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Supreme Court pulls up, fines parties over criminal candidates

NO CRIMINAL POLITICS

Six parties, including the BJP and the Congress, were fined Rs 1 lakh and two - the NCP and the CPI-M, were fined Rs 5 lakh.

"We can only appeal to the conscience of the lawmakers and hope that they will wake up soon and carry out a major surgery for weeding out the malignancy of criminalisation in politics."

The top court held nine political parties guilty of contempt for not complying with directions issued in its February 2020, judgment, on making public criminal records of candidates selected for polls. These parties are: the Janata Dal-United, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the Lok Janshakti Party, the Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Communist Party of India, the Nationalist Congress Party, the Communist Party of India-Marxist, and the Rashtriya Lok Samta Party.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Emphasising criminalisation of the political system should not be permitted by lawmakers, the Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that political parties "refuse to wake up from deep slumber" and take steps to "weed out the malignancy of criminalisation in politics".

The bench stressed that no one can deny that the menace of criminalisation in the Indian political system is growing day by day.

However, the only question is, whether this court can do so by issuing directions which do not have foundation in the statutory provisions, it added.

"This court, time and again, has appealed to the lawmakers of the country to rise to the occasion and take steps for bringing out necessary amendments so that the involvement of persons with criminal antecedents in polity is prohibited. All these appeals have fallen on the deaf ears. The political parties refuse to wake up from deep slumber," in its 71-page judgment.

The bench cited a constitution bench judgment, which observed that though criminalisation in politics is a bitter manifest truth, which is a termite in the citadel of democracy, the court cannot make laws. It emphasised that it cannot issue directions which would indirectly provide for disqualification of a candidate.

Publish criminal antecedents of candidate within 48 hrs

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the political parties that they must publish the criminal antecedents of the candidates within 48 hours of their selection. A bench modified the direction in its February 13, 2020, verdict. In one of the directions in February 2020 judgment, the top court had ordered details to be published by political parties within 48 hours of the selection of the candidate or not less than two weeks before the first date of filing of nominations, whichever earlier.

On Tuesday, the bench said that it has changed this direction and made it mandatory publication within 48 hours, and also passed certain additional directions, which will be known when the full copy of the judgment is uploaded on the top court's website.

'Criminal cases against MPs/MLAs can't be withdrawn without HC approval'

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday said no criminal case can be withdrawn against MPs and MLAs without the approval of the concerned High Court. Amicus curiae senior advocate Vijay Hansaria submitted a report in the top court. The report suggested that withdrawing of prosecution under section 321 of CrPC is permissible in public interest and cannot be done for political consideration. The report said the state governments should be allowed to withdraw cases against former or sitting legislators only after the High Court's approval. It added such application can be made in good faith, in the interest of public policy and justice and not to thwart or stifle the process of law. The amicus made the recommendation in a petition relating to fast-tracking of criminal trials against sitting and former MPs/MLAs. A bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana noted that the issue of misuse of power under section 321 regarding withdrawal of cases is before us. "No prosecution against MP/MLA to be withdrawn without leave of High Court," Hansaria, who was assisted by advocate Sneha Kalita, during the hearing cited that the UP government has sought to withdraw 76 cases against elected representatives, including the Muzaffarnagar riot cases against Sangeet Som, Kapil Dev, Suresh Rana and Sadhu Prachi. "These cases relate to Muzaffarnagar riot in which 65 persons were killed and around 40,000 persons were displaced. Another news report was published on January 12, 2020 stating that the Government has decided to withdraw 76 such cases", said the amicus report.

Rajasthan Congress chief calls Savarkar a 'freedom fighter'

Archana Sharma | Jaipur



Going out of the party line, Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee chief Govind Singh Dotsara has stirred up a hornet's nest with his statement that the "freedom fighter" Veer Savarkar took part in the struggle for Independence and his demand for a Hindu nation in pre-Independent India was a valid one.

Following Dotsara's statement, BJP leaders are making a beeline to congratulate the Congress leader for his change in stand. Addressing the August Kranti Day programme at the PCC headquarters here on Monday, Dotsara said, "One of the two leaders of RSS was seen as freedom fighter when the Congress was fighting for Independence." He simultaneously justified Savarkar's demand for a Hindu nation.

"We are not denying this. He used to talk about Hindu Rashtra before Independence, so he did not commit any crime in saying that. Before Independence, the demand for a

Hindu Rashtra was justified. At that time, our Constitution was not implemented. But the BJP and the Sangh are talking about dividing the country with Savarkar's ideology at a time when the Constitution is in place and is followed by people from across the country," he said. Dotsara's statement has given the BJP leaders a reason to cheer. The Congress is yet to issue any statement on the matter.

US TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT AFGHAN FORCES

Washington: As the security situation is deteriorating in Afghanistan amid intense fighting between the Taliban and government forces, the Pentagon has said that the US military will continue to support troops in the war-torn country.

Addressing a briefing here on Monday, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said that the security situation in Afghanistan "is clearly not going in the right direction". "We will continue to support them with the authorities we have, where and when feasible, understanding that it's not always going to be feasible," he said. "But where and when feasible, we will continue to support them with airstrikes, for instance." Kirby declined to speculate if the US military will continue to provide air support for Afghan forces beyond August 31, the date that President Joe Biden had ordered the American military to end its mission in Afghanistan.



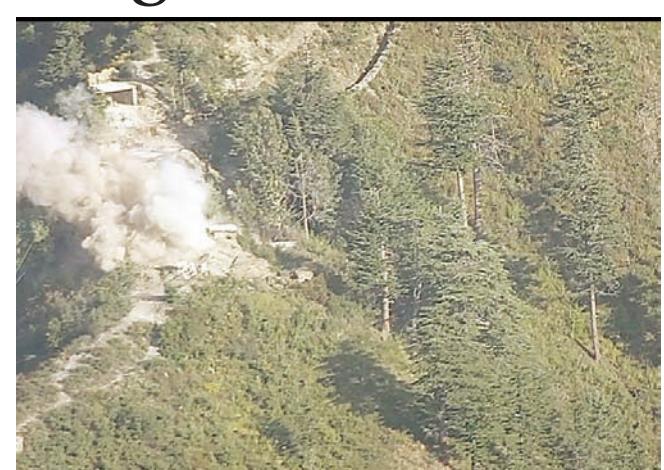
Pak tries to infiltrate terrorists across LoC in garb of ceasefire

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Undeniable proof has emerged which clearly demonstrates that Pakistan's commitment to ceasefire is a farce.

For the first time, a footage of a terror launch pad with active terrorists visible has been accessed. The proof shows that Pakistan is using the time to wage a proxy war against India.

Intelligence sources said that in the garb of a ceasefire agreement, Pakistan has been increasing the number of terrorists in the launch pads near the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB). These terrorists are waiting for an opportunity to sneak into the Indian side. The clear proof is in the form of visuals of one such terror launch pad



opposite a BSF post on the International Border in Jammu region. The BSF has been keeping watch using hi-tech equipment on this terror launch pad and not letting the infiltrators succeed in their plans. The terror launch pad is located in the Pakistan

Droughts to increase in India, Mumbai + cities to sink!

With the latest IPCC report warning about increase in monsoon precipitation extremities, scientists have pointed at increasing instances of drought across India and South Asia. Meanwhile, rising sea levels could submerge a dozen coastal cities in India, including Mumbai and Chennai, by the end of the century, according to a new report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The drought phenomenon has been linked with rising temperatures towards the second half of the 21st century leading to increased variations in monsoon precipitation, scientists said, based on the IPCC's (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Sixth Assessment Report of the Working Group I (AR6WG1) titled "Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science" released on Monday.

For the first time, it has a dedicated chapter on water cycles. The chapter deals in great detail on monsoon, not just as witnessed in India and South, South-East Asia but across five other monsoonal regions around the globe: North American Monsoon, West African Monsoon, East Asian Monsoon, South American Monsoon and Australian & Maritime Continent Monsoon. "With the increasing variability in precipitation, there would be spells of heavy rainfall followed by dry spells. Temperatures will be warmer, and this will lead to an



increased evapo-transpiration demand," said Executive Director at the Centre for Climate Change Research (CCCR) of Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, Raghavan Krishnan. He is one of the Coordinating Lead Authors of the chapter on 'Water Cycle Changes' in the AR6WG1 report. The IITM Earth System Model (IITM-ESM) climate projections (CMIP6)



were included in the IPCC AR6WG1 report, a first from India.

These vulnerable cities - Kandla, Okha, Bhaunagar, Mumbai, Mormugao, Mangalore, Cochin, Paradip, Khidirpur, Visakhapatnam, Chennai, Tuticorin - could be nearly three feet underwater by the end of the 21st century, the report has warned.

No decision for NRIC at national level: Govt

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government has not taken any decision to prepare a National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) at the national level so far.

In a reply to a question in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, Minister of State for Home Nitin Gadkari said that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 aims to facilitate grant of citizenship to migrants belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian communities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who entered India on or before December 31, 2014 and who have been exempted by the Central Government by or under clause (c) of sub-section

(2) of section 3 of the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 or from the application of the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 or any rule or order made there under. The Minister also informed that the government decided to update the National Population Register (NPR) under the Citizenship Act, 1955 along with the first phase of Census, 2021. The demographic and other particulars of each family and individual were to be updated/collected during the exercise of updating of the NPR wherein no document has to be collected during this exercise.

However, due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the update of the NPR and other related field activities have been postponed, he added.



HAVE SOME FAITH IN SYSTEM, WHY PARALLEL DEBATE ON SOCIAL MEDIA: SC ON PEGASUS ROW

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said there must be some discipline and proper debate during the proceedings in connection with petitions on the Pegasus snooping scandal. The top court emphasised those who filed PILs on the issue, are not expected to run a parallel debate on social media platforms or Twitter.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and comprising Justices Vineet Sarana and Surya Kant told the senior advocates representing various petitioners, "Have some faith in the system, parallel proceedings or parallel debate should not be there on Twitter or social media."

The bench emphasised that petitioners must have faith in the system and process of adjudication by the court.

The bench said: "There must be



some discipline. We asked some questions. There is an adjudication process. Sometimes it may be incon-

venient to you. That's how this process is. Both sides have to face the music".

The bench added if petitioners want to bring something to our notice, they should file that here. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing journalist N. Ram, said last time there were statements about his client's statements about the California court. Chief justice said it was taken out of context, but debates must not cross the limits. "If they are using the system, they should have faith in the system", he reiterated.

The top court stressed that the debate has to be within the courtroom and not outside and the debate should not cross the limits.

Several petitions have been filed in the top court seeking court-monitored probe into the Pegasus snooping allegations.

The top court has adjourned the hearing in the matter till Monday. Solicitor Mehta Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, sought time till Friday to seek instructions in the matter.

Modi launches Ujjwala 2.0 from Mahoba in UP

Mahoba | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday virtually launched the second phase of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), known as Ujjwala 2.0, here.

"Ujjwala Yojana benefitted women's lives in an unprecedented way," he said. He said he was overwhelmed to receive the blessings from sisters and mothers, ahead of the Raksha Bandhan festival.

The Prime Minister mentioned the names of some prominent personalities associated with Bundelkhand, including Rani Laxmi Bai. He made a particular mention of Major Dhyan Chand, recalling the decision to rename the country's highest sporting award after the hockey leg-



end. PM Modi also hailed performances of India's men and women hockey teams in the recently concluded Olympics in Tokyo. He listed some steps taken by his government in the last six years, explaining how each of those benefitted women. "In the first phase of Ujjwala Yojana, 80 million women received free LPG connections. These connections benefitted families during the lockdown. Imagine what would have happened if Ujjwala Yojana was not there?" Modi said.

He said that in the last seven years, we gave more

gas connections than the total number of connections given before 2014. He said that no address proof would be required for the beneficiaries of the Ujjwala scheme.

About 1,000 women beneficiaries were present, out of whom, 10 were given LPG cylinder connections by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in a symbolic gesture. The event also saw Modi interact with five women beneficiaries, one each from Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, respectively.

Assam has no claim over any land: Himanta Biswa Sarma

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday that the state has no claim over any land, adding that he does not want anyone to leave their land.

Talking to the media in the national capital, Sarma said, "We cannot fight with the bordering states for small villages. We do not want anybody to leave their land, as Assam has no claim over any land."

"Assam did not ask for any land. It is not a question of them leaving the land because we have never in our history asked for any land from our bordering states," Sarma said.

Sarma was referring to the border disputes between Assam and its neighbouring states. Recently, a border dispute between Assam



and Mizoram had turned violent, killing at least six people.

Amarinder hosts dinner in Delhi for select Punjab MPs

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day after senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal hosted dinner for leaders cutting across party lines, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Tuesday held a similar event for party MPs and leaders from Punjab.

Those present at Amarinder Singh's dinner include former Union Minister Manish Tewari, who is part of 'G-23' bloc of party leaders who have sought wide-ranging reforms in the Congress, former Law Minister Ashwani Kumar, MPs Santokh Chaudhary, and Preneet Kaur (the Chief Minister's wife), and few ministers from Punjab.

However, Rajya Sabha members



Pratap Singh Bajwa and Shamsher Singh Dullo were not present as both are considered from the opposite camp. On the significance of the dinner, party sources say that Amarinder Singh is trying to fortify himself ahead

of crucial state elections and muster support for himself.

The dinner came hours after Amarinder Singh met party interim chief Sonia Gandhi, in their first meeting after Navjot Singh Sidhu was

appointed the Congress chief in Punjab despite the Chief Minister's opposition. Their meeting lasted an hour, and sources said that the two leaders discussed the Assembly elections scheduled next year, besides talking about a minor reshuffle in the state cabinet.

Amarinder Singh's media advisor, Raveen Thukral, in a tweet, quoted the Chief Minister's statement after the meeting: "Met @INCIndia president #SoniaGandhi ji in Delhi this evening to discuss various state related issues. Spent an extremely satisfying one hour with her."

Ahead of the meeting, Amarinder Singh had detailed discussions with poll strategist Prashant Kishor, who had recently resigned as his advisor.

People want 3-child norm in draft bill for population control

Lucknow | Agencies

The Uttar Pradesh Law Commission has now classified the suggestions it has received from people on its draft law for population control, into 53 categories.

These include allowing a third child if a couple has two daughters and also if any of the first two children are physically challenged. Several people have suggested a three-child norm instead of a two-child norm.

UP Law Commission chairman Justice A.N. Mittal said that the commission will soon hand over its reports to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The Commission, last month, had invited suggestions from the people on its website and received over 8,500 suggestions.

According to sources, a number of people have also suggested that people who have more than two children should be barred from contesting the MP and MLA elections.

Other suggestions include denying benefits of reservation to couples who have more than two children and also revoking the right to vote to such couples.

According to the draft law, those who



have more than two children will not be entitled to apply for a government job. Those who are already in government jobs will be debarred from promotion. In addition, such parents will not be able to avail benefits of 77 government schemes.

Parents having one child will get several benefits. If such parents are in government jobs then they will get increment, promotion and various concessions in the government housing

If they are not in government jobs, then such parents will get rebates in water tax, house tax, home loan, and various other concessions.

In addition, if a parent with one child opts for vasectomy then the child will be entitled to free medical facilities till the age of 20 years, education and insurance. This child will also get preference in government jobs.

The rivers in Bihar are flowing above dangerous levels due to continuous rain in this monsoon session.

SIX MISSING AFTER BOAT ACCIDENT ON GANGA IN BIHAR'S BHOPUR

Patna: Six persons were missing after their boat met with accident in the Ganga river in Bihar's Bhopur district on Tuesday afternoon, officials said. The boat was bringing 12 people back from a fair held in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh's Ballia district.

However, the boatmen lost control due to strong waves and wind, and it collided with a pillar of Bhopur-Chapra road bridge and was damaged.

While the boatmen managed to rescue six passengers and brought them to the river bank, the other six went missing. The victims are native of Semra village under Barahara police station. The district administration has launched rescue operations, but there is no trace of the missing people.

The rivers in Bihar are flowing above dangerous levels due to continuous rain in this monsoon session.

Mamata blames Centre for floods in West Midnapore

Kolkata | Agencies

Amid fresh threats of rain in North Bengal and Gangetic West Bengal later this week, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who visited flood-hit Ghatal in West Midnapore district on Tuesday, blamed the Centre for the flood situation there, alleging that the flood is a result of the Centre's dilly-dallying over the Ghatal Master Plan project.

The Ghatal subdivision is one of the flood-prone areas of West Bengal. Therefore, the Ghatal block is very vulnerable to flood hazards. Critical drainage patterns of river Silabati and monsoonal climatic fluctuations are the main reasons for floods in the Ghatal block, which cause huge damage every year. To control the flood situation, the state government had proposed the Ghatal Master Plan in August, 2009. The state government had submitted the proposal to the Ganga Flood Control



Commission (GFCC) for flood protection measures, including desilting of the rivers in the Ghatal area of West Bengal at an estimated cost of Rs 1,577.28 crore.

The GFCC has undertaken specialised analysis of the revised detailed project report (DPR).

"This is a man-made flood. The Centre is not paying heed to our requests for the Ghatal Master Plan. Repeated requests are falling into deaf ears. I have conducted a survey of the area. I will prepare a report on this," the Chief Minister said, while standing on a water-logged lane in Ghatal on Tuesday.

2 INJURED IN SHILLONG BLAST, MILITANT OUTFIT CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY

Shillong: At least two persons, including a woman, were injured in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in the Meghalaya capital on Tuesday afternoon, police said.

Outlawed militant outfit Hymiewtrep National Liberation Council has claimed responsibility. Police, quoting eyewitnesses, said that the blast at the busy Laitumkhrah market was a moderate one and shook the nearby buildings. East Khasi Hills district police chief Sylvester Nongtner said that the wall of a tea shop situated in the parking lot and windows of the adjacent building got damaged. The two injured persons are currently being treated at the Nazareth Hospital.

10 CIVILIANS INJURED IN SRINAGAR GRENADE ATTACK



Srinagar: Ten civilians were injured on Tuesday in a grenade attack in J&K's Srinagar, police said.

Police said militants hurled a grenade at the security forces in the busy Hari Singh High Street market in Amira Kadal area of the city, but it missed the target and exploded on the road, injuring 10 civilians. "The injured have been shifted to hospital for treatment. Searches were started in the area which was cordoned off immediately after the grenade explosion," a police officer said. Attending doctors have described the condition of one injured as critical while most others have reportedly sustained minor injuries.

After renal transplant, Chennai man has 5 kidneys in his body

Chennai | Agencies

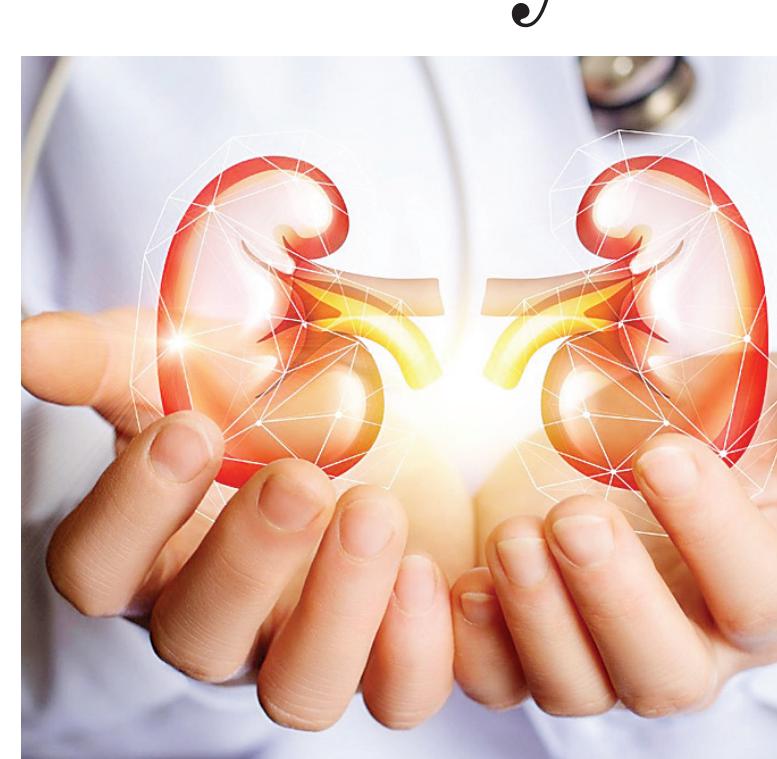
After a third renal transplant surgery, a 41-year-old resident of Chennai now has five kidneys in his body and is doing well.

The patient, who underwent a third renal transplant surgery at the Madras Mission Hospital, earlier had two transplanted kidneys in his body along with his original two kidneys.

This is one of the rarest of procedures conducted on a patient, which is not common even globally.

The surgery was performed on the patient on July 10 and exactly after a month during his first check-up post the operation, the doctors found that he was keeping well, and his transplanted kidney was functioning properly.

The vascular and transplant surgeon who performed the surgery on the patient, Saravanan, told reporter, "There were four challenges in performing this surgery -- first, lack of space for the new kidney in the retroperitoneum; lack of width on the renal blood vessels to connect the renal artery and vein; the bladder was scattered with earlier surgeries; and the patient tends-



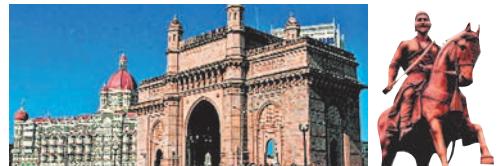
ed to develop a lot of antibodies from the earlier surgeries and plasmapheresis (filtering the blood) had to be performed before placing the new kidney."

He also said that the reason the old kidneys have not been removed to make space for the new one is because the patient could profusely bleed and require blood transfusion and could lead to the production of antibodies and rejection of the new kidney.

The 41-year-old patient had hypertension and chronic kidney disorder (CKD) and had two earlier failed renal transplant surgeries owing to uncontrolled hypertension.

The patient had also undergone triple bypass surgery at the Madras Medical Mission Hospital three months back, after he was diagnosed with coronary artery disease.

Saravanan said, "The kidney was placed high above in the abdominal cavity, right next to the intestine as opposed to the conventional approach. The transperitoneal approach (through the gut), a rare surgery, saved the day for my patient. This is an uncommon surgery and I have to see a paper published on this in India."



SCHOOLS TO RE-OPEN IN MAHARASHTRA

The SOPs have also directed to call students in batches and priority to be given for core subjects. Attendance of students has not been made mandatory. Parents are also advised to not send their kids to school if he/she is showing signs of illness.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday issued directions to reopen offline classes from standard V to VII in rural areas and from standard VIII to XII in urban areas from August 17. The notification comes a day after Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray met the task force for COVID-19 management.

Municipal Commissioners of areas such as Mumbai and Thane have been authorised to take decisions within their respective areas of jurisdiction. Collectors of districts such as Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli, Solapur, Pune, Ahmednagar, Beed, Pune, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Raigad and Phaghar have been authorised to take decisions locally as they continue to report cases.



Classes from standard VIII to XII in rural areas have already resumed from July. The government has also issued standard operating procedures (SOPs) to resume schools. Collectors will plan vaccination of teachers and non-teaching staff. Parents will not be allowed inside

school premises to avoid overcrowding. Protocols like physical distancing inside the classroom should be followed for which two sessions may be held. Teachers are advised to avoid public transport.

The SOPs have also directed to call students in batches and priority to be given for core subjects. Attendance of students has not been made mandatory. Parents are also advised to not send their kids to school if he/she is showing signs of illness. The notification accepted that considering the financial, social and technological disparity, the only suitable method of education is a mixture of online and offline education, though the Education Department was promoting online education for students' safety.

Maharashtra FYJC CET 2021 Cancelled: Bombay HC quashes request for CET for 11th Admission

Maharashtra FYJC CET 2021 will not be conducted now and stand cancelled. Bombay High Court has quashed a government request and has ordered the cancellation of CET for 11th Admission this year.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra First Year Junior College Common Entrance Test, FYJC CET 2021 will not be held this year. As per recent updates on the matter, Bombay High Court has quashed the government's request for holding a Common Entrance Test, CET for 11th Admissions this year. Now, admissions would be done to FYJC or class 11 with-

out any entrance test. The matter of Maharashtra FYJC CET 2021 has been in the High Court for quite some time with some or the other issue being brought to light. The government and school education department had proposed conducting a CET this time for 11th admissions as the Maharashtra SSC exams were cancelled. This entrance exam was made an alternative way of admissions in order to have uniformity in the entire FYJC Admissions process. Even previously, many stakeholders had objected to Maharashtra FYJC CET 2021 on various grounds. Students of other Boards had objected to this exam as they felt that the paper pattern was discriminatory and was not in sync with the syllabus of other Boards. Such was the case as the education department had mandated that CET for 11th Admission must be based on

Sharp spurt in atrocities on Dalits under BJP rule: Congress SC chief

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Congress on Tuesday said that ever since the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power, there has been a sharp increase in atrocities and violence against Dalits and other marginalized communities in the country. To protest against this, the Congress will hold a 'Halla Bol' agitation at Delhi's Jantar Mantar on August 12 and demand answers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, said All India Congress Committee SC Department Chairman Dr Nitin Raut, who is also Maharashtra's Energy Minister.

In a hard-hitting statement, Raut said that as per the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) figures, crimes against Dalits have increased by 281.75 percent between 2009-2018.

"The NCRB data shows atrocities against Dalits in 2019 to be 45,935, with Uttar Pradesh alone accounting for 25.8 percent or 11,829 cases of the total caste atrocities against the Dalits in the country," Raut said.

He rued that the NCRB data comprises only the reported cases as more than double of caste-based atrocities go unreported every year owing to the unwillingness of the police to lodge FIRs in such

matters, threats to the victims and lack of government support. Citing an example of how Dalits are deprived of justice, the minister referred to the Tsunduru, Andhra Pradesh, massacre of 8 Dalit youths and that nobody has been convicted even 30 years after the incident. "Caste-based violence has become an everyday reality for Dalits, especially women and children under the BJP government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he asserted.

Pointing to the recent Hathras, Delhi cases

where young Dalit girls were raped, murdered and forcibly cremated, he said justice is being denied because 'all democratic institutions have been compromised.'

The Prime Minister says that fast track courts would be set up so that justice is not delayed in such cases. But this has not been the case. There has been no statement made in Parliament," Raut pointed out. "Nevertheless, the Prime Minister gives a certificate to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for running a model government. In Delhi, the CCTV footage of the crematorium was destroyed, instead of arresting the accused the police harassed the victim's family," he added.

Holding Home Minister Amit Shah 'directly responsible' for this situation as law and order in Delhi comes under him, he said the explicit aim of a 'Hindu Rashtra' of the RSS-BJP and other outfits is essentially to maintain the hierarchical social order. Even the government of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has turned a blind eye to this social menace. Raut charged the Centre with perpetrating violence on Scheduled Castes by slashing allocations for their welfare in annual budgets, stopping or deliberately delaying scholarships that lead to higher dropouts or suicides among students, with Rohit Vemula an example.

Longest twin-tunnel on Mumbai-Nagpur expressway to be ready by Sep

Team Absolute | Pune

With a third critical 'breakthrough' achieved in the longest tunnel coming up on 'Hindu Hridaysamrat Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samruddhi Mahamarg' at Igatpuri in Nashik, the construction company, Afcons is hopeful of completing both the tunnels by September-end, officials said here on Tuesday.

The troll army, however, did not wait for any clarification and seized upon the rumour to start its hate campaign. One Twitter user wrote: "Taimur and Jehangir are not just a name it's a slap on the face of Hindus. They could also keep the name of their children as Kalam or Irfan ... Hindus and others beware of these Islamist radicals, or propaganda spreaders. #SaifAliKhan #KareenaKapoorkhan #Hindus."



through makes the north portal connectivity to south portal direct and seamless through the right hand side tunnel. We plan to achieve the final breakthrough by September-end and complete both the tubes," said Afcons Project Manager Sekhar Das. The development comes over five weeks after the Shapoorji Pallonji Group company notched a breakthrough on June 29 on the 7.78 kms long tunnel and 35

metres wide (17.5 metres in each tube) coming up between Igatpuri (Nashik) and Vashala (Thane) in a hilly forested region.

This tunnel is part of the 13.10 kms long Package 14 handled by Afcons for the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) on what officials say is the fastest moving package on the expressway.

The 701 km-long east-west expressway linking the state

capital Mumbai with its second capital Nagpur, is expected to be partially operational by September 2021 and fully completed by May 2022, slashing the travel time between the two cities by from the existing 16 hours to barely 8 hours. Besides, the longest tunnel, Afcons package has two small viaducts - of 900 metres and 1.20 kms - which would enable passage to the wild animals in the forested region where the expressway will not be fenced, according to Das. The expressway, being built at a total cost of around Rs 55,000 crore, will have two other smaller tunnels - 1.10 kms and 300 metres long besides a vertical shaft and one inclined shaft to provide ventilation to the two tubes.

RENNED AWYURVEDACHARYA BALAJI TAMBE PASSES AWAY



Pune: Renowned Ayurvedacharya Balaji Tambe passed away following a brief illness at a private hospital here on Tuesday. He was 81, family sources said. He had been ailing for over a week and had been admitted to the hospital but did not respond to the medical treatment and breathed his last.

Tambe is survived by his wife Veena, sons Sunil and Sanjay and grandchildren. Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and other dignitaries mourned the demise of the legendary healer and researcher. A globally renowned legendary master in Ayurveda, Yoga and Music Therapy, Tambe was the founder of the Atmasantulana Village at Karla, near Lonavala designed on a Vedic lifestyle, in 1982.

Maha govt preparing new guidelines to introduce further relaxations

The Maharashtra government is preparing new guidelines after receiving various suggestions and instructions from doctors, experts and government departments

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra government is planning to give further relaxations in Covid-19 related curbs as the number of the daily new cases seems to be plateauing for the last few days.

Maharashtra COVID task force met on Monday and discussed the possibility of granting more relaxations in COVID-19 curbs while observing precautions, an official said, adding the government is identifying new areas and preparing guidelines.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray who attended the meeting of the state's task force on along with state chief secretary Sitaram Kunte, state COVID task force head Dr Sanjay Oak and other members.

"The Maharashtra government is now preparing new guidelines after receiving various suggestions and instructions from doctors, experts and government departments. The focus of the discussion (in the meeting) was basically on how to introduce further relaxations while observing precautions," said a state government official, who attended the meeting. He said the government is listing down new areas where more relaxation can be introduced. The task force also discussed issues related to



tackling of a projected third wave of the pandemic, requirement of medical oxygen, increasing the pace of vaccination, effective implementation of tracing and tracking among others, he said. The state gov-

ernment had excluded malls, cinema halls, theatres, religious places and religious gatherings from the purview of the relaxations introduced last Monday. The government had allowed shops to function till 8 pm in 25 districts excluding 11 districts where level-3 restrictions continue to remain in force due to a higher COVID-19 positivity rate. Restaurant owners, malls and other establishments are demanding that the government extend the current timings. Artists also demanded that theatres be allowed to function with restrictions. The government is also under pressure to open religious places. CM Thackeray on Sunday announced that fully vaccinated citizens of Mumbai can travel in local trains from August 15, but a gap of 14 days from the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine is necessary to avail of the facility. Speaking in a live webcast, he had also said that his government was considering granting relaxations to shops, malls, restaurants and places of religious worship, and a decision would be taken following a meeting of the coronavirus task force on Monday. Thackeray had also said that the COVID-19 situation in Pune, Ahmednagar, Solapur, Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara, Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri, and Beed districts was a cause of concern. Maharashtra on Monday reported 4,505 new coronavirus positive cases and 68 fatalities, taking the tally of infections to 63,57,833 and the toll to 1,34,064, the state health department said.



MONSOON SESSION OF MP ASSEMBLY ADJOURNED SINE DIE

■ MP assembly sees a mere two hours of business transacted during monsoon session.
■ Session adjourned sine die after ruckus over price rise, OBC reservation issues

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The four-day monsoon session of the Madhya Pradesh assembly was reduced to mere one-and-a-half day, with just about two hours of business transacted, as uproar over issues of price rise and OBC reservation caused the session to be adjourned sine die on Tuesday.

Last year, amidst tight COVID-19 protocol, the single-day special monsoon session had also been adjourned within 90 minutes. These are the shortest hours that the MP assembly has been convened for, according to sources.

Outside the house, leader of opposition Kamal Nath called the 'historically short' monsoon session as 'playing with democracy' and added that the BJP always did politics of 'suppression and concealment'. He said the Congress had moved adjournment motions on price rise and OBC reservation, but the ruling party did not allow any discussion.

Home and Legislative Affairs Minister



Narottam Mishra, however, blamed the curtailing of the house on the opposition. Speaking to the media outside the house, he said the state has never seen such issue-less and directionless opposition.

Amidst uproar on Tuesday, the government got the first supplementary budget estimation worth Rs 4,587.59 crore and amendment bills to the Excise and Municipal Acts passed without any discussion through majority voice votes. The amendment to Excise Act pertains to provision of death penalty and life imprisonment for selling spurious liquor, leading to deaths. The Municipal Act amendment is about legalisation of illegal construction up to certain limits. As the session commenced on Tuesday - the second day of the schedule at 11.00am - Kamal Nath took up the issue of price rise, including fuel price hike, during the question hour and demanded that a discussion be allowed on the adjournment motion on the issue moved by the Congress. The treasury bench MLAs and ministers started opposing this saying the high fuel prices were due to the increase in taxes implemented by the previous

Congress government, led by Kamal Nath. The opposition members then stormed into the well of the house, demanding discussion on the issue. As the uproar continued, Speaker Girish Gautam adjourned the house for half-an-hour till 12.00 noon.

However, the opposition continued with uproar on issues of price rise, 27 per cent reservation of OBCs and excesses on Dalit and tribal communities even after the house reconvened. The supplementary budget and the two amendment bills were passed amidst this uproar and the speaker adjourned the house sine die at around 1.00pm. On the first day of the session on Monday, the session had been adjourned after customary homage to the deceased members. The opening day had also seen a massive protest and walkout by the Congress over insults to tribal communities by the government as the holiday on World Tribal Day had been withdrawn.

The Congress, meanwhile, also held a protest in front of the statue of Mahatma Gandhi outside the house on assembly

campus over the OBC reservation issue. The decision of the Kamal Nath-led Congress government in March 2019 to accord 27 per cent reservation to OBC communities had been stayed by the MP High Court, which is still hearing the case. On Tuesday, the High Court said the last hearing will be conducted on September 30, and asked the counsels of government and petitioner to be physically present for the hearing. Speaking to the media, Kamal Nath said the Congress wanted discussions on price rise, recent floods, COVID-19 pandemic and suppression of figures, OBC reservation and other issues, but the government ran away from discussion in the house and tried to suppress the voice of the opposition. "They know that if the issues were discussed the truth of their failure will come out in public and therefore the session was adjourned. The BJP is playing political tricks," Nath said, adding that the Congress will now fight for the issues of people on the street. Narottam Mishra said issues of people who have been affected by the recent floods have been discussed in the house, but the Congress does not want to talk on issues of people's welfare and is always engaged in divisive politics. "The Congress knows that it cannot exist if it does not play up divisive issues. All people's welfare issues could have been discussed, but the Congress ruckus led to curtailing the session and now its leaders are crying about short sessions," he added.

MP amongst the three new states where PepsiCo expanding

Team Absolute | Bhopal

To further enable the last mile delivery in rural India and encourage entrepreneurship, PepsiCo India on Tuesday extended its partnership with Common Service Centres (CSC) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, to list its food products on Grameen eStore platform. After a successful pilot project in Uttar Pradesh, PepsiCo India's snacking brands - Lay's, Kurkure, and Uncle Chippy's will be listed on the CSC Grameen eStore across 50 districts in Madhya Pradesh.

PepsiCo India's partnership with CSC is aligned with the Government of India's mis-

sion of building 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' by creating rural employment and making the digital inclusion of rural India a reality.

Dinesh Kumar Tyagi, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) CSC SPV stated, "Our relationship with PepsiCo India has evolved with time. CSC has been working together in great synergies with PepsiCo India to create more opportunities for rural entrepreneurship. The extension of our partnership with PepsiCo India will certainly prove a milestone for CSC to ensure last mile delivery in the hinterlands of rural India while enhancing rural entrepreneurship helping in the scaling of businesses and local employment." Speaking on

the new developments, Aditya Sinha Senior Director & Head of Sales, PepsiCo India said, "CSC has been paramount in driving digital inclusion in rural and remote locations.

The CSC Grameen e-store program is a unique purpose vehicle that has encouraged and economically empowered rural entrepreneurs. We started our partnership with CSC Uttar Pradesh that has shown positive results and are delighted to take this partnership forward to three more states besides further expanding it in Uttar Pradesh. We are proud to be associated with this program and will continue to work closely with CSC to promote rural entrepreneurs and help create more synergies."

The Madhya Pradesh government has made necessary preparations to deal with the expected third wave of Covid-19 infection in the state. As many as 189 oxygen plants are being set up which will likely be functional by September this year.

Madhya Pradesh Health and Family Welfare Minister, Prabhuram Choudhary said a total of 189 pressure swing adsorption (PSA) oxygen plants are being set up in the state to ensure adequate availability of oxygen in the treatment of people. As many as 57 oxygen plants have been set up which are already operational while the remaining plants will be functional by the end of September.

"PSA oxygen plants are being set up in all medical colleges and district hospitals across the state. Of these, 11 such plants have been set up in med-

ical colleges while 83 were installed in district hospitals. As many as 48 PSA oxygen plants are being set up in civil hospitals, 41 in community institutions and six in other government health institutions," the Minister added. Choudhary said, "One PSA

oxygen plant each has been set up in Lanji, Waraseoni, Sendhwa, Lahar, Bairagarh, Berasia, Pandurna, Sausar, Hatta, Amoli, Aron, Hazira, Pipariya, Itarsi, Manpur, Sihora, Petlawad, Thandla, Vijayraghavgarh, Barwaha, Nainpur, Bhampur, Sabalgarh, Jawad,

Sarangpur, Biaora, Teonthar, Nasrullaganj, Ashta, Shujalpur, Nagda, Gan Basoda, Bhagwanpura and Gadarwara while two oxygen plants each have been installed at Kailash Nath Katju (Kukshi), Ambah, Jaora, Kurai, Maihar and Madhav Nagar Civil Hospital. Choudhary said PSA oxygen plants are being installed in 41 community health centres while one oxygen plant each has been set up in MRTB Hospital Indore, Military Hospital Jabalpur, AIIMS Bhopal, ESI Hospital Nagda, Nehru Shatabdi Chikitsalya Singrauli and Railway Hospital Jabalpur. Covid-19 patients need oxygen to battle the infection. During the second wave of the pandemic owing to lack of oxygen, several patients died and many had to face severe problems across the country. For this purpose oxygen plants are being set up in all hospitals across Madhya Pradesh.

CM met journalists of Vindhya region



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that media is the fourth pillar of democracy. It is a worthwhile initiative by the Assembly Speaker Girish Gautam to invite journalists on a study tour of the Vidhan Sabha. Chouhan was addressing the journalists of Vindhya region who came to learn about the working of the Vidhan Sabha. In a meeting organised in the Assembly building in the chamber of Speaker Girish Gautam, Chief Minister said that the means of communication help in the promotion and publicity of the schemes being run by the government. Along with this, the attention of the government and administration is also drawn towards the problems of the people. Interaction between the various pillars of democracy is necessary, for which such study tours are necessary. Gautam also addressed the journalists who came from Rewa, Satna,

CM PLANTS SAPTAPARNI SAPLING



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Saptaparni sapling in Smart Garden today. Former Minister Rajendra Shukla was also present on this occasion. Chief Minister Chouhan is planting saplings every day as per his resolve. Saptaparni is an evergreen medicinal tree which has great importance in Ayurveda.

Sheopur will be made the cleanest city: Singh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Urban Development and Housing Minister Bhupendra Singh has said that according to the direction of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan Sheopur, which has been severely affected by floods, will be made the cleanest city. Cleanliness work is being carried out in the form of a campaign here. Efforts are being made to completely clean the city in the next three days. The cleanliness campaign will continue in Sheopur later also. Two superintending engineers, 3 additional CMOs, 4 sub engineers and 200 sanitation workers are engaged in cleanliness work in the city.

Presently 13 JCBs, 6 dumpers, 7 sewer suction machines, 3 jetting machines, 26 tractor-trolleys, 15 tractor scrapers and 6 fire-fighters besides other equipment and machines have been deployed in Sheopur for cleaning and other work. Drinking water system has been completely restored in Sheopur. Out of the total 106 tube wells, 105 have started working. Tankers have also been deployed as per the requirement. Along with the posting of a new Chief Municipal Officer, two additional sub-engineers, two sanitary inspectors and one accounts officer have been posted to speed up development works in Sheopur. The survey of damaged houses is

FLIGHT FROM REWA TO BHOPAL AND INDORE SOON: CM

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that flights from Rewa to Bhopal and Indore will start soon. Consent has been given on behalf of the state government to give the amount of the tender received from the Ministry of Civil Aviation for starting the flight. Former minister Rajendra Shukla met Chief Minister Chouhan on Tuesday and requested him to give 100% VGF contribution of the state as desired by the Ministry of Civil Aviation. Chouhan directed the officers to send consent letter in this regard immediately. Chief Minister said that 72 seater airline will start soon between Rewa, Indore and Bhopal. Shukla urged Chouhan that by starting air service from Rewa, the development of Rewa and surrounding area would get a boost.

Minister Silawat meets CM Chouhan:

Urges CM to restore irrigation projects damaged by excessive rain

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silawat called on Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday and discussed about the irrigation structures damaged by excessive rainfall in Gwalior-Chambal region. He told Chief Minister that extensive damage has taken place in about 660 minor irrigation schemes, dams and canal systems of 38 medium and major projects in Sheopur, Shivpuri, Gwalior, Bhind, Morena, Ashoknagar, Guna and Datia districts of Gwalior-Chambal region. This will affect about 8 lakh hectare Rabi area. He said that in order to provide irrigation facilities to the farmers for Rabi crops, it is very important to complete the repair work of damaged canals and other water structures before October 15, 2021. Silawat said that he has taken stock of situation by visiting the entire area.

An estimate of Rs 816 crore has been made for repair, reconstruction and restoration of dams, canals and other water structures damaged by heavy rains based on preliminary survey. Silawat urged Chief Minister to sanction the amount as per the estimates and sanction area of Rs 300 crore on priority basis.

Silawat informed that excessive rains have caused a lot of damage to dams and canal systems. Due to excessive rainfall in the catchment area of Upper Kanket, Kanket and Harsa dams, Abda dam and



Mahuar dams of Gwalior-Chambal region, the guide wall constructed in the downstream of the dam, stilling basin, falls of waste weir etc. have been damaged. He informed that about Rs 85 crore is likely to be spent on repair and restoration of these dams. Similarly, the

Chambal canal project, which irrigates 3 lakh 62 thousand hectare area of Sheopur, Morena and Bhind districts, has been the most affected. The 169 km long main CRMC is totally damaged at about 85 places. Apart from this, about 20 percent damage has been done in the distributary, minor and sub-minor canals. Initially, about Rs 250 crore will be required for the improvement works of 3200 km length canal system. Silawat informed that a 244 km long main canal of Raighat canal project has been damaged at many places. Due to this, irrigation will be affected in two lakh one thousand hectare area in Datia, Bhind and Shivpuri districts. Apart from this, about 15 percent damage has been done in the distributary minor and sub-minor canals. Initially, about Rs 40 crore will be required for the repairing work. He informed that the damage to Harsa canal system will affect the Rabi irrigation of 66 thousand hectare area of Gwalior district. Initially, about Rs 25 crore will be required for the repairing work of 500 km canal system. Similarly, due to the damage of Mahuar canal system, Rabi irrigation will be affected in 10 thousand hectare area of Shivpuri district. Initially, about Rs 20 crore will be required for repairing work of the canal system. Rabi irrigation will be affected in one lakh 3 thousand 500 hectare area of Shivpuri, Datia and Gwalior districts due to damage of Sindh and Harsa high level canal system. Initially, about Rs 15 crore will be required for repairing work of the canal system.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Investments in climate

As Europe shows global leadership in the fight against climate change with the Green Deal and the new "fit for 55" proposals, around 45 per cent of European Union (EU) firms report investments to address climate change. Nearly half of firms in the EU have invested in energy efficiency, up from 37 per cent in 2019 to 47 per cent in 2020. Although EU firms show commitment, enhancing their awareness of climate change-related risks will be the key to greater climate investment. The new report provides an overview of EU firms' perceptions of climate risks, their investment to address those risks and the main factors influencing their decisions. The report builds on the EIB Investment Survey, an EU-wide survey that includes interviews with over 13,500 firms. These report findings are comparable across EU countries and the United States, as well as sectors and firm size. Around 45 per cent of EU firms report investments to address climate change, compared to 32 per cent of firms in the US. Western and Northern Europe saw the largest share of firms investing in these measures, at 50 per cent. The share in Southern Europe is 38 per cent and in Central and Eastern Europe 32 per cent. At the country level, the differences are even more pronounced: Finnish (62 per cent) and Dutch (58 per cent) firms are at the forefront of climate investments, whereas only 23 per cent of Cypriot, 19 per cent of Irish and 18 per cent of Greek firms make this kind of investment. When it comes to specific investments in climate change, the push towards energy efficiency continues. Despite higher energy efficiency investments than in the previous year, Europe's energy savings potential remains largely untapped given the energy and non-energy benefits that these entail.

TIME TO FATHOM OPPOSITION UNITY!

Vinod Kumar Shukla

Opposition political parties are trying hard to get united against the Bharatiya Janata Party government with the Congress being part of it minus the Gandhis. Is this the message that one can draw from the unity shown at the dinner hosted by former Union minister in the Mammotha Singh Government Kapil Sibal. Rahul Gandhi too is trying to unite rest of the opposition political parties against the BJP but Shiv Sena, Shiromani Akali Dal and Biju Janata Dal joining the birthday bash of Kapil Sibal has certainly something more to tell.

The most interesting aspect of the gathering was that none of the Gandhis were present at the dinner hosted by the former Union minister. Aam Aadmi Party was neither invited by Rahul Gandhi in the all-party meeting nor by Kapil Sibal which means AAP doesn't fit into this opposition umbrella for its unreliability.

Sonia Gandhi always played a key role in the formation of the anti-BJP axis in the past two decades but her health is not allowing her to remain active. Moreover, the country is witnessing a new kind of Hindu revivalist politics which made her irrelevant. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the new super

hero of Indian politics. Sonia is remembered for the storm in the tea cup that had changed the course of Indian politics in 1999 when a tea party organised by former Janata Party chief Subramanian Swamy and BJP MP at present brought AIADMK leader J Jayalalithaa and Congress leader Sonia Gandhi face to face which became instrumental in bringing down the coalition government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. There was no ideological connotation in it but Swamy avenged his exit from Bharatiya Jan Sangh for which he reportedly had held Vajpayee responsible. His antipathy towards the tallest leader of the BJP A B Vajpayee was no secret. But things have changed now and the BJP is not dependent on any of its allies and did not succumb to the pressure of any of them including Shiv Sena and Shiromani Akali Dal for its brute majority at the moment. Moreover, it has successfully been able to implement its programmes under the leadership of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister despite not having a majority in the Rajya Sabha leaving the Opposition red faced. And this has decimated the entire opposition. It has passed such laws which appeared impossible otherwise. This has certainly set the alarm bell ringing for the entire opposition as the party of so-called cow belt region has spread its reach in the

southern part of the country and North East. So, the opposition parties appeared to be in mood to bury their hatchets to take on the BJP to save themselves from existential crisis and decided to iron out differences later on. So, all regional leaders with their fixed vote bank tried to showcase their solidarity at the birthday party thrown by Sibal. And besides opposition parties leaders, some of the dissenting leaders of the Congress were also present at the bash hosted by Sibal which indicates that even the Congress is acceptable to the Opposition parties minus Gandhi-Nehru family. If the BJP is missing its Man Friday Arun Jaitley, then the Gandhi Family too must be missing Ahmed Patel. There is a need to understand that if the Nehru-Gandhi family works as glue for the Congress workers across the country, the family drifts away certain sections of the Opposition from it despite having similar ideological frame of mind as some of them were once part of the Congress. Presence of Lalu Prasad in the gathering was surprising despite Gandhis not being around as he is strongly behind them. So, after a long time the entire Opposition including parties from southern India gathers at one place so what the occasion was informal. The DMK was represented by its leader Tiruchi Shiva; Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP Derek

O'Brien too was present on the occasion; former UP CM Akhilesh Yadav; and RLD leader Jayant Choudhary were some other leaders too who made their attendance marked. So almost all the opposition leaders who are opposed to the BJP on certain issues were present. Some churning is certainly going on everywhere not only in the Congress but otherwise also as Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar seems to be very active in organising meetings of leaders of various political parties. Information poured in that leaders had discussed politics in the dinner party but no one was ready to reveal about future strategy or it is too early to say anything. Some people have also argued that Gandhis not joining the bash was strategic on the advice of Prashant Kishor who wanted to fathom the unity of opposition political parties. But will these Opposition leaders with small egos be able to take on the BJP behemoth which always left them gasping with its innovative strategies. If people say that they were trounced by the TMC in West Bengal, the same strategy of the TMC will pay the BJP dividend in the rest of the country if TMC joins any alliance. But every development is interesting to watch for!

(Writer is a freelance journalist based at Delhi. Views expressed are personal.)

'Millionaire' pigeons in this city of Rajasthan

Archana Sharma

You might have heard the story of many industrialists who are billionaires and millionaires in Rajasthan. However, you might be unaware of the fact that even pigeons are millionaires in the state's small town Jasnagar situated in Nagaur.

Multimillionaire pigeons -- This is how pigeons are called in this town as property worth crores of rupees have been named after them.

This wealth includes several shops, lands stretched to several kilometres and cash deposits too. While pigeons have 27 shops on their name, they also have 126 bigha land and cash deposit worth Rs 30 lakh in their 'possession'.

On top of it, over 400 gaushalas are also being operated on 10 bigha land which is owned by these pigeons. Around four decades back, a new industrialist floated a Kabutaran Trust here, said Prabhusingh Rajpurohit, adding that the arrangement was made after



taking inspiration from our ancestors, as well as from former sarpanch Ramdin Chotiya and his guru Marudhar Kesari, who inspired all of us to arrange for food and water for the mute

birds. Industrialist Sajanraj Jain was the pioneer in the project, he added.

People donated with open hearts as soon as the project

was floated. Now, a gaushala is being run on this land owned by pigeons in which 500 cows stay. All medical arrangements have been made for these bovines here. With the help of a huge donation, around 27 shops were built in the town via the trust to ensure the protection of pigeons as well as to make sure that the birds get regular grain and water. In fact, the trust was named after pigeons and hence is called as kabutaran trust (Kabutar means pigeon in Hindi).

The shops are earning a rent of Rs 80,000 per month. Also, the land is being rented and hence it also gives a regular income to the trust. All this income is being deposited in the bank which over the years has increased to Rs 30 lakh. Now with this earning, the trust is giving three sacks of food grains daily for the last 30 years. Also, arrangements are made for around 400 cows staying in gaushala when required.

international

UNICEF CONCERNED OVER KILLING OF 100 KIDS IN ETHIOPIA

Addis Ababa | Agencies

The Unicef has expressed extreme concerns over the reported killing of more than 200 people, including 100 children, at a site for displaced persons in Ethiopia's Afar region.

"The intensification of fighting in Afar and other areas neighbouring Tigray is disastrous for children," Xinhua news agency quoted Henrietta Fore, Unicef Executive Director, as saying on Monday.

"It follows months of armed conflict across Tigray that have placed some 400,000 people, including at least 160,000 children, in famine-like conditions."

The attack on displaced families sheltering at a health facility and a school occurred on August 5.

Recent fighting displaced more than 100,000 people, adding to the 2 million people already uprooted from



their homes, Fore said in a statement. "Unicef estimates a 10-fold increase in the number of children who will suffer from life-threatening malnutrition in Tigray over the next 12 months."

The World Food Programme (WFP) reached half of the people it planned to assist, including communities on the verge of famine in northern Ethiopia.

It faces severe shortages of food, cash, fuel and functioning telecommunications

TEMPLE ATTACK A CONSPIRACY AGAINST MINORITIES IN PAK

Quetta: Senator Danesh Kumar, a leader of the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), has condemned the attack on a Hindu temple in the Bhong area of Rahim Yar Khan and termed the incident as a conspiracy against minorities living in Pakistan. He said it was condemnable that police failed to protect the temple located just 2 km from a police station, Dawn news reported. He said the Hindu community in the area had informed the police about a possible attack, but the police did nothing.

Kumar added anti-social elements entered the temple and not only ransacked it but also looted gold and other valuables before setting the place on fire. It was unfortunate that such incidents were taking place in Pakistan, adding that these events were tarnishing the image of Pakistan abroad, the Senator noted. Kumar said it was deplorable that the political leadership only issued a statement and no practical step was taken to stop such incidents.

Afghan govt has to use advantages to exert leadership: Pentagon

Washington | Agencies

The situation in Afghanistan hinges on Afghan civilian and military leadership, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said during a news conference.

Taliban forces have taken at least five provincial capitals in the country and others are threatened, Kirby said, adding that the fighting in the country "is clearly not going in the right direction".

He said Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin shares the concerns of other nations about the situation.

Still, he believes "that the Afghan forces have the capability, they have the capacity to make a big difference on the battlefield," Kirby said.

"He has maintained that we will continue to support them with the authorities we have, where and when feasible understanding that it's not always going to be feasible."

This support includes airstrikes and over-the-horizon counterterrorism support. While most US forces



have withdrawn from Afghanistan, the Defense Department has been centred on carrying out President Joe Biden's order to complete the downgrade from that country by the end of the month. The US will then switch to a bilateral relationship with the Afghan government, Kirby said.

The US has authorities needed to continue air support to the Afghan government through the end of the month, Kirby said. "Whatever the outcome here, when we look back, we're going to be able to say that it was driven by leadership Afghan leadership, political and military leadership," he said. "That's what's vital here."

The Afghan government has a force of over 300,000 soldiers and police, Kirby said. The Afghan military has an air force, which the US continues to support and improve. The government forces have modern weaponry and an organisational structure. "(The government) has a lot of advantages that the Taliban don't have," Kirby said.

"The Taliban doesn't have an Air Force, they don't own airspace. (The government forces) have a lot of advantages. Now they have to use those advantages, to exert that leadership. And it's got to come both from the political and from the military."

Kim Jong's sister slams S Korea, US over military drills

Seoul | Agencies

Kim Yo-jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, on Tuesday slammed the US and South Korea over their joint military drills, vowing to build up Pyongyang's nuclear weapons in response.

In a statement carried by Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), Kim Yo-Jong said: "They (exercises) are the most vivid expression of the US hostile policy, designed to stifle our state by force, and an unwelcoming act of self-destruction for which a dear price should be paid as they threaten the safety of our people and further imperil the situation on the Korean Peninsula."

"We will put more spur to further increasing the deterrent of absolute capacity to cope with the ever-



growing military threats from the US, i.e. the national defence capabilities and powerful pre-emptive strike for rapidly countering any military actions against us."

Besides slamming the drills, she also demanded the withdrawal of the US forces stationed in South Korea, Seoul's Yonhap News Agency reported. "For peace to set

Ransacked Pak Hindu temple handed over to community after restoration

New Delhi/Rahim Yar Khan | Agencies

The Hindu temple in Pakistan's Bhong town which was ransacked by a mob following an incident of an alleged desecration of a seminary, has been completely restored to its original shape and handed over back to the minority community, according to a news reported.

Deputy Commissioner Khurram Shehzad said this on Monday while briefing Pakistan Army Commander of 60 brigade, Brig Mohsin Imtiaz and Chenab Rangers Sector Commander Adnan Danish, during their visit of the temple in Bhong town, some 60 km from Rahim Yar Khan, Dawn news reported.

The DC said that for the security of the temple, a boundary wall was also being constructed around it. The report said the work on restoration of the idols, damaged during the attack on the temple, would be complete soon. He said that all the expenses incurred on the temple's renovation would be recovered from the rioters involved in the attack.

He said police had prepared a comprehensive security plan for the temple and the Hindu families who had moved to other places during the violence would be brought back to Bhong town after clearance by police,

the report added. On the occasion, the Temple Committee member Mohan Jee said the local Hindu community was satisfied with the temple renovation work carried out by the district administration. He added that it would take two months to complete the work on restoration of the idols in the temple and the experts for the purpose would be brought from Hyderabad. He said the Hindu community would start performing the religious rites at the temple after the restoration of the idols.

Meanwhile, different local courts with powers of anti-terrorism courts (ATCs) have so far sent some 100 suspects allegedly involved in the attack on judicial remand to the New Central Jail, Bahawalpur.

The suspects were produced before the courts by Rahim Yar Khan police during the last three days. ATC Judge Nasir Hussain sent 38 suspects on judicial remand before proceeding on official/mandatory leave for a month on Saturday. On Sunday, despite the official holiday, the police brought 14 suspects from Bhong and other places and produced them before the duty judge. Additional Sessions Judge Ghulam Hussain Bhindhar as the ATC was closed for official holidays till August 29.

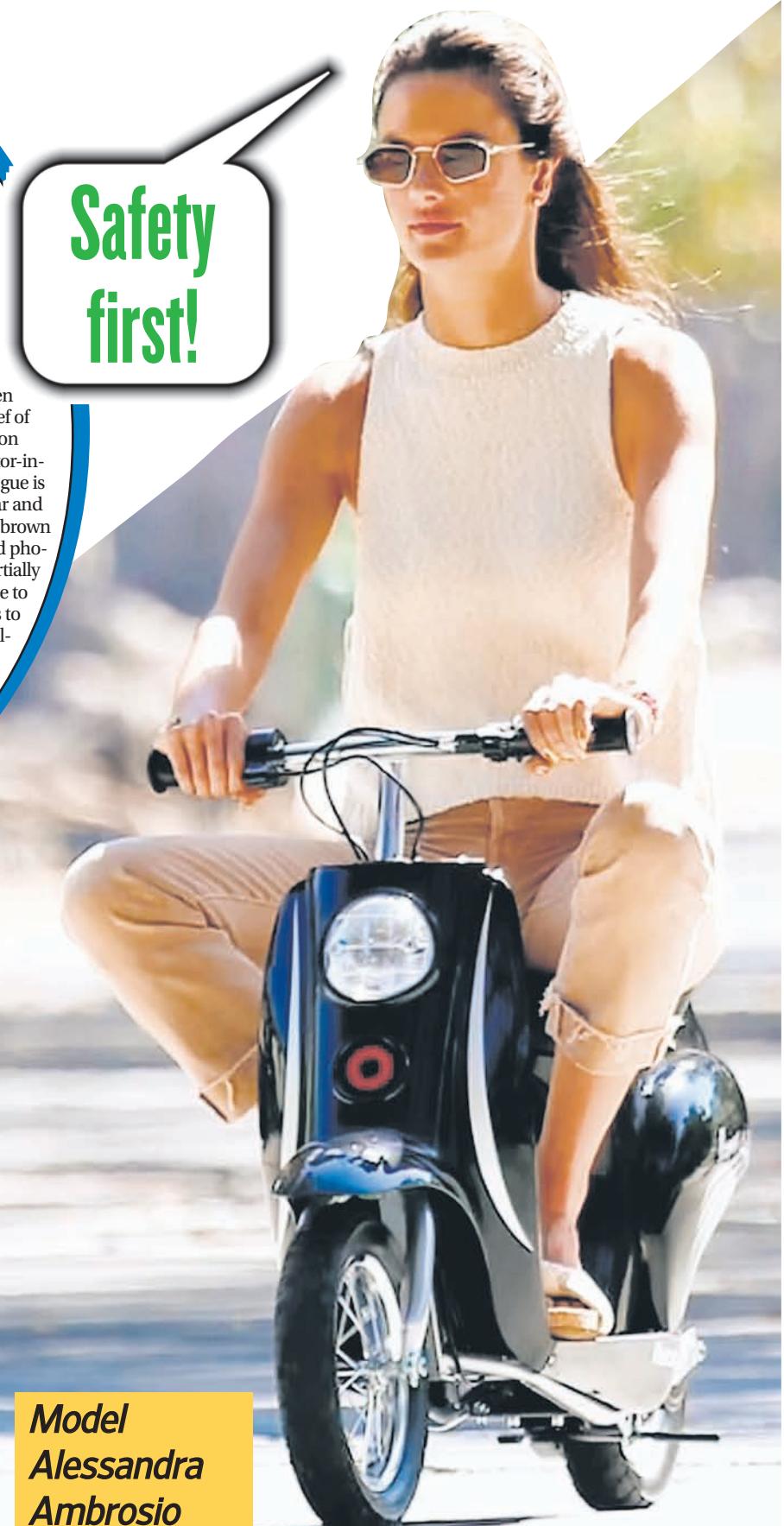


Maitreyi on Teen Vogue cover

Los Angeles | Agencies

Never Have I Ever' star Maitreyi Ramakrishnan is the second person of South Asian descent to grace the cover of the popular Teen Vogue magazine solo. Versha Sharma, who is the editor-in-chief of Teen Vogue described Maitreyi as a rising star on her post on Instagram. Sharma, who is the first South Asian American Editor-in-Chief of Teen Vogue, wrote alongside the cover: "My first cover for @teenvogue is here and I could not be happier that it's @maitreyiramakrishnan, rising star and hilarious talent, looking extra fashionable, surrounded by books. It's classic brown girl vibes + back to school all in one." "The features by @aaminasdfghjkl and photos by @heathersten are so fantastic. link in bio to see it all + my letter (partially to you, partially to my younger self) about why it means so much to me to choose a cover star like Maitreyi - a brown girl allowing so many of us to see ourselves portrayed in a way that is exactly how we grew up. (final!) and that's all possible thanks to @mindykaling, too!" Sharma added. A post from a New York-based media portal The Juggernaut, wrote on the photo-sharing website: "At 19 years old, @maitreyiramakrishnan has made history as only the second person of South Asian descent to grace the cover of @teenvogue solo." With Maitreyi, Poorna Jagannathan and Richa Moorjani leading the cast, 'Never Have I Ever' is a coming-of-age story that examines Indian culture against an American backdrop.

Safety first!



Harry Styles and Kid Harpoon lead the nominations for the Ivor Novello Awards

Los Angeles | Agencies

Harry Styles and songwriter Kid Harpoon have gained the most nominations at this year's Ivor Novello Awards. Singer Harry, 27, and his writing partner Kid Harpoon, who has written songs alongside artists such as James Bay and Florence Welch, secured three nods in two categories. The nominated songs are Watermelon Sugar, which has already a Grammy and Brit awarded song, and Adore You off Harry's 2019 album Fine Line, reports daily-mail.co.uk. The duo are also up for Songwriter Of The Year but will have to fight off some stiff competition if they want to walk away with the trophy as AJ Tracey, Celeste and Jamie Hartman, Kamille and MNEK have also been nominated in the same category.

Another category which may be challenging is the PRs for Music Most Performed Work - in which Harry's two songs have received nominations.

Lewis Capaldi also has two songs in the category, his 'Before You Go' and 'Someone You Loved' while Joel Corry feat. MNEK's 'Head & Heart' will also be in the running. The Best Album accolade is up grabs by Fontaines D.C.'s 'A Hero's Death', Lianne La Havas' titular album, Pa Salieu's 'Send Them To Coventry'



Rita Ora looks cuts a radiant figure

Los Angeles | Agencies

She's got plenty to smile about after The Voice Australia proved to be a ratings smash with almost two million viewers tuning in for the premiere.

And Rita Ora certainly seemed to be in great spirits as she giggled and posed for racy new snaps in which she appeared to be topless. The singer, 30, took to Instagram on Monday to share the sizzling shots from her latest photoshoot, with Rita captioning her snaps: 'Had fun shooting today', reports dailymail.co.uk.

The images see Rita looking simply radiant as she wore her blonde locks in bouncy curls while she highlighted her features with a dewy make-up palette.

Rita credited her sister Elena with making her laugh during the shoot as she noted that her sibling kept on coming out with hilarious one-liners.

The Anywhere hitmaker was glowing as she posed this way and that while trying to suppress her giggles during the sultry photoshoot.



CATHERINE ZETA-JONES IS CAST IN NETFLIX'S UPCOMING SERIES

Los Angeles | Agencies



Catherine Zeta-Jones has been cast in the role as Morticia in Netflix's upcoming Wednesday Addams series, titled Wednesday.

Zeta-Jones, 51, joins a cast including Jenna Ortega, 18, in the titular role, with Luis Guzmán, 64, playing Gomez Addams.

The series in February was ordered by the streaming giant for eight episodes, focusing on Wednesday's time studying at Nevermore Academy while exploring her abilities as a psychic.

The show will also follow Wednesday's sleuthing abilities of a 25-year-old conundrum surrounding her parents, as well as stopping a series of killings in the town.

Actresses who have past played the role in the sci-fi franchise include Carolyn Jones in the 1960s TV show, Anjelica Huston in the two 1990s feature films, and Charlize Theron in a voice-only role in the 2019 animated movie. Zeta-Jones, who past won an Oscar for her work in the 2002 film adaptation of the musical Chicago, has been seen in recent years on shows including Fox's Prodigal Son, Facebook Watch's Queen America and the FX miniseries Feud: Bette and Joan, reports dailymail.co.uk.

Famed filmmaker Tim Burton will direct and executive produce the show, which is created by showrunners Al Gough and Miles Millar.

'YOU SIGN AWAY YOUR PRIVACY'



JLS singer Aston Merrygold blasts One Direction's Liam Payne for blaming his mental health issues on being in the band

Los Angeles | Agencies

Aston Merrygold has blasted Liam Payne for blaming his mental health issues on being in One Direction.

Liam, 27, previously cited the 'toxic and difficult' environment of being in the boyband for being a detriment on this mental health.

However, Aston, 33, who also found fame in a band, JLS, called out the claims, saying that it 'comes with the job, you sign away your privacy' and that Liam should have understood that fame comes with a price.

Liam previously revealed that he had difficulty adjusting to the lifestyle and had a hard time being locked up in hotel rooms while on tour, reports dailymail.co.uk.

Both singers found fame on the X-Factor, and Aston told The Sun that there were other reasons why the band were not allowed out and it may have had something to do with safety, with fans bombarding hotels.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Beyoncé



Chopra third most talked-about athlete globally on Twitter; hockey logs record high

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Tokyo Olympic Games gold medalist, javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra (@Neeraj_chopra1), was the third most talked-about athlete globally, while hockey was the most talked-about sport on Twitter in India, recording an increase of 134 per cent compared to the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Following Chopra's success at the quadrennial showpiece on the penultimate day, the official Olympics handle's (@Olympics) video celebrating the thrower's iconic win was the most watched Olympics video on Twitter in India. The 23-year-old Chopra's tweet expressing



gratitude for the country folk's support for his gold-winning Olympics journey was also the most liked and re-tweeted tweet among Olympics conversations in India. This was also the tweet that received the most number of replies. "Still processing this feeling. To all of India and beyond, thank you so much for your support and blessings that have helped me reach this stage. This moment will live with me forever. (Folded hands, Flag of India)," Chopra had tweeted following his success.

Hockey became the most talked about Olympic sport on Twitter in India, recording an increase of 134 per cent compared to 2016 Rio, while the other sport that recorded massive increase in conver-

sations were javelin throw (+5631%) and golf (+703%), where Aditi Ashok (@aditigolf) became the first Indian golfer to represent the country at the Games.

Fencing thanks to Bhavani Devi's exploits, registered a 1086 per cent increase.

#FieldHockey was the most mentioned hashtag sports in India during the Games, followed by badminton, wrestling, boxing and golf. While Chopra was the most talked-about athlete in India, Mirabai Chanu (@mirabai_chanu) was second, followed by PV Sindhu (@Pvsindhu1), Lovlina Borgohain (@LovlinaBorgohain), Bajrang Punia (@BajrangPunia) and Rani Rampal (@imranirampal) in that order.

Messi lands in France to join Paris Saint-Germain

Paris | Agencies

Lionel Messi arrived at Le Bourget airport here on Tuesday afternoon to finalise his signing with French Ligue 1 giants Paris Saint-Germain after his tearful farewell to Barcelona on Sunday.

Hundreds of fans have been waiting at the airport since Monday as the 34-year-old Argentine had been linked with the Paris-based club right after his shock departure from Barcelona was announced.

Messi, wearing a T-shirt which wrote "ici c'est Paris (this is Paris)", waved to the fans when walking out of the airport.

PSG released a video later in the afternoon on its official website which heavily implied that the signing is completed. A news conference will take place in the auditorium of the Parc des Princes on Wednesday at 11:00 am, Xinhua reports.

According to the French newspaper L'Equipe, Messi has agreed to a two-year deal with the option of a third year with PSG. His contract is reported to be worth \$35 million a year after tax.



Vinesh Phogat temporarily suspended for indiscipline

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Wrestler Vinesh Phogat has been temporarily suspended by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) for "indiscipline" during the recently-concluded Tokyo Olympics.

The federation is reportedly angry with the star grappler for her indiscipline at the Games, as Phogat had refused to stay at the Games village and train with other Indian team members.

She also had an argument with the chief coach Kuldeep Malik.

A senior WFI official told reporter that Vinesh has been given time till August 16 to reply to the notice issued by WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

"There are three issues on which the WFI has questioned Vinesh. Firstly, she refused to stay with the team members. Secondly, she didn't train with them and the third she didn't wear the name of brands sponsoring the Indian contingent



at Tokyo. Rather she wore the Nike logo," the official said. Vinesh had entered the Games as a top medal contender but ended up suffering defeat by fall against Belarus' Vanesa Kaladzinskaya. This was

not the first time that Vinesh and WFI came at loggerhead. Last year, at the Nationals, Vinesh had refused to participate citing Covid scare; leaving the federation red faced.

ICC reaffirms commitment to bid for cricket's inclusion in Olympics

Dubai | Agencies

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday confirmed its intention to bid for cricket's inclusion in the Olympic Games beginning with Los Angeles 2028 (LA28) edition.

"We would love for cricket to be a part of future Games. Our sport is united behind this bid, and we see the Olympics as a part of cricket's long-term future. We have more than a billion fans globally and almost 90 percent of them want to see cricket at the Olympics," said Greg Barclay, the ICC chairman in a statement issued by the ICC. The ICC has convened a working group meeting which will be

focused on cricket becoming part of the Olympic family for Los Angeles Games 2028, Brisbane Games 2032 and beyond.

"Clearly cricket has a strong and passionate fan-base, particularly in South Asia where 92% of our fans come from, whilst there are also 30 million cricket fans in the USA. The opportunity for those fans to see their heroes competing for an Olympic medal is tantalising," said Barclay.

England and Wales Cricket Board chairman Ian Watmore will chair the ICC Olympic Working Group and he will be

joined by the ICC independent director Indra Nooyi, chairman of Zimbabwe Cricket Tavengwa

BCCI invites applications for top NCA post occupied by Dravid

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian cricket board on Tuesday advertised for the top post at National Cricket Academy (NCA), currently occupied by Rahul Dravid, leading to speculations that the former India captain may not continue at the NCA and join the senior team in some capacity.

In an advertisement on its website, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said it is inviting candidates to apply for the position of Head of Cricket at NCA.

Dravid can also reapply for the position, the tenure of



which is two years. Dravid had been appointed as Head of Cricket at NCA in July, 2019 and overseen the progress of many youngsters who have made the Indian team. He was recently appointed head coach of the Indian team that went to Sri Lanka to play the white-ball series. Shastri's tenure ends after the T20 World Cup in October-November. His fate will depend on India's performance in England and at the T20 World Cup. was not the first time that Vinesh and WFI came at loggerhead. Last year, at the Nationals, Vinesh had refused to participate citing Covid scare; leaving the federation red faced.

Djokovic withdraws from Cincinnati to recover from 'taxing journey'

New York | Agencies

World No. 1 tennis player, Novak Djokovic of Serbia, had withdrawn from the Cincinnati Western & Southern Open -- the ATP Masters 1000 tournament -- to "recover" and "recuperate" from a "taxing journey from Australia to Tokyo".

Djokovic has been playing non-stop on the Tour, winning the Australian Open, the French Open and Wimbledon. The Serbian was aiming for a "Golden Slam" and had competed at the Tokyo Olympic Games but



lost to world No. 4 Alexander Zverev of Germany in the semifinals, ending his dream of an Olympic gold medal.

Competing in the bronze-medal match, Djokovic lost to Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain and later withdrew from the mixed doubles bronze-

medal match at the Olympics due to a left shoulder injury. Cincinnati is the top tournament ahead of the last Grand Slam of the season, the US Open, which starts later this month. Djokovic posted a note to his fans on social media after the announcement.

The ICC's LA28 (Los Angeles 2028) proposal received a big boost in April when the Indian cricket board agreed to send its men's and women's teams to the 2028 Olympics, if cricket is included. Greats like Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, and former Australia captain Ricky Ponting have backed the ICC proposal.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had earlier been the biggest opponents of cricket's inclusion in Olympics.

The process for inclusion of sports in LA28 begins in mid-2022. The International Olympic Committee will take a decision on the LOC's proposals for inclusion of sports in mid-2023.

THE SILENT SEVEN: COACHES BEHIND INDIA'S OLYMPIC MEDALS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

India ended the Olympic Games in Tokyo with its best medal haul ever, a total of seven -- one gold, two silver, and four bronze. The credit for this historic tally and the overnight fame have gone deservedly to Neeraj Chopra, Saikith Mirabai Chanu, Ravi Kumar Dahiya, PV. Sindhu, Lovlina Borgohain, Bajrang Punia and the men's hockey team, but we must pause to note the unseen hand of the coaches -- seven foreign and one Indian -- who played key roles in fashioning this moment of victory. Here's a look at who they are:

UWE HOHN (COACH) AND DR KLAUS BARTONIEZ (BIO-MECHANICAL EXPERT)

Moulded Neeraj Chopra into champion thrower

Uwe Hohn took over as Neeraj Chopra's coach a few years ago and played a big part in moulding the young Indian into a world-beater. A pioneer in javelin throw from Germany, Hohn worked on perfecting Chopra's technique and in 2019 handed him over to his compatriot Bartonietz, who added muscle to the athlete's frame.

PARK TAE-SANG (SOUTH KOREA)

Turned Sindhu into an all-round player

Park became PV. Sindhu's coach a couple of years ago and has played a crucial role in her development into an all-round player. A gold medalist in the men's team event at the 2002 Asian Games in Busan, South Korea, Park helped Sindhu improve her defence and netplay. Park was brought by chief coach P. Gopichand in 2019 to train the men's team, but he soon became a part of Sindhu's coaching staff.

GRAHAM REID (AUSTRALIA)

Transformed the men's hockey team

Reid, who won a silver medal playing for Australia in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, helped the Indian team transform from a quarterfinalist to a bronze medal-winning team. The Australian, hired in 2019, picked a team comprising players who could play multiple roles and showed resilience to come back from the disastrous 1-7 defeat suffered at the hands of



RAFFAELE BERGAMASCO (ITALY)

Gave Lovlina the confidence to excel

The chief coach of the women's boxing team working under high-performance director Santiago Nieva has played a big role in Lovlina Borgohain's bronze win in women's welterweight boxing. He is the man behind how Lovlina started aggressively and played with a free mind in Tokyo.

his movement.

KAMAL MALIKOV (RUSSIA)

Worked on Ravi Dahiya's counter-attack

He took over as Ravi Kumar Dahiya's coach as recently as April 2021, after it became clear that two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar was unlikely to make it to Tokyo. Malikov worked on the reaction speed and counter-attack of Dahiya that helped him reach the final in Tokyo.

VIJAY SHARMA (INDIA)

Stood by Mirabai through her highs and lows

Vijay Sharma has been the chief national coach for the last many years and took charge of Mirabai when she became a national champion in 2014, just before the Commonwealth Games. A lifter whose career was cut short by a wrist injury, Sharma played a big role in getting Mirabai back on track after she fouled out her three attempts in Rio de Janeiro.



KAREENA KAPOOR TURNS PRODUCER WITH HANSAL MEHTA THRILLER

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Kareena Kapoor Khan is all set to turn producer for the very first time in collaboration with Ekta Kapoor's Balaji Telefilms. The untitled film will be directed by Hansal Mehta.

Excited to turn producer for the first time, Kareena Kapoor Khan said: "Very honoured and excited to work as a producer on this film with Ekta whom my family has known for years and of course to be directed by Hansal for the first time. I am a huge fan of Hansal's films and to be working with him for the first time will be special. There are a lot of firsts on this film and I cannot wait to begin this journey."

This collaboration marks the coming

together of Ekta Kapoor and Kareena Kapoor Khan. Interestingly, while the blockbuster 'Veere Di Wedding' was Kareena Kapoor Khan's first film after the birth of her son Taimur, this film will be her first after her second baby, incidentally, both being produced by Ekta Kapoor.

Producer Ekta Kapoor of Balaji Telefilms said: "Kareena Kapoor Khan is a dynamite combination of star power and talent. We last worked together on 'Veere Di Wedding' which was probably the biggest hit headlined by a female star. The second time's always a charm and I'm confident this one too will excite the audiences. To have Hansal Mehta, one of the most prolific filmmakers of our times tell this story makes it all the more exciting! Get ready for one of the most intriguing and shocking mainstream films thus far."

The thriller film is inspired by a real-life incident. The story is set in the UK and is scheduled to go on floors soon.

Filmmaker Hansal Mehta said: "Our aim with this film is to create a fresh, gripping, and moody thriller with Kareena playing a character that I am hoping will do justice to her immense talent as an actor. I look forward to venturing on this journey with Ekta and Kareena, both of whom have accomplished so much in their respective careers and are absolute powerhouses."

Hansal Mehta has cemented his position as one of the critically acclaimed directors after the success of 'Scam 1992'.

Masaba Gupta oozes oomph in brown attire

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Masaba Gupta raised the hotness quotient with her latest picture posted on social media. The designer-cum-actor posted a stunning picture dressed in a brown crop-top and beige skirt on Tuesday. The picture is from her latest photoshoot, where she is seen dressed in a nude palette - brown crop-top and beige skirt.

Masaba dazzles in the brown coordinated outfit, as her gold accessories and brown lip colour complete the look.

Minutes after Masaba posted the picture, her friends from the film industry started dropping comments. Malaika Arora wrote, "Love" with a fire emoji.

Bollywood celebrity stylist Anita Shroff Adajania wrote, "Uff nude is you!" Gul Panag commented, "Looking amazing Masaba." Mini Mathur wrote, "Whattt?? Go away, No."

Masaba will be seen next in the web series 'Masaba Masaba' season 2.



TISCA CHOPRA PROUD TO BE RELATED TO KHUSHWANT SINGH

Ekatmata Sharma | New Delhi

Actress Tisca Chopra is also an author and an avid reader. The actor-author hails from the family of late celebrated author Khushwant Singh. Carrying forward the lineage, she has penned two books 'Acting Smart' and 'What's Up With Me?'. The actress recalls the time spent with the illustrious author for the last time at his home in Delhi. Tisca told reporter: "When I met him for the last time many years ago, I remember we had gone to the Sujan Singh Park house where he lived, there were mountains of books, like tall towers of books in his house. I asked him, 'Have you read all of these?' He said, '100 saal ka saamaan aur kal ki khabar nahi'. He meant the books but I think it applies to everything." She added proudly: "I am very proud to be related to him and that I have in some very tiny minuscule way managed to continue writing." She shared that her life is inspired by Khushwant Singh's writing in a major way. "Khushwant Singh is a writer, whom I have been a fan of for very many years. His writing has a fluidity which we can only aspire to. He lived so fully and had such rich experiences," said Tisca.



Scared to come out of bio bubble: Vaani Kapoor

New Delhi: Actress Vaani Kapoor agrees there was nervousness and fear on stepping out of her house amid the pandemic to shoot for her upcoming film 'Bell Bottom'. She says the courage her co-actors such as Akshay

Kumar and the production house showed gave her a sense of confidence. "There was a lot of paranoia. I will not deny that. There was nervousness and fear that even if somebody tests positive how do you come back to India or where does that person stay... The kind of factors that came into play," Vaani told reporter, while talking about going out of the house to shoot for 'Bell Bottom' in Glasgow.

She credited the production house and co-star Akshay Kumar for showing courage. "Hats off to the production house who had to bring in the entire team from India to make them quarantine with 14 days of no work. It's also very expensive... It's an unusual circumstance... We were getting tested at least twice or thrice every week and we had a good bubble and of course a place like Glasgow which is much wider spread and spacious so things were a little more manageable there."

"It also gave me a sense of confidence," said Vaani.



Hrithik is Sooraj Pancholi's dance idol



New Delhi: Sooraj Pancholi made a comeback with 'Time To Dance' opposite Isabelle Kaif, Katrina Kaif's sister. The film has been directed by Stanley D'Costa and produced by Lizelle D'Souza, wife of choreographer and director Remo D'Souza. 'Time To Dance' is making its premiere on television this week. The film introduced ballroom and Latin dancing for the very first time for the Indian audience. This is Sooraj's third film as an actor after 'Hero' and 'Satellite Shankar'.

Sanjay Bhansali, Netflix come together for mega-series 'Heeramandi'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Netflix have joined hands for the mega-series 'Heeramandi'. As Sanjay Leela Bhansali marks 25 years in the film industry as a filmmaker, he will be bringing to life his passion project. Sharing his thoughts on 'Heeramandi', Sanjay Leela Bhansali said: "'Heeramandi' is an important milestone in my journey as a filmmaker. This is an epic, first-of-its-kind series based on the courtesans of Lahore. It is an ambitious, grand, and all-encompassing series; therefore I am nervous yet excited about making it. I am looking forward to my partnership with Netflix and bring-

ing 'Heeramandi' to audiences all over the world." The magnum opus series will explore stories of courtesans and the hidden cultural reality of 'Heeramandi', a district during pre-independent India. It's a series about love, betrayal, succession, and politics in the 'kothas' which promises Sanjay Leela Bhansali's trademark larger-than-life sets, multifaceted characters, and soulful compositions. Monika Shergill, VP, content, Netflix India said: "Sanjay Leela Bhansali

has created a stunning brand of cinema which is uniquely his own, with emotionally charged storytelling, magnificent sets, and unforgettable characters. We congratulate him on completing 25 phenomenal years and giving masterpieces for generations to cherish. We are beyond excited to bring his extraordinary creative vision to storytelling on Netflix. 'Heeramandi' will be a story that will intrigue audiences and transport them into a world of incredible grandeur, beauty, and harshness at the same time." One of the greatest filmmakers of all time, Sanjay Leela Bhansali has given Indian cinema some of its biggest cinematic gems from 'Black' to 'Padmaavat'.

Mannara