessly taking over the lead role from Dola Banerjee, with whom she won the team gold medal at the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

But over the years, Deepika, while winning world cup medals aplenty, has found cracking the Asian Games and Olympics riddle tough. Deepika's overall tally of nine gold, 12 silver, and seven bronze in the world cups stands in sharp contrast to her poor run in continental and global multi-discipline showpiece events.



More than a decade of competing at the top level and having represented the country in two Olympics, this could be Deepika's best chance of clinching a medal - or medals - as she will be competing in two categories in Tokyo - individual and mixed team.

She will pair with her husband Atanu Das in the mixed team event, which will make its debut in Tokyo. The expectations are high because Deepika is in the best form of her

career. A fortnight back, Deepika, 27, bagged three gold medals -- women's individual, team, and mixed pair - in the World Cup Stage 3 in Paris late last month to reclaim the No.1 spot in the world.

Deepika's sterling performance in Paris could be attributed to the fact that she secured the Tokyo Olympic quota in 2019, and because of the postponement of the Games by a year, she got one extra year to prepare for the showpiece event. While luck will play a major role in her success, given that the Koreans and Japanese will be tough as ever, the experience of the last two Olympics and the confidence gained from a hat-trick of gold medals in Paris could make it a third-time lucky for the Indian archer.

RAHUL VAIDYA, DISHA PARMAR TIE THE KNOT!

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Rahul Vaidya and actress Disha Parmar got married on Friday. The couple looked gorgeous in their wedding outfits as they greeted the media.

Rahul donned a cream and beige sherwani while Disha glowed in a red lehenga. The couple also greeted the media and distributed sweets.

The newly-married couple has been sharing



glimpses and videos of their wedding celebrations on social media. From engagement to haldi ceremony, followers have been gushing over the special moments of the couple.

In an unusual trend, they will have the saangeet ceremony on Saturday, a day after their wedding. The dance choreography has been done by Sumit Khaitan.

In an earlier interview, Sumit had revealed that the couple is fun to choreograph and very enthusiastic. He said, "The experience has been positive because both of them are full of life. Rahul is very expressive and Disha is an amazing dancer. I must say they are quick learners. They have been very accommodative and sweet. They don't have any tantrums and try to understand the options we give them. They are happy to understand what we want to teach them and very comfortable and adjusting. They have really liked my choreography and said that it is catchy and cheerful, which is really

encouraging."

Film industry mourns demise of Surekha Sikri



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Celebrities from the world of cinema and television took to social media on Friday to mourn the demise of veteran actress Surekha Sikri, who passed away at the age of 75 following a cardiac arrest earlier in the day.

Amit Sharma, director of the 2018 film "Badhaai Ho", for which Sikri was honoured with a National Award, tweeted: "You will be remembered eternally SUREKHA ji. I will miss you and cherish you always. Praying that you are in a better place."

Actor Giriraj Rao wrote, "Making a film is like travelling in a train, where the journey is a destination in itself. You meet all kinds of co-passengers here. Some open up their tiffins and hearts to you, while

some guard their luggage and eye you with suspicion." Veteran actor Anupam Kher posted: "Deeply saddened to know about the sad demise of my senior in #NationalSchoolOfDrama & an actress par excellence #SurekhaSikri!! She was the queen of theatre in Delhi!! Watching her perform in the play #LookBackInAnger was an experience I will never forget. Thank you. #OmShanti."

Balika Vadhu's Avika Gor said, "I am saddened to know about the demise of my mentor Surekha Sikri ji, one of the greatest actors and doyen of Indian cinema, a legend. She inspired generations of actors and will always be missed. RIP. Surekha ma'm was an inspiration and showed the way with grace."

Actor Rohit Roy, who featured alongside Sikri in the 1997 television show "Kabhie Kabhie", wrote: "Huge loss... actor par Excellence... fabulous human.... Surekha ji RIP."

"There is and will always be too much respect and admiration for you Surekha ji. You have always aced all the roles with immense grace. Would have been my pleasure to work with you. Rest In Peace," tweeted actor Shreyas Talpade. Bengali cinema superstar Prosenjit Chatterjee wrote: "Another huge loss... #SurekhaSikri Ji, you'll always be remembered as a powerhouse performer. Rest In Peace."

Arjun Rampal wraps up his portions for 'Dhaakad'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Kangana Ranaut has shared that Arjun Rampal has wrapped up shooting his portions for the action film "Dhaakad". Kangana posted a picture on Instagram

Story, where Arjun can be seen opening a bottle of champagne. The actor wears a black vest, flaunting blonde hair and a tattoo on his chest. Arjun plays the villain Rudraveer in the film starring Kangana as Agent Agni.

"It's a film wrap for our baddy @rampal72 will miss you on the sets #Dhaakad," Kangana wrote on the image.

The film's first schedule was shot in Madhya Pradesh.



RITEISH, GENELIA TO PERFORM ON 'INDIAN PRO MUSIC LEAGUE'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

This weekend, celebrity ambassadors Riteish and Genelia Deshmukh of Mumbai Warriors and Bobby Deol of Punjab Lions will be present to support their respective teams on the music reality show "Indian Pro Music League", which gears up for its grand finale on July 18. Riteish and Genelia will dance to "Dil mein baji guitar" and "Dhagala lagali" while Bobby grooves to "Duniya haseno ka mela".

"With our superstars Mika Singh and Asees Kaur leading the way, the entire team grew from strength to strength as the competition progressed. Our talented lot of young singers including Rupali Jagga, Shehnaaz Akhtar and Divya Kumar have given tremendous performances.

They have stayed true to Punjab by showcasing the culture, the values and talent of the state," said Bobby about his team on the Zee TV show.



Shilpa Shetty's look of the day is a colour riot



Team Absolute | Mumbai

On Friday, actress Shilpa Shetty posted a happy picture in a multi-coloured outfit holding a pinwheel. "Happiness has a language of its own. Sometimes, it's just holding a pinwheel," wrote Shilpa Shetty on her Instagram page.

In the picture post, the actress looks gorgeous in a multi-coloured flare skirt paired with a pink blouse, holding a pinwheel against a pink background.

The actress mentioned she was dressed for the dance reality show "Super Dancer Chapter 4". She is one of the judges of the show along with filmmaker Anurag Basu and Bollywood choreographer Geeta Kapur.

Shilpa is set to make her comeback in films with "Hungama 2".

Vidya Balan: 'Is there fear of loss of stardom? Not at the moment'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Vidya Balan says she does not have the fear of losing the stardom she has gained over the years with her power-packed performances. She admits, though, that it hurts when a film of hers does not do perform well because she is always intensely involved in anything that she does.

"When you are going through a low, it is very tough, especially because it is all very public. When your films don't work, for example, it affects me badly because I am so intensely involved in my films. I give so much of myself to my films," said Vidya.

The actress says the most painful part of the experience is that she feels "rejected or unloved" when such a thing happens. "It is heartbreaking, there is no doubt about it and then you feel unloved and rejected. I think that is what is painful. You can't make sense of it. Only later are you able to look at the situation objectively and say, 'oh that why this film did not resonate with people'. When it is fresh, I think it is always very tough," she said.

However, loss of stardom is a notion that has never bothered her, Vidya added. "Is there fear of loss of stardom? Not at the moment, no," said the actress, flashing the trademark smile. Vidya was recently seen in Amit Masurkar's film "Sherni", where she played an upright forest officer on the lookout for a man-eating tigress. The film also features Sharat Saxena, Mukul Chadda, Vijay Raaz, Ila Arun and Brijendra Kala, and garnered a positive response upon release. The film released on Amazon Prime Video.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Rubina Dilaik