

# absolute india

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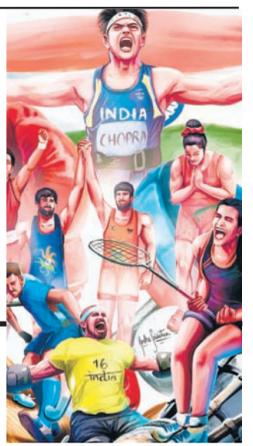
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## JAISHANKAR LASHES OUT PAKISTAN AND CHINA AT UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

# Innocents' blood on their hands

As events in Afghanistan elevate concerns about international security, Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Thursday said that the global community should call out the hypocrisy of countries that protect terrorists "with innocents' blood on their hands".

Arul Louis | United Nations

Speaking at the Security Council on the international threat of terrorism, Jaishankar drew attention to the roles of Pakistan and China in providing support to terrorist groups without mentioning the two by name. "Unfortunately, there are also some countries who seek to undermine or subvert our collective resolve to fight terrorism. This cannot be allowed to pass. When we see state hospitality being extended to those with innocents blood on their hands, we should never lack the courage to call out their double-speak," Jaishankar said. "It is, therefore, vital that this Council does not take a selective, tactical or complacent view of the problems we face. We must never countenance sanctuaries for terrorists or overlook their raising of resources," he said. In what is seen as a reference to Beijing's attempts to protect individuals and groups linked to Pakistan-backed LeT and JeM, he said: "Don't place blocks and holds on listing requests without any reason. Reiterating his action plan against terrorism, he said the Council in tackling terrorists and terrorist groups should "enlist and delist objectively, not on political or religious considerations". It has been blocked by some countries that try to defend some terrorists as "freedom-fighters".

“ Whether it is in Afghanistan or against India, groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) continue to operate with both impunity and encouragement. Summon the political will: don't justify terrorism, don't glorify terrorists. No double standards. Terrorists are terrorists; distinctions are made only at our own peril. ”

New Delhi: The Taliban are intensifying their hunt for people who worked for and collaborated with NATO and the US forces, according to a UN document. The confidential paper was produced by the Norwegian Centre for Global Analyses, which provides the UN with intelligence information. "The Taliban are arresting and/or threatening to kill or arrest family members of target individuals unless they surrender themselves to the Taliban," the BBC reported. It said that those at particular risk are people with positions in the military, police and



### TALIBAN HUNTING DOWN AFGHANS IN MILITARY AND POLICE

investigative units. It added that the militants are screening for individuals while permitting some evacuation of foreign personnel from Kabul airport, but the situation there remained "chaotic". According to the report, the Taliban are recruiting new informer networks to collaborate with the new regime.

### TALIBAN FLAG TORN DOWN IN FIRST SIGNAL OF POPULAR OPPOSITION

Kabul: Several people have been killed after Taliban fighters shot at crowds in Afghanistan for waving the national flag at an independence day rally, leading to mass panic and stampede, a witness said, a day after three people were killed in a similar protest, The Guardian reported on Thursday. Demonstrations in the city of Asadabad, in which white Taliban flags were torn down, were among the first signs of popular opposition to the Taliban. Afghanistan celebrates its independence from British control on August 19 and there were signs that it had galvanised dissent against the Taliban across the country. Hundreds of protesters, including women, gathered in Kabul brandishing the national flag and shouting "our flag, our identity". At Abdul Haq Square, one protester climbed a flag pole to pull down the white Taliban flag and replace it with the black, red and green national flag.

## ANTI-TALIBAN FORCES MASSING NORTH OF KABUL: RUSSIA



Moscow: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Thursday that armed resistance to the Taliban is forming in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley, led by deposed vice-president Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud, the son of anti-Taliban fighter. "The Taliban doesn't control the whole territory of Afghanistan. There are reports of the situation in the Panjshir Valley where the resistance of Afghanistan's vice president Mr Saleh and Ahmad Massoud is concentrated," he said. The Panjshir Valley northeast of Kabul is Afghanistan's last remaining holdout, known for its natural defences. According to images shared on social media, Saleh and Massoud, are pulling together a guerrilla movement to take on the Taliban.

## Gujarat HC stays several sections of 'Love Jihad' Act



Team Absolute | Gandhinagar

The Gujarat High Court on Thursday stayed several sections of the Gujarat government's Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021 popularly known as the 'Love Jihad' Act. The court has banned filing of the FIR saying that it cannot be done unless it was proved that the girl was falsely implicated.

The Court put a stay on several sections of the amended Act against forced religious conversion by marriage. The sections which were put on hold include the one that termed interfaith marriage as a reason of forceful conversion.

In the recent budget session of the Gujarat state Assembly, the state government had passed the Amendment bill and it was brought into force from June 15 this year after getting the nod from the governor. This Amendment has been challenged by two petitions. One is moved by Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind and Jamiat Ulama Welfare Trust and the other is moved by an Ahmedabad resident Mujahid Nafees.

The petitions submitted that the amended law went against the basic principles of marriage and violated Article 25 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to propagate, profess and practice any religion.

The court on Thursday put a stay on Sections 3, 4, 4A, 4B, 4C, 5, 6 and 6A of the Act.

The division bench of Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Biren Vaishnav's

“ We are of the opinion that pending further hearing, rigors of section 3, 4, 4a to 4c, 5, 6 and 6a shall not operate merely because the marriage is solemnised by a person of one religion with that of another religion without force, allurement or fraudulent means and such marriages cannot be termed as marriage for the purpose of unlawful conversion. This interim order is to protect the parties which solemnised interfaith marriages from unnecessary harassment. ”

interim order came during the hearing on a number of petitions challenging the provisions of this law. "The HC also made a good observation and banned filing of the FIR by a third person, asking how can they decide whether a marriage was carried out for religious conversion," Mujahid Nafees, one petitioner told the media on Thursday.

When asked, Gujarat deputy chief minister Nitin Patel said, "Whenever such rulings are passed by concerned courts, our legal department and other technical sections look into it. Once we receive this interim order and after our legal experts looking into, the government will decide the future course of action."

## Complaint filed against Ram temple trustees by seer

Team Absolute | Ayodhya

Mahant Dharam Das, the seer of Hanuman Garhi temple in Ayodhya, has filed a police complaint against Ram Mandir Trust secretary Champat Rai, all trustees, MLA Deep Narayan Upadhyay, Ayodhya mayor's nephew Rishikesh Upadhyay and sub-registrar of Faizabad tehsil for criminal conspiracy, fraud and misusing the funds donated by devotees of Lord Ram in buying Nazul land. Dharam Das is



the disciple of late Mahant Ram Abhiram Das, who had reportedly placed the idols inside the disputed structure on December 22 midnight in 1949.

Das, a prominent face of Ram Mandir Movement and one of the main litigants from Hindu side in the Ram Janmabhoomi title suit, lodged the complaint at Ram Janmabhoomi police station.

He has accused the members of temple trust of criminal conspiracy, fraud and misuse of funds donated for Ram temple construction. Das has also named Faizabad sub-registrar S.B. Singh as accused. He told reporters, "The office of sub-registrar was not aware that 'Nazul' land was sold twice-how is this possible? Mahant

Devendra Prasadacharya had sold this plot of 676 square metres to Deep Narayan, nephew of Ayodhya mayor Rishikesh Upadhyay, for Rs 20 lakh in February. Deep Narayan sold it to the trust for Rs 2.5 crore in May. The value of this land, as per DM circle rate, is approximately Rs 35 lakh. He also named BJP MLA from Gosaiganj (Ayodhya) Indra Pratap Tiwari and trustee Anil Mishra for being witnesses in the deal. He demanded sacking of Rai as secretary and handing over responsibilities of the trust to seers of Ayodhya. "The government should not get involved in temple construction," said Das. While none of the trustees were willing to comment on the development, Prakash Gupta, the in-charge of camp office, said, "If it is Nazul land, complaint should have been filed with Nazul officers, not police. We bought land and paid money--where is corruption in this?"

## HC orders CBI probe in post-poll violence in Bengal

Team Absolute | Kolkata

In a major blow to the West Bengal government, a five-member bench of the Calcutta High Court on Thursday handed over the investigation of serious crimes like rape and murder in the post-poll violence to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and formed a three-member team to investigate the lesser criminal offences.

The court also directed the state government to immediately process the compensation for the victims of the post-poll violence.

Accepting the National Human Rights Commission's recommendation, the five-member bench directed that the investigation into the violence following the April-May election in Bengal will be conducted by a special team to be set up by the CBI.

The CBI will be investigating into the serious crimes like rape and murder. A separate division bench has been formed to monitor the CBI investigation.

Similarly, the division bench also formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate lesser crimes that happened after the elec-



tions. Senior officers like Kolkata Police Commissioner Soumen Mitra, Suman Bala Sahoo and Ranveer Kumar will be a part of the SIT. The investigation by the SIT will be monitored by a retired judge of the Supreme Court. Both the CBI and SIT will have to give their initial reports to the court after six weeks. The Court has directed the State of West Bengal to immediately process the compensation for the victims of the post-poll violence. The court also rejected the allegations of bias raised by the state government against the National Human Rights Commission, a team of which had submitted a fact-finding report to the court as per its directions.

## NEW STRAIN OF THE COVID-19 DELTA VARIANT FOUND IN SWEDEN

Team Absolute | Stockholm

A new strain of the Covid-19 Delta variant has been found in Sweden, with some cases being among fully vaccinated individuals, local media reported. Eight infections caused by the Delta variant with the E484Q mutation have been found in Uppsala, some 70 km north of capital Stockholm, Xinhua news agency quoted Swedish Television as saying in a report. All the new cases are reported to be linked to travel abroad.

Uppsala is a university city and the new term has just started, Mats Martinell, medical manager urged the public to be vigilant. "We are in a stage where there can be large outbreaks connected to super-spreading events such as parties, and one has to be careful," he told Swedish Television. More than 1.11 million Covid-19 cases have been recorded in Sweden, according to the latest official statistics.

Although little is known about the new strain, studies indicate that it may be more transmissible.

## WEALTH OF 7 BILLIONAIRES MORE THAN 16 STATES IN INDIA

New Delhi: According to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, Now the number of Indians has increased to 17 in the list of top-100 rich people of the world. These include Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries, Gautam Adani of Adani Group, Azim Premji of Wipro, Pallonji Mistry of Shapoorji-Pallonji Group, Shiv Nadar, founder of HCL, Lakshmi Mittal of ArcelorMittal and Radhakishan Damani, founder of DMart. If the total wealth of these billionaires is added (\$ 277.3 billion, about Rs 20.6 lakh crore), then it is more than the total GDP of 16 states of the country. Not only this, the total wealth of Mukesh Ambani alone is more than 10 states of the country. These states include Andaman and Nicobar, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur Nagaland Sikkim, Meghalaya, Puducherry, Chandigarh, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Assam. The total GDP of all these states is \$ 275.8 billion, about Rs 20.4 lakh crore. The GDP figures of the states are for the financial years 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21. This figure has been taken from the ministry of statistics and state budgets.



## Resolution professionals can now verify tax returns of bankrupt companies

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of Finance has amended the Income Tax Rules to allow resolution professionals appointed by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) to verify the tax returns of companies undergoing bankruptcy.

The Income-tax (24th Amendment) Rules, 2021, notified by the ministry on Wednesday also made it the obligation of the resolution professional to follow the rules meant for tax return



preparers of certain assesses. The new rules allow the resolution professional to

furnish details of the documents given by the assessee for preparation of the return as well as details of the

scope and findings of any examination of the representative has done on such documents in case of a company undergoing bankruptcy proceedings.

Under clause (c) and (cd) of section 140 of the IT Act, enables any other person, as may be prescribed by the board, to verify the return of income in the cases of a company and a limited liability partnership.

According to experts, the move would align the two laws and ensure there is no inconsistency in the regulatory process.

## SC HOLDS ARRESTING ACCUSED NOT MANDATORY ALWAYS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court observed if arrest is made routine, it can cause "incalculable harm" to the reputation and self-esteem of a person as it emphasised that it is not mandatory to take the accused in custody at the time of filing a charge sheet. The bench emphasised if trial courts were to insist on the arrest of an accused as pre-requisite formality to take the charge sheet on record in view of the provisions of Section 170 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), then "we consider such a course misplaced and contrary to the very intent of Section 170 of the CrPC". It stressed that personal liberty is an important aspect of the constitutional mandate. "The occasion to arrest an accused during investigation arises when custodial investigation becomes necessary or it is a heinous crime or where there is a possibility of influencing the witnesses or accused may abscond," it noted. The bench pointed out merely because an arrest can be made because it is lawful does not mandate that arrest must be made.





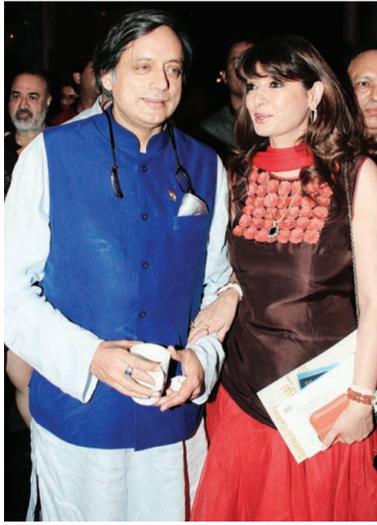
# NOTHING ON RECORD TO SHOW THAROOR INCITED SUNANDA PUSHKAR TO COMMIT SUICIDE: COURT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court, while discharging Congress MP Shashi Tharoor in the case related to death of his wife Sunanda Pushkar, said there is nothing on record to show he had "provoked, incited or induced the deceased to commit suicide", and that she might have felt distressed or mentally disturbed with his alleged extra-marital relation, "but mental disturbances does not constitute the offence of abetment".

In the 176-page order, special judge Geetanjali Goel said: "There is nothing to demonstrate any overt act on the part of the accused (Tharoor) and only on the ground that he continued the alleged affair with MT (a Pakistani journalist) (even if it is assumed) and exchanged messages with her, it cannot be presumed that he had abetted the commission of suicide by the deceased."

Emphasising criminal trials require evidence, the court said there is no doubt a precious life was lost, but in the absence of specific allegations and sufficient material, it cannot presume Tharoor had committed the offence, and he cannot be compelled to face the rigmarole of a criminal trial. The court added the prosecution has not been able to point out even one instance where the accused had done something purposefully which facilitated the commission of the offence. "There is no material whatsoever against the accused, much less any positive act to instigate or aid the deceased in committing the sui-



cide, even if it is assumed that the death was a suicide. As such, it is not shown, even prima facie, that the offence under Section 306 IPC is made out against the accused," said the court.

The court observed that Pushkar might have felt distressed or mentally disturbed with the alleged extra-marital relation of the accused, but mental disturbance does not constitute the offence of abetment.

The court further added even it cannot be said that a person subjecting a woman to cruelty is guilty of abetment unless something is brought on record. "Even for instigation, the intention to provoke, incite, urge or encourage doing of an act is an essential factor but the record does not bear out any such intention on the part of the accused," it said.

The prosecution had argued that Tharoor had continued the affair with MT despite his assurance not to continue the same and this showed wilful misrepresentation and instigation by misrepresentation. Junking this contention, the court said: "There is nothing on record to show that the accused did some act in order to irritate or annoy the deceased until she reacted or strongly persuaded or advised the deceased to do some act with the intention to provoke, incite, urge or encourage the latter to commit suicide."

The court on Wednesday had pronounced the order discharging Tharoor. Pushkar was found dead on the evening of January 17, 2014. Initially, Delhi Police investigated it as a murder, with an FIR registered under Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), but then it charged Tharoor under Sections 306 (abetment of suicide) and 498A (cruelty by husband).

# PM Modi's claims on MSP 'incorrect', says Samyukt Kisan Morcha

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha on Wednesday claimed that the Independence Day announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the Minimum Support Price (MSP) has been increased by 1.5 times is incorrect and the announced MSP is not being realised by all farmers despite his commitment in the Parliament.

"Farmers of the country have realised fully that they cannot depend on the Prime Minister's hyped claims, false promises and spin-narratives, or his 'jumlas'. The hollow claims around remunerative Minimum Support Prices (MSP) stands exposed fully, in addition to the jumla on 'doubling farmers' incomes'," a release from the Morcha said.

"The undependable statements of the Prime Minister lie exposed when we look at the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) reality, more than a year after the pompous announcement. AIF is a 13-year scheme with disbursements till 2023-24. As on August 6, 2021, only Rs 4,503 crore has been sanctioned under AIF for 6,524 projects including 'in-principle' sanctions (4.5 per cent of the so-called 'sanction' announced last year itself). As per a Rajya Sabha response on July 23, 2021, only Rs 746 crore has been disbursed (0.75 per cent of the grand announcement)," the Morcha claimed.

On the 'National Mission on Edible Oils and Oil Palm' with an outlay of Rs 8,844 crore



announced on Wednesday, the release said that the emphasis on oil palm cultivation is of concern to many, from health and environmental points of view, apart from corporations such as Patanjali ready to capture the market. "What is striking, however, is that Modi government's mission on edible oils has no solutions placed on the market front for the farmers," it said.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha also warned that Punjab farmers' unions have announced a protest on Thursday during which they will block rail and road traffic on Jalandhar Highway, as sugarcane farmers of the state have been agitating for payment of pending arrears of more than Rs 200 crore due to them from the last crushing season.

# KSBL chairman arrested for defaulting bank loan

HYDERABAD | Agencies

The Hyderabad police on Thursday arrested Karvy Stock Broking Limited Chairman C. Parthasarthy for allegedly defaulting the loan taken from IndusInd Bank.

The Central Crime Station (CCS) police made the arrest after registering a case against Karvy Stock Broking Limited (KSBL) on the basis of a complaint filed by the bank.

Parthasarthy will be produced before a city court later in the day, a police official said.

The IndusInd bank had granted a loan of Rs 185 crore to KSBL in 2019 on depositing the securities and guarantees to the bank but



the company failed to repay. It was alleged that the KSBL illegally transferred Rs 138 crore to other companies. Two other banks had also lodged the complaint against

KSBL but for now the police have taken action only in connection with the case registered on IndusInd Bank's complaint.

# JCO MARTYRED, TERRORIST KILLED IN RAJOURI ENCOUNTER

Jammu: A Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) of the Indian Army was martyred while one terrorist was killed in an operation against the militants in J&K's Rajouri district on Thursday. Defence spokesman Lt Colonel Devender Anand said, "Based on specific input, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by the Indian Army and the local police at Danna village, Thanamandi, Rajouri district. "During the search operation in the forested area of the village, the search party, led by JCO Subedar Ram Singh, was fired upon by terrorist from a nearby densely forested area. The JCO immediately retaliated and in the ensuing fire fight, one terrorist was neutralised while Subedar Ram Singh suffered a gunshot wound. "The valiant JCO was provided immediate first-aid and was evacuated to the nearest hospital. However, he succumbed to his injuries." Subedar Ram Singh, 46, belonged to Salana village in Uttarkhand's Pauri Garhwal district. He is survived by his wife, son and daughter.

# Odisha MLAs, staff to undergo Covid test for Monsoon session

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

In view of prevailing Covid-19 situation, all legislators and their personal staff will undergo RTPCR test for the Monsoon session of Odisha Assembly beginning from September 1.

Holding a meeting on Thursday, Assembly Speaker S.N. Patro has asked officials to conduct RTPCR test of all MLAs, their security staff, and drivers on August 29-31, Speaker's PRO said in a statement.

There will also be RT-PCR tests for all the officers and staff of the Secretariat along with the officers and staff of the office of the Chief Minister, ministers, Leader of Opposition, government chief whip and deputy chief whip at the same place during the above three days.

The persons, who found negative in the RTPCR test, will be allowed to enter the Assembly premises.



Members, officials, and supporting staff, who have not taken at least a single dose of Covid-19 vaccine, will not be allowed into the House, it said. The members will be provided with face shields, masks,

gloves, and sanitiser by the Health Department daily before the commencement of each sitting during the session. The Monsoon session of the House will continue till September 9.

# AIIMS Officers Association warns of strike by month-end

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The All India Institute of Medical Science may see its Officers Association going on strike by the end of this month to press for their demands, including cadre review "which has not been done for last 30 years".

The Officers Association of AIIMS has submitted a memorandum to the AIIMS administration with their demands, saying cadre review has not been done since 1992 and the Health Ministry and AIIMS should seriously consider the matter.

Officers Association of AIIMS President Ajeet Singh said that they have written many times to the Health Ministry in the past, but got no response. "Now the Health Minister has also changed, but our demands are still unanswered. We



are requesting the AIIMS administration to undertake a cadre review which has not been done for last 30 years. Once the cadre is reviewed, the employees of Officers Association AIIMS can be promoted, but no con-

sideration has been given so far," said.

The association's other demands include the review of AIIMS's contribution in national pension scheme. Ajeet Singh claimed that other government offices contribute 14 per cent in the NPS, but AIIMS offers only 10 per cent.

He also said that Delhi's AIIMS, Chandigarh AIIMS, and PGI Puducherry Hospital fall under the same category, but all are being given different pay scales. "A coordination committee was constituted in 2012 at Deputy Director level with Delhi AIIMS, Chandigarh AIIMS, and PGI Puducherry to solve such issues but all has gone in vain and nothing has been achieved," he said.

If the AIIMS administration will not respond to our demands, we will go on strike by the end of this month, he warned.

# MHA recommends CBI probe into 1,000 low-floor bus purchase by Delhi govt

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has recommended a CBI probe into the alleged irregularities in the purchase of 1,000 low-floor buses by the Delhi government.

According to a letter written to the Chief Secretary of the Delhi government on August 16, the Home Ministry's Additional Secretary (UT) Govind Mohan said that a three-member committee was constituted by the Government of NCT Delhi for a detailed enquiry into the matter.

"The matter has been examined in this Ministry and with the approval of competent authority, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has been requested to take necessary action for undertaking Preliminary Enquiry on the matter by the Central Bureau of Investigation," the letter reads further.

The Delhi BJP unit had in June alleged a scam involving crores of rupees in the purchase of the 1,000 low-floor buses by Delhi administration. It also demanded the resignation of the transport Minister Kailash Gehlot and Delhi Transport Corporation Managing



Director Vijay Bidhuri. BJP MLA Vijender Gupta had approached the Lt. Governor for an enquiry committee after alleging irregularities in the terms of the purchase and maintenance contracts.

He alleged that in January 2021, the Delhi government had placed a work order of 1,000 low-floor buses costing Rs 890 crore. Along with the order for purchase, it also took out the tender for the annual maintenance of the buses for Rs 350 crore per year, he said, adding that this too was handed over to the same bus suppliers.

# NOW, DEMAND FOR NAME CHANGE OF DEOBAND TO DEVVRAND

Lucknow: After the demand for renaming Aligarh as Hariygarh and Mainpuri as Mayan Nagar, right wing activists have now sought renaming of Deoband, home to a renowned Islamic seminary, as Devvrand. The West Uttar Pradesh unit of the Bajrang Dal has sent a letter in this regard to UP Urban Development Minister Ashutosh Tandon. Bajrang Dal convenor for west Uttar Pradesh, Vikas Tyagi, said that Deoband was earlier identified with Mata Bala Sundari Devi temple and not with the Islamic seminary. "During Mahabharat, the Pandavs spent their years in exile here. The UP government is removing the names of Mughal significance and Deoband should be now known as Devvrand," said Tyagi. Earlier in 2017, BJP MLA Brijesh Singh, had made a similar demand. He said that places like Rankhandi Jakhwala and Jadoda Panda bear testimony to Deoband's historical connections with Hindu mythology. Deoband is one of the five constituencies in Saharanpur district of North Uttar Pradesh with a sizeable Muslim population. The Yogi Adityanath government has already changed the names of Faizabad to Ayodhya, Allahabad to Prayagraj and Mughalsarai to Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Nagar in the state.



# Govt issues notification on electronic monitoring, road safety

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways issued notification on Thursday for 'Electronic Monitoring and Enforcement of Road Safety'.

The rules specify the detailed provisions for placement of electronic enforcement devices (speed camera, CCTV, speed gun, body wearable camera, dashboard camera, automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) etc.

In the notification, the ministry has asked the state governments to ensure that electronic enforcement devices are placed at high-risk and high-density corridors on the National Highways and state highways and at critical junctions at least in major cities with more than one million population and also the 132 cities specified by the ministry.

The electronic enforcement device shall be placed in such a manner so as not to cause any obstruction, line-of-



sight issues or interruption in traffic flow, the notification said.

The footage from an electronic enforcement device having electronic stamp for location, date and time can be used to issue challans against offences such as not driving within the prescribed speed limit; stopping or parking vehicle at an unauthorised location; not undertaking safety measures for drivers and pillion riders; and not wearing protective headgear or helmet and other offences, including jumping red lights, the ministry said.

The ministry also said that all challans issued under Rule 167 in electronic form, using auto-generation of challan through the electronic monitoring and enforcement system, shall be accompanied by information like clear photographic evidence highlighting the offence, the licence plate of the vehicle, date, time and place of the offence and notice specifying the provisions that have been violated.



## WORKING UNDER CHOUHAN'S LEADERSHIP TO WIN NEXT MP ASSEMBLY POLLS: SCINDIA

### The Union Minister's statement came amid speculation over who would be the BJP's face for the next Assembly elections.

Team Absolute | Indore

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Thursday said "all BJP leaders" were working under Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's leadership to win the next Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh.

His statement came amid speculation over who would be the BJP's face for the next Assembly elections.

"As far as 2023 elections are concerned, all BJP leaders are working under the leadership of Chief Minister Chouhan. I believe that with his governance, the State would scale new heights of development," said Scindia, recently inducted in the Union Cabinet as Civil Aviation Minister.

Chouhan worked every day in public interest when coronavirus cases surged and also during the recent floods in Gwalior and Chambal regions, the former Congress leader told reporters in Indore.

On efforts to evacuate people from



Afghanistan, Scindia said they will continue till the last stranded person is brought home safely.

The Indian government is capable of bringing home all those with valid visas, he added. Blaming the previous UPA government for skyrocketing fuel

prices, Scindia said, "This party (Congress) mortgaged India to foreign forces in 70 years, due to which the country could not become self-reliant in raw fuel production."

"Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, Indian oil companies are focussing on exploring raw fuel reserves to become self-reliant in production," he added. He also accused the Opposition of trying to "stifle democratic process and destroy the temple of democracy" during the Monsoon session of Parliament.

Asked why BJP general secretary Kailash Vijaywargiya was not seen with him during his three-day Jan Ashirwad Yatra in the State, Scindia said reporters were "looking for juicy stuff", but he has had a "very cordial relationship" with the senior leader for the last 20 years.

"Before the start of the Yatra, he handed me a bouquet of flowers at the Indore Airport," Scindia added.

## CM PLANTS NEEM SAPLING IN SMART GARDEN



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a Neem sapling in Smart Garden today. Chouhan plants saplings every day in fulfilment of his resolve. Rich in antibiotic elements, Neem is known as the supreme medicine. Neem may be bitter in taste, but its benefits are like nectar. Neem is also very useful from environmental point of view.

## Atal Progress-Way notification issued by the Government of India

Atal Progress Way will prove to be the lifeline for the development of the Gwalior-Chambal division: Chief Minister

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Ministry of National Highways and Road Transport, Government of India on Thursday issued approval to include the ambitious Atal Progress-Way project of Madhya Pradesh in Bharat Mala Phase-I. This new express-way will be 404km in length in Madhya Pradesh and pass through Bhind, Morena, and Sheopur districts of Chambal, connecting Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh) in the east and Kota (Rajasthan) in the west. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister for Road, Transport, and Highways Nitin Gadkari for the inclusion of Atal Progress Way in Bharatmala Phase-I. Chouhan said, "Atal Progress-Way would

prove to be the lifeline for the development of Gwalior-Chambal division. An industrial corridor will be constructed around this 404km length express-way. Which will become an important link in the economic development of the region." The major new route from Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh) to Kota (Rajasthan) will relate to the construction of this route, benefiting 3 districts of Madhya Pradesh. The distance between these two points will also save about 50 km. The travel time will also be reduced from 11 hours to 6 hours. Madhya Pradesh government has made advance preparations to invite investment in industrial, commercial, and various activities for the express-way to be built on the banks of the Chambal river. The land to be used in the express-way is made available by the state government at its own expense. About Rs. 7000 crore is likely to be spent on this project. Preparations are being made to make this express-way through 7 different packages.

Public Works Minister Gopal Bhargava has expressed his gratitude to Gadkari. He said, "Tenders for this project would now be floated very soon." Bhargava, while giving credit to the continuous interest and review meetings taken by the Chief Minister Chouhan in this project said, "For the first time, from the concept of such an ambitious and completely new project to the creation of detailed project report (DPR), and subsequently getting Government of India's approval has been possible in such a short time due to the active guidance of Chief Minister." This project is being constructed by NHA. The Detailed Project Report (DPR) for Atal Progress-Way was prepared by the State Government in a record 4 months and presented to the Government of India. The transfer of about 1500 hectares of government land has also been completed in record time and possession has been given to the Ministry of National Highways and Road Transport (NHA).

## Two die, 25 fell ill after drinking contaminated water from village well

Niwari: Two persons, including a minor girl, died, while 25 others took ill on Thursday after drinking contaminated water from a well in a village in Niwari district of Madhya Pradesh, an official said. The incident took place at Jawarpura village, some 32km from Niwari district headquarters. A local resident, Laxman Kushwaha (45), died in the village, while the minor girl, aged seven, died at a hospital in Jhansi district of neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, Prithvipur Block Medical Officer MK Jain told PTL. As many as 25 people fell sick and some of them are being treated at a local hospital and others at their homes in the village, he said, adding their condition was improving. "A medical team comprising three doctors has been deputed in the affected locality," Jain said. After drinking contaminated water from the well, the victims complained of vomiting, diarrhoea and fever, he said.

## IMD issues yellow alert warning of heavy rains, thunderstorms in 21 districts

The weather department has also forecast rain or thunder showers for most places in 10 divisions of the state, including Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior and Jabalpur.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday issued a yellow alert, warning of heavy rainfall, thunderstorms and lightning strikes in 21 districts of Madhya Pradesh.

At least eight districts in the state received heavy rainfall (64.5 mm to 115.5 mm), while Singrauli in eastern Madhya Pradesh recorded very heavy showers (123 mm) in the last 24 hours, ending 8.30 am on Thursday, an official said.

According to the IMD, heavy rainfall (64.5 mm to 115.5 mm) with thunderstorm and lightning may hit isolated places of Sagar, Chhatarpur, Damoh, Tikamgarh,



Panna, Niwari, Rewa, Satna, Anuppur, Umaria, Dindori, Katni and Narsinghpur districts. The alert, which is valid till Friday morning, also covers Chhindwara, Seoni, Rajgarh, Vidisha, Raisen, Hoshangabad, Betul and Dhar districts, senior meteorologist PK Saha of the IMD's Bhopal office said. The weather department has also forecast rain or thunder showers for most places in 10 divisions of the state, including Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior and Jabalpur. Madhya Pradesh is witnessing the second

wet spell this month. The first spell had raged Gwalior and Chambal divisions in northern part of the state, which left 24 persons dead. The monsoon trough is now passing through Gwalior and Sidhi, bringing in moisture and causing rains, Saha

## Have to get involved in relief, rehabilitation and rebuilding: CM

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the problems of our brothers and sisters affected by floods have to be resolved. Have to engage in relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction works. Our priority is to solve the problems of the brothers and sisters who were affected by the floods. Chouhan was discussing with media representatives at Smart Garden. Chouhan has left on a tour of the flood affected areas of Sheopur and Shivpuri districts today. Chouhan will reach Gwalior by plane from Bhopal; from there he will go to Sheopur by helicopter. Chouhan will distribute flood relief amount in Sheopur with a single click and will also discuss with the people of the flood affected districts of Gwalior-Chambal division and Vidisha.



## CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO FORMER PRESIDENT SHANKAR DAYAL SHARMA

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid homage to former President Shankar Dayal Sharma on his anniversary. Chouhan garlanded the portrait of Sharma at his residence. Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar also offered floral tributes. The 9th President of India, Shankar Dayal Sharma was born on August 19, 1918 in Bhopal. Before becoming the President, he was also the 8th Vice President of India. Sharma was the first person from Madhya Pradesh who became the President of India on the strength of his erudition, dedication and love for the country. He participated in the 'Freedom Struggle of India'. Sharma had assumed the top office of the President of India in 1992. In the year 1971 and 1980, he won the Lok Sabha seat from Bhopal. He passed on October 9, 1999.

## Bystanders Save Woman Who Fell While Trying To Board Moving Train

A CCTV footage by the Railway Protection Force, Indore showed a police officer and others rushed to save the woman who lost her balance while boarding a train.



Team Absolute | Indore

In a chilling movement, fellow passengers saved a woman from being run over by a train in Indore on Tuesday, August 17. The entire incident of passengers pulling the woman as soon as she slipped while attempting to board a moving train, was caught on CCTV cameras by the Railway Protection Force, Indore.

In the video, the woman is seen rushing to board the train and loses her footwear, and slips down. A police constable is also seen immediately rushing to the woman's aid. Eventually, the train comes to a halt with many passengers rushing out to offer help.

Khemraj Meena, Railway PRO, said, "The woman passenger was boarding a

train along with a man and a child. After keeping the luggage inside the train, the man and the child boarded the train. The woman slipped off and fell off from the moving train and got stuck between the station and the platform."

As the video went viral on social media, netizens have responded by appreciating the people's effort in helping the woman. Some of the responses read, "Hats off to all the people including the security who ran promptly to take the situation under control", "Great and no ward is sufficient to appreciate the onlookers." While others have criticized the woman for being irresponsible to board a moving train. Few responses were, "One small mistake life ruin. This is a show of irresponsibility. Incredible people", "So many incidents happen every day and still people cannot learn a single lesson."

## IGRMS online exhibition "Umang Laigi laikon: sacred groves of Manipur"



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under its online exhibition Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) on Thursday presented the Umang Laigi laikon: sacred groves of Manipur situated in the Sacred Groves open air exhibition of Manav Sangrahalaya has been presented online with its basic information and photographs and videos.

About this exhibition, Praveen Kumar Mishra, Director, IGRMS said that The Meiteis of Manipur practice nature worship & ancestor worship. Many of the lofty hills surrounding the valleys are named after the Umang Lai (the ancestral deities) who is worshipped to be the presiding deities of land and people of areas under the control of the deities. They also have the tradition of worshipping sacred groves. 'Umang Lai,' literally means deities who give an appearance and illu-sively vanishes from the common sight. There are about 365 Umang Lai groves all over Manipur. About the Umang Laigi laikon Dheer Singh, Assistant Horticulture Officer told that - The cultural prac-

tices such as maintenance of Umanglai (areas of Umang Lai) and celebration of Umang Lai Haraoba (an annual festival of Umang Lai) in the villages and clan level, and observances of Jina (taboo) among the hill tribes had been a medium to control the society in maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature. Since time immemorial, such kinds of cultural practices have been a powerful source in maintaining the region's ecological balance. The Meitei people believe in the existence of their ancestral soul, who possesses the divine power to regulate society under his good or evil. According to the local belief, Umang Lais are those ancestral or guardian deities who indicate and reserve their permanent abode by divine actions. Visitors can see this exhibition from home through the Official site ([https://igrms.com/wordpress/?page\\_id=4227](https://igrms.com/wordpress/?page_id=4227)) and Facebook site (<https://www.facebook.com/NationalMuseumMankind/>) of the IGRMS in addition to YouTube link (<https://youtu.be/ps9EtcX7vWE>).

## Music is the way to soothe the heat of the soul: Governor Patel

Governor addresses 14th Foundation Day celebrations of Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya Gwalior  
Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya should guide schools in including fine arts in elementary education

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya should guide and cooperate in the inclusion of fine arts, songs and music in elementary education. He said that the new National Education Policy has given a new dimension to the educational world of the country. It has paved the way for education system of international standard along with our basic traditions, cultural heritage. The need is to try with new thinking and innovations. Patel was address-

ing the 14th Foundation Day programme of Raja Mansingh Music and Arts University Gwalior through virtual medium from Raj Bhavan on Thursday.

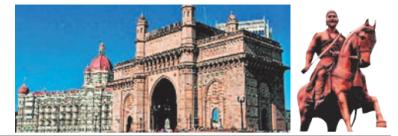
Patel said that melodious music calms the soul and helps to focus. The tone, sound and emotion of music are the means of worshipping God. The form of Indian music had its seeds in the Vedic period itself. Samaveda is a collection of those Vedic hymns that can be sung. There has been a tradition of using hymns to worship God since ancient times. Even on the occasion of Yagya etc. there used to be group songs. He said that music helps in keeping us physically and mentally healthy. He said that the National Education Policy has given an unprecedented opportunity to make the quality of education of global standard and strengthen the cultural heritage. Music fills the infinity between two souls. Sweet music soothes the soul and helps to concentrate. He has said that arts are not just entertainment, they enrich culture and civilization. Society and nation are formed by culture. He



called upon the students of the University to contribute to the preservation and promotion of the rich heritage of Indian folk arts through their spiritual practice, research and innovations. Contribute to the vitality, continuity and prosperity of Indian culture.

Member of Parliament Vivek Narayan Shejwalkar said that the establishment of the University is an unforgettable event. On the same day the Agricultural University was established in Gwalior. This was an important event of the establishment of two universities in one day. He said that art is the mirror of

culture. It is a means of worshipping God. The university is doing the work of building humanity. It is a belief that a person becomes human only by joining art. He said that the success, with which the university is doing the work of carving and honing artists and art, will continue further. Vice Chancellor Sahitya Kumar Nahar gave the welcome address. He said that for the last 13 years, the university has been doing the work of teaching and artistic promotion of music, dance, fine arts and theatre. It is continuously moving on the path of development of service to art and upgradation of practice. Registrar Krishna Kant Sharma read out the progress report of the University. He said that 23 thousand students are studying music, fine and dance arts in university and college. The university is leading in the field of research. Here 9 students have got research degrees and 101 are doing research. University students have also got opportunities to perform in the International Tansen Music Festival. Shri Sunil proposed vote of thanks.



## THACKERAY IS LEADING MAHARASHTRA TOWARDS DEMOLITION: RANE

Narayan Rane reached Mumbai on Thursday and addressed party workers from a makeshift podium outside the airport as he began the Jan Ashirwad Yatra. The Maharashtra BJP led by opposition leader Devendra Fadnavis extended him a grand welcome at the Mumbai airport.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Union Minister for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Narayan Rane on Thursday started Jan Ashirwad Yatra from Mumbai. The Maharashtra BJP led by opposition leader Devendra Fadnavis extended him a grand welcome at the Mumbai airport as many party workers gathered to welcome the minister braving the rains.

Rane addressed the audience outside the airport from a makeshift podium as he targeted Shiv Sena and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. "Uddhav Thackeray is leading the state of Maharashtra towards demoli-

tion. Through Jan Ashirwad Yatra, we begin the process of change to provide people with a good government led by BJP," said Rane.

"I have just taken charge as a Union cabinet minister one-and-a-half months ago in Delhi. Sitting in the union cabinet under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi is altogether a new experience. I pledge I will use my portfolio to serve the people of Maharashtra. Will ensure employment generation to maximum youth through MSME," he said.

Meanwhile, Rane's decision to visit the Bal Thackeray memorial at Shivaji Park as part of the Jan Ashirwad Yatra has not gone down well with the Shiv



Sena. On Thursday morning, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) was directed to remove all the banners welcoming him from the park's vicinity. Rane, who was expelled from Shiv Sena in 2005, is expected to visit the Thackeray memorial to offer tributes

## Retd Justice VM Kanade sworn-in as new Maharashtra Lokayukta

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former judge of Bombay High Court, Justice V.M. Kanade has taken over as the new Lokayukta of Maharashtra. Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari administered the oath of office to Justice Kanade with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Upa-Lokayukta Sanjay Bhatia and other top dignitaries in attendance.

Also present were Protocol Minister Aditya Thackeray, Mayor Kishori Pednekar, DGP Sanjay Pande, high court judges and senior government officials. Justice Kanade, 66, succeeds Justice ML Tahaliyani,



whose term as Lokayukta ended in August 2020. Starting his practice as a lawyer in the Bombay HC from June 1979, Justice Kanade later worked as a HC Panel Counsel for Union of India from 1986-1999, as an Assistant Government Pleader from 1988-1990 in the Writ Cell and as 'A' Panel

Counsel for State of Maharashtra from 1992-2000, appearing on behalf of various government corporations.

In October 2001, he was elevated as a judge of Bombay HC, served as Acting Chief Justice briefly in December 2015 and January 2016, was the Chairman of

the Government Law College Governing Council, and Administrator of Maharashtra Cricket Association from March-September 2018. During his judgeship till June 2017, he delivered over 34,000 judgements, more than 12,000 of his verdicts are reported in Law Reports.

## PM Modi's bust, roadside temple in Pune vanish within 72 hours!

Team Absolute | Pune

A temple dedicated to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with his bust, erected by a local Bharatiya Janata Party activist in Aundh area here, suddenly disappeared barely 72 hours after it was inaugurated.

The temple and bust, erected and funded by local BJP worker Mayur Mundhe - came up on the roadside and were inaugurated by a senior citizen on Independence Day.

Even as it sparked widespread criticism from the Nationalist Congress Party, Congress and the common citizens, the bust was abruptly removed by some unknown persons late on Wednesday.

Despite repeated attempts by IANS, Mundhe was incommunicado with his mobile switched off, his friends declined to comment on the



matter, while an embarrassed city BJP slammed its hands off the episode.

Slamming the short-lived monument, former Pune Mayor and NCP Pune President Prashant Jagtap alleged that the temple and bust erected was "illegal" and his party would take appropriate steps in this regard. The NCP took out a symbolic protest march to the site and had plans to offer diesel-kerosene to

highlight the spiraling fuel prices, but were disappointed after Modi's bust was missing from the spot.

"After this temple came up, we were optimistic that fuel prices would fall, inflation would come down and people will get Rs 15 lakh in their bank accounts. But when we came here to worship, the 'god' was missing," Jagtap said sarcastically. The Congress Seva Dal castigated

the incident as "a mentality of slaves", while other party leaders have termed the move as a sign of "intellectual bankruptcy."

Launching what he claimed was the state's first temple dedicated to Modi, Mundhe had said it was his tribute to the PM for his "bold moves" of abrogating Article 370, ending 'triple talaq', and paving the way for constructing the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. "I feel that for such a person who built the Ram temple in Ayodhya, there should be a shrine, so I decided to construct this temple on my own premises," said Mundhe, who has some police cases registered against him.

He spent around Rs 200,000 for the bust of red stone and marble, specially brought from Jaipur, and a poem he composed praising the PM was also pasted outside the temple.

## Mumbai Police, BMC bust 5 'fake doctors' operating in Chembur

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a big operation, the Mumbai Police and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation busted five allegedly bogus 'senior' doctors operating in the sprawling slums of Govandi-Shivajinagar areas of north-east Mumbai, officials said here on Thursday.

Following a reliable tipoff, police inspector HM Nanavare and constable NB Sawant investigated the matter discreetly and then informed the BMC Assistant Health Officer of M-East Ward Dr. Priya Koli. A joint team of the BMC and police on Wednesday raided the premises of the five doctors who had been flourishing for long in the slums, charging exorbitantly for various kinds of treatment from the patients. An official said that the doctors had no medical degrees



or certificates or registration with the Maharashtra Medical Council or any other authority and were found to be impersonators. However, they were blatantly 'treating' patients of all kinds of diseases, injuries or wounds, administering injections, giving or prescribing medicines, advising surgeries, etc. The teams raided the locations separately and nabbed the five 'senior' doctors -- all males, aged between 43 and 53. The police also recovered large quantities of

medical stuff including stethoscopes, injections, bottles of drips and injections, surgical trays, all types of oral drugs and syrups, antibiotics, and even certain sensitive or restricted use drugs, medical literature, etc. from the premises that were searched.

The five accused have been booked under various sections of Indian Penal Code and Maharashtra Medical Practitioners Act, 1961 and further investigations are underway.

## Extortion Case Against Param Bir Handed Over To CID

The Mumbai police had formed a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the extortion case against Param Bir Singh.

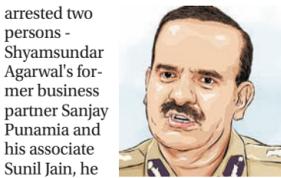
Team Absolute | Mumbai

An extortion case registered against senior IPS officer Param Bir Singh in Mumbai has been transferred to the Maharashtra police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), an official said on Wednesday.

The Mumbai police had formed a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the extortion case against Param Bir Singh and a separate case of similar nature (not related to him), which was being handled by the Unit 9 of the crime branch.

The city police had on July 22 registered a case against Param Singh, a former Mumbai police commissioner, five other police personnel and two more persons for allegedly demanding Rs 15 crore from a builder, the official said. The case was filed on the basis of a complaint submitted by 57-year-old real estate developer Shyamsundar Agrawal at the Marine Drive police station in south Mumbai.

During the investigation, police had



arrested two persons - Shyamsundar Agarwal's former business partner Sanjay Punamia and his associate Sunil Jain, he said. The five cops who were named as accused in the case were DCP (crime branch) Akbar Pathan, Assistant Commissioner of Police Shrikant Shinde, ACP Sanjay Patil, Inspector Asha Korke and crime branch inspector Nandkumar Gopale, he said.

Considering the scope of investigation into the extortion case filed at the Marine Drive police station, its probe has been transferred from the SIT to the state CID, the official said.

Param Bir Singh faces two more extortion cases in Thane city, where he had served as the police commissioner before being posted in Mumbai.

## MAN KILLED OVER MOBILE PHONE REPAIR

Mumbai: One of the four accused then pulled out a skewer from a nearby kabab shop and stabbed Ali on his chest. Ali was rushed to a local hospital where he was declared brought dead.

A man was stabbed to death over servicing of a mobile phone at Mankhurd on Monday. Four persons have been arrested in this connection.

The deceased, Akbar Ali (24), and his brother Mohammad went to a mobile shop at Mankhurd to get the latter's phone repaired. The brothers were unhappy with the repair work and eventually got into an argument with the four persons, including the shop's owner and his friends. The argument soon escalated into a physical fight. One of the four accused then pulled out a skewer from a nearby kabab shop and stabbed Ali on his chest. Ali was rushed to a local hospital where he was declared brought dead. An officer of Mankhurd police said a case of murder has been registered. Senior Inspector Prakash Chougule said they have arrested the four accused. The deceased was a daily wage labourer and had four cases registered against him as well, the officer added.

## EPFO fraud: Rs 21 crore siphoned from Mumbai PF office through illegal withdrawals

A 37-year-old clerk at EPFO's Kandivli office, Chandan Kumar Sinha, was the mastermind behind the scam.

A group of employees at a Mumbai office of the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) have allegedly siphoned off over Rs 21 crore from a common PF pool through illegal withdrawals.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

According to the IE report, a 37-year-old clerk at EPFO's Kandivli office, Chandan Kumar Sinha, was the mastermind behind the scam. He allegedly used as many as 817 bank accounts, most-

ly of migrant workers, to fraudulently claim PF deposits of Rs 21.5 crore on their behalf.

An internal investigation of EPFO found that 90% of the money claimed by the nexus of employees has already been taken out of their accounts, the IE mentioned in the report citing sources, who added that the case will be transferred to the CBI as soon as the internal audit is complete.

Sinha is currently absconding and is among the five employees of the office who have been placed under suspension for their alleged involvement in the multi-crore scam.

The money that was withdrawn by the nexus belonged to the pooled fund of EPFO, which holds

deposits made by registered organisations every month. The funds received in these pools are usually invested in government securities.

"No individual PF account has been misused (in the fraud). The money belonged to the pooled fund and it is a loss to EPFO not any individual. It is the equivalent of a bank robbery," an official said. EPFO officials believe that the nexus managed to evade scrutiny between March 2021 and June 2021 as this was the time when the organisation had relaxed its norms and assigned multiple roles to employees involved in verification and approval to manage the high volume of withdrawals amid job losses and pay cuts due to the COVID-19

pandemic. Also, they exploited key loopholes in the system using passwords and other access provided to them by senior officials who were working from home during the lockdown.

The internal probe done by EPFO found that a few section officers at the branch actively helped Sinha siphon funds. "It is a bit embarrassing that some of our officials gave their passwords to him and did not bother to change it later. This is negligence," another senior official told the daily.

After the fraud was discovered, EPFO has written to banks for freezing the 817 bank accounts that received the fraudulent withdrawals. A little over Rs 2 crore have been tracked and recovered so far.

## Cases of Delta and Delta Plus variants rise, but doctors not worried

With the kickstarting of local trains, Mumbai witnessed a marginal increase in its COVID-19 cases. However, what is of concern is the threat emerging from the Delta and its sub-lineage Delta Plus variants of the virus in the city as well as in the state.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

In the past few months, Maharashtra has reported a total of 76 cases of Delta Plus so far, and five deaths have occurred due to the Delta Plus variant, with Ratnagiri reporting two, and Mumbai, Beed and Raigad reporting one each. Of those who succumbed to the variant, almost all were in the senior citizen category and were suffering from comorbid conditions, and two of them had received both the doses of vaccination. "Delta Plus is a mutation of its parent variant Delta and 13 more sub-lineages of the Delta Plus strain have been found of which three - AY 1, AY 2, AY 3 - are currently going around in Maharashtra. But the dominant variant continues to be Delta, a more transmissible variant of the two.

"What we have observed is that Delta Plus is concerning due to immune escape but that has been observed only in a few cases. I think we still need to wait and understand how the situation is likely to unfold in the coming days. As of now, we need to be alert but not worried. Yet, the monitoring must continue with genomic surveillance so that we better understand the virus and the kind of immune response needed to conquer it. Also, with vaccination picking up speed gradually, we expect breakthrough infections to be much less, yet, these must be continuously monitored," said Phullar Desai, a microbiologist from a private pathology lab in Mumbai which is working on genomic samples to monitor COVID-19 variants. However, clinicians and doctors inside Mumbai hospitals who attend to COVID-19 patients on a daily basis

aren't worried about the Delta or its sub-variant, saying that the number of Covid cases have gone down considerably. "If I were to speak from a physician's perspective, I must tell you that COVID-19 is on a complete decline at this moment. Through the past one and a half years I have been attending to Covid patients. As of now we have hardly three to four of them admitted in the hospital. Although Delta and Delta Plus variants hit the city, all patients have recovered well as of now because the treatment which we follow for COVID-19 remains the same, that is aggressive, irrespective of the variant," says Dr Manjusha Agarwal, senior consultant - internal medicine, at Global Hospital in Mumbai's Parel. Although the state has been aggressive in the area of COVID-19 vaccination, a few districts including Pune, Satara, Kolhapur,

Solapur, Sangli, Ahmednagar and Ratnagiri are reporting a high number of daily cases. Many citizens in these districts have also refused to take vaccination against COVID-19. This is also one reason why the total number of COVID-19 cases in the entire state of Maharashtra went up to close to 5,000 on Thursday. In his annual Independence Day address, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray asked people to stay cautious, warning them that a state-wide lockdown could be imposed if people began taking things lightly and did not follow appropriate COVID-19 rules. Doctors are now worried that the cases of Dengue and malaria might far exceed those of COVID-19. "If I get 10 patients with fever, seven of them will be Dengue patients, 2.5 would be malaria patients and only 0.5 would be COVID-19 patients. Presently there is a Dengue menace in Mumbai and this I can say with confidence because we do a Rapid Antigen test and RT-PCR for every patient irrespective of vaccination status," says Dr Agarwal. "Yes, it is absolutely true that we are witnessing a rise in the cases relating to Dengue and malaria, especially in the current monsoon season and we worry that these may actually be more than COVID-19 cases on the ground. Among children, a flu shot will help to keep them immunised and protect them from fever, which could be caused by either Covid or monsoon viruses," says Dr Ramesh Shah from Mumbai.

## Cyber fraudster poses as job site executive to cheat woman

The complainant told the fraudster that she was unable to find any good jobs. The accused offered the complainant a refund of her membership fees and swindled the money through a phishing link.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A 30-year-old woman who had taken paid membership on a job search website was duped of Rs 29,000 by a fraudster who impersonated as a representative and tricked her into transferring the money on the pretext of returning her membership fees. An FIR was registered with the Mira Road police station in Thane district on August 16.

The complainant woman told the police that she used to work as a manager in a

luxurious hotel in Vile Parle (east) but due to the Covid-19 lockdown rules, she was not able to board local trains and quit her job. In April this year, she took paid membership on Naukri.com for Rs 5,624, hoping to land another job. However, on August 3 she received a phone call from a woman who posed as an executive of Naukri.com and asked about the job offers she was receiving and whether she was happy with the paid membership. The complainant told her that she was unable to find any good jobs.

The fraudster then offered the complainant a refund of her membership fees and she readily agreed. The fraudster passed the woman's number to a companion who sent her a phishing link. The complainant went on the website and filled in all the details and was asked to pay Rs 10 as processing fees. She received an OTP for the transaction but as soon as she entered the OTP, Rs 10,000 got debited from her account.



EDITOR'S SPECS

UP Election: BJP appeasing Muslims

The Bhartiya Janata Party in Uttar Pradesh has now set its eyes on a target that is considered impossible by many. The BJP will now make a conscious effort to win over a section of minority votes in every assembly constituency. The party will send out 44,000 members who will meet and talk to Muslim families and make them aware of the welfare work being done for them by Modi and Yogi Governments. The party has planned to target 5,000 votes in each assembly constituency. The BJP Minority Morcha will be training its members to seek minority votes for the party in the upcoming assembly polls. The party will also identify 50 strong workers in each assembly constituency. They will be given training and asked to target 100 votes from surrounding lanes. BJP Minority Morcha says, "We analysed previous polls. Almost 20 per cent of assembly seats have been lost with a margin of 5,000 votes. Even in Bengal, we lost a considerable number of seats with lesser margins." The Morcha has identified 50 seats in Uttar Pradesh that have more than 60 per cent Muslim population and plans to secure tickets for his community. To boost morale of Muslim workers of BJP, the party has a slogan that says, "Jo chunav ladega wahi aage badhega" (Those who contest will march forward). In the 2017 assembly elections, the BJP did not give a single ticket to any Muslim candidate in Uttar Pradesh. However, Muslim members in BJP think that things are likely to change in this election. According to them, "Muslims have 25 per cent share in BJP as one of its founding members was Sikander Bakht. Our community does not know these facts. If we are enemies of BJP, why is it that BJP is working for us as well?"

SECURITY AWARENESS FOSTERS NATIONALISM

D.C. PATHAK

A democratic nation has two binding factors that sustain its integrity -- equality amongst citizens on the vital empowerment for electing the rulers who would exercise the sovereign function of governance and a shared value about the past and the future that gets them to work for preserving the sanctity of the country's territorial integrity.

A large country like India with its rich diversity and a growing influence in the comity of nations must constantly endeavour to keep its people united against fissiparous tendencies induced by anti-national elements within and hostile forces outside. Democracy offers religious and socio-cultural freedoms, subject of course to the laid down rules including a penal code that would define their public limitations but prescribes a common political umbrella for the state created by the constitutional arrangement of an electoral process run transparently on the principle of 'one man one vote' without discrimination of caste, creed or gender.

The Indian republic prescribed universal franchise at one go -- many advanced democracies of the West achieved that in stages -- and legally prohibited electoral appeals made at the cost of caste, communal and regional harmony. That our political parties did not always play by the book is another story but it cannot be denied that a ruling dispensation that called for 'development for all' and 'equal protection of law' for all citizens, basically fulfilled the demands of a secular democracy. This is why the Constitution of India as enacted originally did not have to put the label of secularism on it.

While all patriotic Indians want to see that India was not weakened by the internal divides of community and region, we are passing through times where national security is threatened not so much by a visible external attack as by 'invisible' offensives of our adversaries designed to cause internal destabilisation and conflicts.

Post-Cold War the world has witnessed an era of 'proxy wars' run through infiltrated terrorists, identity-based insurgencies and border conflicts and beefed up by use of information as an instrument of combat. The IT revolution proved a boon for economic progress and development but it also provided a tool for modularisation of proxy war.

An increasing reliance on cyber space for inflicting damage on the opponent is the order of the day. Further, domestic political contradictions are known to be receiving the attention of external forces planning to influence the political destiny of a nation -- the case of British consulting firm Cambridge Analytica in the 2010s collecting personal data belonging to millions of Facebook users without their consent and using it for political advertising, is an early illustration of this new trend affecting national security.

There is need for all Indians to be reasonably abreast of all that impinged on security -- this will have the effect of focusing their attention also on the Fundamental Duties recommended by our Constitution and deepening their sense of commitment to national security.

National security is above politics and does not come in the way of citizens making full demand on the ruling dispensation for economic betterment and human welfare. However, there has to be a deeper recognition of the citizen's contribution to making the nation secure and a greater awareness of the reality that development can happen only in a secure environment.

Interestingly, a strategic shift in the concept of security, now

fully accepted, was first voiced by Warren Christopher, President Bill Clinton's Secretary of State, who famously said in 1993 that 'national security was inseparable from economic security'. Economic growth buys security creating the new equation between security and development. But this also explains why damaging the economic assets of a target country is now part of the new 'war methodology'.

A term like Cyber Pearl Harbour unsurprisingly has figured in the new language of the 'asymmetric warfare'. Enlightened citizens need to have an understanding of the emerging non-conventional dimensions of security facing their country.

There is a case for carrying security education to our youth in the higher stages of studies. Some states of India, including Punjab and Rajasthan, had established departments in universities specially attuned to the subjects of national security and strategic affairs.

Prime Minister Modi has given equal attention to national security and economic development and it is a matter of great satisfaction that the Modi government has through an act of Parliament established the Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU), the first national university devoted to defence and national security studies. RRU is an institution of national importance under the Ministry of Home Affairs functioning from Gandhinagar in Gujarat.

It is a pioneering national security and police university of India committed to identifying and sustaining national, strategic and security culture, promoting innovation, research and education and helping with the training of cadres from the security, military and civilian society in the strategic areas of defence and security. RRU should be organising collaborative programmes on general studies with other universities to reach out to youth for spreading security awareness amongst them. This will be a true national service meant to build the new India of patriotic citizens through apolitical means.

There is sound logic behind why all young adults need to be exposed meaningfully, through discussions, to an understanding of India's strategic environment, national security and factors that affected internal stability and integrity of the nation. Firstly, in the Age of Information being well-informed is the key to success in any field. Completeness of knowledge is vital for a failsafe decision making.

Awareness of risks in the environment in any situation is as important as the visualisation of opportunities -- this is part of this completeness. Secondly, any threats to internal security including an unsatisfactory law and order translate into a risk for the individual citizen as well. Terrorism, drug trafficking and the new trend of social media being used as a weapon of combat by an adversary are the prime illustrations of what all citizens should know about in some depth, in order to safeguard themselves and also contribute to the security of the country.

And lastly, all those working across various wings of the government must similarly know about India's national security scenario and the current policy responses that are in play to deal with it. They would then be better placed to undertake their responsibilities that would have been impacted directly or indirectly by the national security issues of the day. In short, national security orientation of all citizens is an aid to the process of strengthening nationalism and working for consolidation of India's inner strength.

Under a democratic state the citizen lives in three dimensions -- personal, social and political. Freedom of religion and



worship, choice of avocation and food preferences all fall in the personal domain -- the exercise of this freedom is not regulated by the state but is bounded by the social code in the sense that it is not supposed to cause affront or inconvenience to another citizen.

The all-important social dimension tests the ability of a person to handle interaction with another fellow citizen -- this accrues from culture of which religion is a major determinant. Religion is supposed to teach harmony and not promote conflict -- if it breeds exclusivism and an attitude of superiority over others, it would be problematic for the state in terms of becoming a source of internal instability.

A faith-based identity can change what was essentially a social group into a political community if it is used by politicians for electoral appeal.

In India, the same has happened with caste and regional identities, which are at best cultural instruments, with the result that the nation has become internally divided and conflict prone. Parties who gain political power on caste and communal foundations would not be able to provide the security and development to all citizens thereby negating the essence of democracy.

To get out of this quagmire the people should vote for a leadership that stands for integrity, uniform approach to matters of economic development and security and strong governance. Prime Minister Modi's rise to power in 2014 and return with a bigger majority in 2019 was largely because of the voters rising above caste and regional barriers and exercising a political choice to give power to a leadership that would measure up to this expectation. The opposition, though dwindled, is not prepared to shed community-based politics.

It is raising a narrative of majoritarianism and autocracy to deprecate the Modi government instead of taking the latter on in policy matters. Indian voters are, however, politically mature enough to see that what was personal and cultural should not be allowed to impede the common political obligation of all citizens to install a truly national government -- thus providing a common political umbrella to all citizens of India.

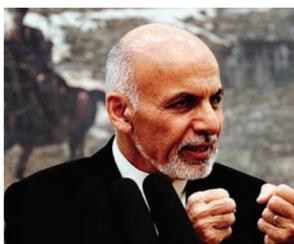
(The writer is a former Director Intelligence Bureau)

international

GHANI PLEDGES TO RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

Dubai | Agencies

Former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who fled the country earlier this week following the fall of Kabul to the Taliban, has pledged to return.



"Their decision was this: Whatever happened 25 years ago was going to be repeated. The President of Afghanistan once again was going to be hanged in front of the people's eyes, and such a shameful history would have been once again repeated."

Ghani was referring to former President Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai, who was killed by the Taliban in 1996. Ahmadzai's body was hanged from a traffic light pole outside

the Presidential Palace. The former President underlined that he does not believe himself to be a traitor. "I did not betray the home country and ask everyone not to pay attention to rumours, we wanted peace for Kabul and did not want it to be destroyed. I hope that the war in Afghanistan will end," he said.

"Our armed forces are not responsible for this failure, politicians are to blame." Ghani also stressed that he was engaged in talks with the Taliban to ensure security of Kabul and a peaceful transfer of power.

On August 15, Ghani flew out of Afghanistan several hours before the Taliban entered Kabul without a fight and established full control over the capital. Vice President Amrullah Saleh declared himself the caretaker president according to the national constitution and in absence of the president, calling to put up armed resistance against the Taliban. Western countries are evacuating their nationals and embassy staffers.

IRAQ CONDEMNS TURKISH AIRSTRIKES

Baghdad: Iraqi authorities have condemned airstrikes by a Turkish aircraft in Sinjar area in the northern province of Nineveh, stressing its rejection to the violation of sovereignty. The Iraqi Ministerial Council for National Security, headed by Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, held a meeting on Wednesday to discuss situation in the Sinjar area and the measures taken to maintain security there, Xinhua news agency reported. "The council condemned the unilateral military actions that offend the principles of good neighbourliness, and rejected the use of Iraqi territory to settle scores from any party," a statement from al-Kadhimi's office said, referring to the recent airstrikes on positions believed to be used by the outlawed 'Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) members in Sinjar.

If necessary US troops could remain in Kabul past Aug 31: Biden

Washington | Agencies

amid mounting criticism from the public over the US drawdown from Afghanistan, President Joe Biden said that Washington is committed to evacuating Americans and if necessary, troops could remain in Kabul past the August 31 deadline.

Biden defended his decision to withdraw the US troops from Afghanistan while speaking to ABC News on Wednesday, reports Xinhua news agency.

Asked if the US drawdown could have been handled better, Biden replied: "No, I don't think it could have been handled in a way that... but the idea that somehow, to have gotten out without chaos ensuing, I don't know how that happens." "One of the things we did-



remaining after August 31, he said: "If there's American citizens left, we're gonna stay till we get them all out."

Of Afghan allies the US is looking to evacuate, he said: "The commitment holds to get everyone out that, in fact, we can get out and everyone who should come out. And that's the objective. That's what we're doing now. That's the path we're on. And I think we'll get there." Also on Wednesday, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said that US military flights had evacuated over 2,000 people in the last 24 hours and nearly 5,000 people over the last several days. The US Embassy in Afghanistan earlier in the day issued a security alert saying "the US government cannot ensure safe passage to the Hamid Karzai International Airport."

n't know is what the Taliban would do in terms of trying to keep people from getting out," he said.

"They're cooperating, letting American citizens get out... But we're having some more difficulty having those who helped us when we were in there." He also said that the US military could extend its mission in Afghanistan beyond August 31 to evacuate Americans on the ground. Pushed on what he would do if there were Americans

US Congress sued for footage, other records related to Capitol riot

Washington | Agencies

An American freelance journalist has sued Congress for footage and other records pertaining to the January 6 Capitol riot, arguing that concealing those records from the public eye is a manifestation of the legislative branch's lack of transparency.

Shawn Musgrave, in the lawsuit filed with the US District Court for the District of Columbia, asked a judge to recognise a "common law right of access" to congressional records, which are exempt from public records laws like the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), reports Xinhua news agency.

The lawsuit was filed on Wednesday against the US Capitol Police (USCP), the House Sergeant at Arms and the secretary of the Senate. "The result of FOIA inapplicability, in combination with almost nothing requiring further transparency to the public from these offices, has roundly led to low transparency and high secrecy", the complaint reads, adding that the lack of transparency has become even more apparent in the face of



increased public interest in congressional security in the wake of the riots.

"However, these offices are subject to the common law right of access to public records, as all three branches of government are subject to that right." Musgrave is seeking public access to surveillance footage of the riot and records about the Capitol's security measures,

arguing that increased USCP transparency generally would be helpful in understanding the riot and in preventing similar attacks from happening in the future.

He also filed a separate lawsuit against the Senate Intelligence Committee and its chairman, Senator Mark Warner, Democrat of Virginia, seeking to make public the panel's

full torture report.

The American public only "had access to the redacted and heavily abridged Executive Summary version" of the torture report since its release in 2014, according to the file.

Whether the judges will be convinced by Musgrave's argument that the legislative branch has an implied legal obligation to disclose those materials remains unclear.

The lawsuits came amid ongoing investigation led by a House select committee into the riot, during which a mob of former President Donald Trump's supporters breached the Capitol Complex, attempting to stop Congress from certifying the 2020 presidential election results to Joe Biden.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi suggested on Tuesday that Republican representatives Jim Jordan of Ohio and Jim Banks of Indiana could be targets of the January 6 committee's investigation. Staunchly supporting Trump, Jordan and Banks were House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy's picks to serve on the select committee, but their membership were vetoed by Pelosi, who claimed the pair were "outrageous" and "not serious".

Protests across Afghanistan holding national flag

Residents in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar and Khost on Wednesday publicly rallied under the Afghan national flag, Afghan media reported.

Jalalabad | Agencies

Several provinces across Afghanistan witnessed protests with Afghans taking to the streets holding the country's national flag, which is no longer in use since the Taliban took Kabul city.

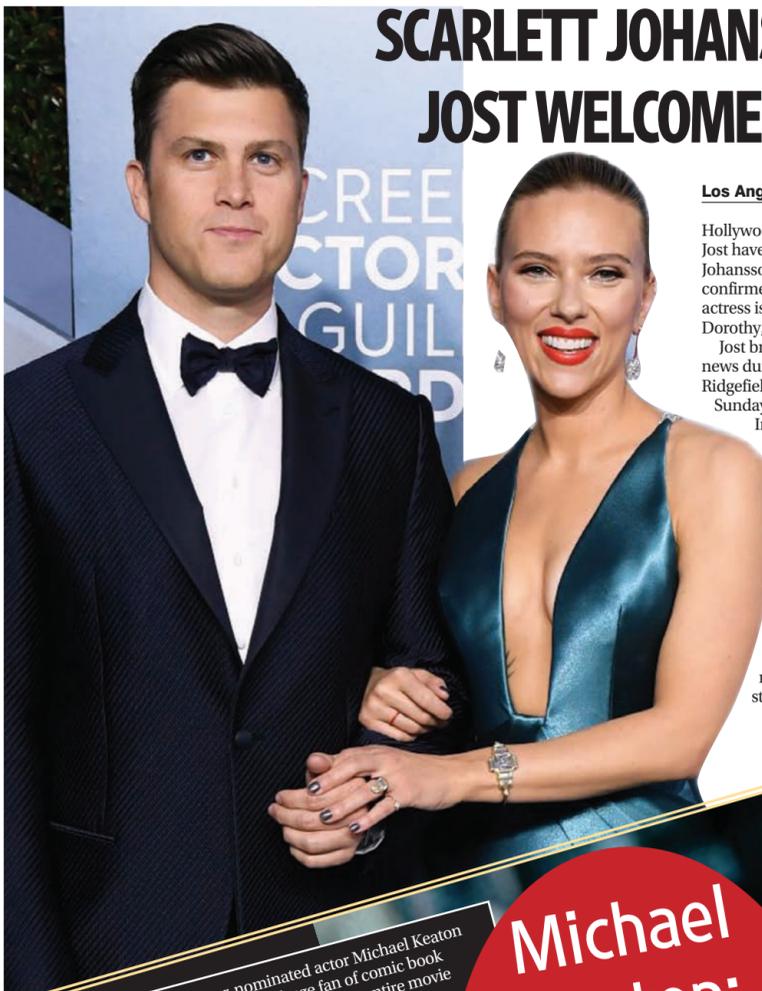
Residents in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar and Khost on Wednesday publicly rallied under the Afghan national flag, Afghan media reported. Violence was reported in protests in Nangarhar and



Khost provinces in clashes between Taliban members and protesters, and there were reports that one demonstrator was killed in Jalalabad city.

The Taliban have stated that next government will decide on the national flag. "May my life be sacrificed for this flag," said Ahmad, a resident in Nangarhar.

"We hoisted our flag in the centre of the bazaar, our national flag is our national identity," said Tahzibullah, a resident in Kunar. After taking control, the Taliban replaced Afghanistan's national flag in some parts of the country with its own white flag.



## SCARLETT JOHANSSON, COLIN HANKS WELCOME FIRST BABY

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson and Colin Hanks have welcomed their first baby together. Johansson's representative Marcel Pariseau confirmed to people.com. The "Black Widow" actress is also mom to daughter Rose Dorothy, who turns 7-years-old this year. Jost briefly mentioned their pregnancy news during a stand-up performance at The Ridgely Playhouse in Connecticut on Sunday, a source confirmed to people. On Instagram later Wednesday, Jost shared a statement revealing that they welcomed a baby boy named Cosmo. He wrote, "Ok Ok we had a baby. His name is Cosmo. We love him very much. Privacy would be greatly appreciated." Johansson and Hanks got married in an intimate ceremony in October 2020. The couple got engaged in May 2019 after two years of dating. The actress showcased her 11-carat glittering engagement ring that July while taking the stage at San Diego Comic-Con.

## Alesha Dixon puts best fashion for book promotion

Los Angeles | Agencies

Alesha Dixon displayed her impeccable sense of style once more on Thursday in a cobalt blue suit after her appearance on Heart FM to promote her new book, Girls Rule. The singer, 42 looked incredibly chic in her outfit as she exited Global Radio Studios following the broadcast. Alesha flashed a look at her black bralette underneath her double-breasted jacket. She boosted her height with nude heels and clutched a copy of her new book in her hand. The Britain Got Talent judge accessorised tastefully with modern silver jewellery including a chunky chain-link necklace and hoops. She slicked her raven tresses up in a braided bun and enhanced her delicate features with a light palette of make-up. Earlier this month, she made a pop comeback with her new single War, her first music release for five years.



Los Angeles: Oscar-nominated actor Michael Keaton has revealed that he is not a huge fan of comic book films, so much so he hasn't watched an entire movie in the genre since starring as Batman in filmmaker Tim Burton's 1989 movie. Keaton, who played villain Vulture in 2017 Marvel movie 'Spider-Man: Homecoming', I'm not sure I've ever seen an entire (comic book) movie. I just never got around to it. So you're talking to a guy who wasn't in the zeitgeist of that whole world. "When I went down to do the Marvel things in Atlanta ... It's an entire city dedicated to Marvel ... They'll be dead, and they'll still be doing Marvel movies," he told The Hollywood Reporter, reports femalefirst.co.uk. The actor will reprise his iconic Bruce Wayne/Batman role in forthcoming film "The Flash", in which Ezra Miller's titular character will encounter different versions of the Dark Knight, including Ben Affleck's incarnation, when going through numerous parallel universes.

**Michael Keaton: Haven't seen comic book film since 1989**

## America's Got Talent: Tory Vagasy advances to semis

Los Angeles | Agencies

Tory Vagasy advanced to the semifinals of America's Got Talent on Wednesday's results episode after being saved by viewer voting. She performed Heart Of Stone from Six The Musical on Tuesday and was in jeopardy of being eliminated as one of the bubble acts along with singing groups T.3 and Korean Soul. Tory won the Instant Save of viewer voting and moved on to the next round of the NBC talent competition show. "Thanks to everyone who ever supported me and showed me kindness. Thank you," Tory told host Terry Crews after she advanced. Korean Soul and T.3 were then up for the last spot in the semis, but judges Simon Cowell, Howie Mandel, Sofia Vergara, and Heidi Klum were tied in their voting. Viewer voting determined which act would advance and Korean Soul moved on to the semis.



## LITTLE MIX ANNOUNCE NEW ALBUM TO MARK 10 YEARS

Los Angeles | Agencies

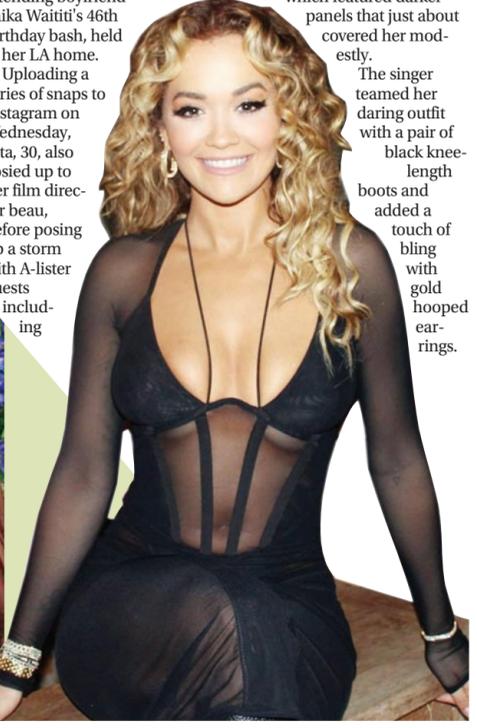
Little Mix to mark their 10th anniversary on Thursday, Little Mix have unveiled their seventh studio album, 'Between Us'. The chart-topping girl group - comprising Perrie Edwards, Jade Thirlwall and Leigh-Anne Pinnoch - has announced their first album since Jesy Nelson's exit from the group. Set for release on November 12, the LP will include their greatest hits and some brand new material in a release. Alongside a video montage, including their time on 'The X Factor' in 2011, the trio said of their follow-up to 2020's 'Confetti': 'Between Us 12.11...we are so excited about this album. It includes all our hits, as well as some brand new songs we can't wait for you to hear. We can't thank you all enough for your support over the last ten years... The album news comes as Jesy continues to tease the release of her debut solo single, seemingly called Boyz.



## Rita Ora sizzles in black at beau Taika Waititi birthday bash

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rita Ora may have pulled off her hottest look yet as she put on a sizzling display in a sheer black dress while attending boyfriend Taika Waititi's 46th birthday bash, held at her LA home. Uploading a series of snaps to Instagram on Wednesday, Rita, 30, also cosied up to her film director beau, before posing up a storm with A-list guests including Rami Malek, Joshua Jackson, Ashley Benson, Kristen Stewart and Paris Jackson. Rita looked incredible as she flaunted her jaw-dropping figure in the barely-there dress, which featured darker panels that just about covered her modesty. The singer teamed her daring outfit with a pair of black knee-length boots and added a touch of bling with gold hooped earrings.



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Maria Bakalova



## U20 WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS:

# Indian mixed relay team wins bronze

Nairobi | Agencies

World Athletics Chief Seb Coe has congratulated the 4x400m mixed relay team for winning a bronze medal while addressing the Indian contingent on the sidelines of the U20 World Athletics Championships in Nairobi, Kenya. On Wednesday evening, the Indian quartet of Bharat Sridhar, Priya H. Mohan, Summy, and Kapil clocked 3:20.60 seconds in the final of the 4x400m mixed relay event to clinch the bronze medal. Priya will also feature in the women's 400m final on Saturday. The Indian quartet finished third behind Nigeria (3:19.70 sec) and Poland (3:19.80).

Bharat Sridhar, who is coming back from an injury and Covid, gave India a good start in the third lane as he completed his leg in 47.12.



Priya Mohan maintained the momentum as she ran a superb time despite this being her third 400m race of the day as she completed the second leg in 52.77 and though Summy was the slowest of them all and completed

the next 400 in 54.29 seconds, Kapil made up for that with a faster anchor leg in 46.42 seconds. The Indian juniors thus coming quite close to the 3:19.93 clocked by the senior team at the Tokyo Olympics early this month.

The bronze medal on the opening day of the event came as a big boost for the 28-member Indian contingent that is hoping to take forward the recent great performances at the World Juniors by Neeraj Chopra,

who won the javelin throw gold in 2016 in Poland with a junior world record, and Hima Das, who bagged the women's 400m gold in 2018. "This is what you need at the start of the Championship. Congratulations to you 4x400m mixed relay. Fantastic result in the final and great in heats as well. So, "antastic," said Coe in a video posted on his Twitter handle.

Meanwhile, in men's shot put, Amandeep Singh Dhaliwal qualified for the finals with a best throw of 17.92m. He finished sixth in group B and 11th overall. His final will be held on Thursday. In javelin throw, Kunwer Ajai Singh Rana and Jay Kumar both qualified for the final. Rana qualified by throwing 71.05m while Kumar cleared qualification with 70.34m, finishing sixth and seventh respectively. Their final will be held on Friday.

# Zimbabwe to host ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2021

Dubai | Agencies

The International Cricket Council announced on Thursday that the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2021 will be held in Zimbabwe from November 21 to December 5. The qualifier was originally scheduled to take place in Sri Lanka from July 3 to 19, 2020 but was postponed thrice due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The tournament comprising of ten teams will decide the three qualifiers for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2022 to be held in New Zealand from March 4 to April 3. The three teams will then join five teams who have already qualified through the ICC Women's Championship - hosts New Zealand, defending champions England, Australia, India and South Africa in the next stage. "The ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier is an extremely important event in our calendar as it



not only provides teams with a chance to qualify for the World Cup but will also determine the final two participants in the next edition of the ICC Women's Championship. I'm sure Harare will witness to some keenly contested matches. I thank Zimbabwe Cricket for agreeing to host the tournament and wish teams all the best in their preparations for this important event," said Chris Tetley, the Head of ICC Events in a press release. The teams that will be seen in action in the

fifth edition of the qualifying tournament are Bangladesh, Ireland, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the West Indies, the Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, the United States and Zimbabwe.

The three qualifiers as well as the next two teams will also ensure places in the next ICC Women's Championship (IWC) along with the top five from last time, as the number of teams in the third cycle of the IWC goes up from eight to 10 teams.

# Australia name final 15 for T20 World Cup; Smith, Warner return

Sydney | Agencies

Aaron Finch will lead a strong Australian squad at the T20 World Cup in Oman and the UAE with opener David Warner and former skipper Steve Smith also returning to action. While Smith returns from an elbow injury and skipper Finch is recovering well from recent knee surgery, Warner was rested for the recent tours of West Indies and Bangladesh. Glenn Maxwell, Kane Richardson, Marcus Stoinis and Pat Cummins are also back in action after missing the recent tours. The selector dropped nine players including wicketkeeper-batsman Alex Carey and bowler Jhye Richardson and Andrew Tye that represented the country in the recent T20 Series against West Indies and Bangladesh.

The 15-member squad announced by Cricket Australia chief selector includes uncapped Josh Inglis, who has had scored 531 runs in England's T20 Blast, coming in for Carey. "Josh has been on our radar for some time with his performances in white ball cricket and more recently in the Vitality Blast where he topped the run charts," Chief selector George Bailey said.



"He offers the squad flexibility in the batting order with his adaptability, counterattacking ability and power striking. He is a player we are excited about for the future." Bailey said that Carey's omission was "purely performance-based".

(Box) Australia squad for T20 World Cup: Aaron Finch (C), Ashton Agar, Pat Cummins (VC), Josh Hazlewood, Josh Inglis (wk), Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Kane Richardson, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Mitchell Swepson, Matthew Wade (WK), David Warner, Adam Zampa. Travelling reserves: Daniel Christian, Nathan Ellis, Daniel Sams.

# ECB to review security for England's tour of Pakistan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will review security ahead of England's tour of Pakistan this autumn amid concerns over conflict in neighbouring Afghanistan.

England are scheduled to visit Pakistan for the first time in 16 years in October, with the men's team due to play two T20s in Rawalpindi and the women's side facing two T20s and three ODIs.

However, the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has raised concerns over new security issues in neighbouring Pakistan.

"For any tour there's ongoing security procedures and checks. We continue to plan for the men's and women's tour of Pakistan this



autumn," an ECB spokesperson was quoted as saying by the Daily Mail. Pakistan were forced to play home international matches in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) following a terrorist attack on the Sri

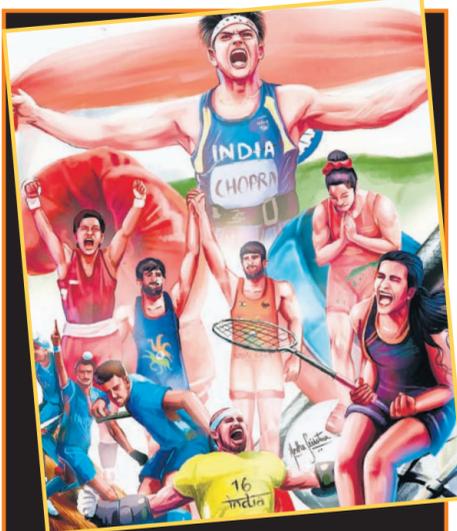
# T20 WORLD CUP: ICC ANNOUNCES VIRTUAL TROPHY TOUR TO MARK TWO MONTHS COUNTDOWN

Dubai | Agencies

To mark two months countdown to the Men's T20 World Cup in Oman and United Arab Emirates (UAE), the International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced a virtual trophy tour starting from Thursday. The virtual tour will be driven around by Nissan. The tour will be launched by Carlos Brathwaite, the star of the last Men's T20 World Cup.

Brathwaite hit four consecutive sixes in the last over of the final against England, helping the West Indies claim the title in 2016. The all-rounder will recite a poem written by Birmingham Poet Laureate, Casey Bailey. The poem aims to capture the essence of T20 cricket and celebrate the dreams and hopes of aspiring cricketers globally. "This trophy brings back memories of one of the best nights of my life and so it gives me great joy to be associated with this unique trophy tour, where fans get to take it to places it has never been. Imagine taking it to the Eiffel Tower? Or the Taj Mahal? I am personally looking forward to all the exciting content fans are going to create and would encourage everyone to channel their inner creativity and get involved," said Brathwaite in a press release.

The disruption caused to the world by the Covid-19 pandemic meant that a globe-trotting Trophy Tour was not feasible. Instead, ICC urges cricket fans to take the trophy to more cricket playing nations than ever before.



# UP CM presents Rs 42 crore monetary award to Olympians

Lucknow | Agencies

The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday gave away a sum of Rs 42 crore by way of felicitating the Olympians who did the nation proud at the recently-concluded Tokyo Games. Chief Minister Adityanath also handed an additional cash reward of Rs 25 lakh each to 10 athletes from the state who participated in Tokyo Olympics. Gold medalist javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra received Rs 2 crore, silver medalist wrestler Ravi Dahiya and lifter Mirabai Chhanu received Rs 1.5 crore each, while three individual bronze medalists -- shuttler PV Sindhu, boxer Lovlina Borgohain and wrestler Bajrang Punia -- were given Rs 1 crore

each. All the 19 members of the Indian men's hockey team that won the bronze in Tokyo received Rs 1 crore each. The members of the women's hockey team, which performed exceptionally well to finish fourth in Tokyo, were awarded Rs 50 lakh each and so was golfer Aditi Ashok, who narrowly missed out on a bronze medal.

Adityanath lauded India's best-ever show at an Olympic event and praised the athletes for delivering their best for the country despite the Covid pandemic. "We are glad that our team produced its best-ever show at 2020 Tokyo Olympics. In 18 disciplines, India won 7 medals and 10 athletes from UP also participated in the Tokyo Games," Adityanath said.

# Three-year Olympic cycle for Paris 2024 will be tricky: Abhinav Bindra

Team Absolute | Mumbai

India had its best medal haul in the Tokyo Olympics with Neeraj Chopra winning gold in javelin throw but the road to Paris will be difficult given the shorter Olympic cycle, according to Abhinav Bindra, the first Indian to win an individual gold medal in the quadrennial showpiece.

"It was a historic performance with the best-ever seven medals. There were moments of great triumph and heartbreaks, but that is what sport is all about. We have a good momentum now going forward. I see the next Olympics cycle will be tricky, primarily because of the shorter cycle. Normally athletes get a year post Olympics



that allows them to rest and recover, but this time around they need to get back pretty quickly," said Bindra at a webinar organised by ELMS Sports Foundation.

Besides Chopra's gold, India won silver medals through weightlifter Mirabai Chhanu and wrestler Ravi Kumar Dahiya while shuttler PV Sindhu, boxer Lovlina Borgohain, wrestler Bajrang Punia and the men's hockey team bagged the bronze

medals at the Tokyo Olympics which were held from July 23-August 8. The shorter cycle for Paris is because the Tokyo Olympics were postponed from 2020 to 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, thus reducing the cycle from four years to three. The athletes will now be left with the challenge of having less qualification events and quotas and the international federations will have to schedule them in such a way that there is enough gap between the qualifiers and other events.

Bindra, who won the 10m air rifle gold in Beijing 2008, believes that bringing in scientific methods and creating a high-performance environment at the grassroots level will be critical going forward.

# Cincinnati Open: Osaka, Barty, Kerber advances; Medvedev beats McDonald

Cincinnati | Agencies

Second seed Naomi Osaka of Japan survived a scare as she overcame American teenager Coco Gauff 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 to advance to the third round in the WTA event here. Naomi, playing her first event in the American hardcourt circuit in the lead-up to the US Open, was a set and a break down on Wednesday but quelled Coco in their second-round encounter at the joint ATP, WTA sanctioned Western & Southern Open. World No.1 Ashleigh Barty of Australia too reached the third round with a 6-4, 7-6(3) win against Great Britain's Heather Watson while defending champion Victoria Azarenka of Belarus beat Alison Riske 6-2, 7-5 to reach the next



round. Third seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus was stunned 5-7, 6-2, 7-6(4) by Paula Badosa of Spain in a Round of 32 clash.

Daniil Medvedev of Russia also continued his winning streak as he raced into the third round in the ATP event at the Cincinnati Masters by beating Mackenzie McDonald of the United States in straight sets. Second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece also advanced by beating Sebastian Korda of the United States 7-6(5), 6-3.

Medvedev, who had won his fourth ATP Masters 1000 title in Toronto on Sunday, was off to a good start here with a 6-2, 6-2 win against wildcard McDonald in a second-round encounter on Wednesday.

# Afghan cricket board to host expanded T20 league in September

Kabul | Agencies

Despite the turmoil Afghanistan witnessed this month as Taliban took over the country, cricket in Kabul is likely to proceed unhindered with the Afghanistan Cricket Board's (ACB) Shpageeza Cricket League, a domestic T20 tournament, set to be held in a more expanded form from September 10 to 25 at the Kabul Cricket Stadium here. Two more teams have been added to the roster bringing the number of franchises to eight. This will be the eighth edition of the league.

The ownership rights for all the eight franchises were sold on Thursday at a ceremony held at ACB head office in Kabul. The eight franchises are Hindukush Stars, Pamir Zalmiyan, Spenghar Tigers, Kabul Eagles, Amo Sharks, Bost Defenders, Band-e Amir Dragons, Mis-e Ainak Knights, Hindukush Stars and Pamir Zalmiyan



are the new entrants in the league. "This time round, SCL will provide audiences and fans with a new experience. It will also be great financially for players," said Hamid Shinwari, the Afghanistan Cricket Board Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in a statement.

Shinwari called the role of business community vital in cricket's further development in the country.

# Yorkshire apologises after held guilty of racism

Leeds | Agencies

Yorkshire County Cricket Club on Thursday acknowledged that former player Azeem Rafiq was victim of racism and has apologised to the Pakistan-born English cricketer. The county issued a statement following findings of an investigation conducted by international law firm Squire Patton Boggs that looked into the allegations made by the player. Some of the allegations of racism were upheld by the panel. "There were many allegations made against the club most of which relate to a period more than ten years ago. Many of the allegations were not upheld and for others there was insufficient evidence for the panel to make a determination," said the club in a statement. "It is right, however, to acknowledge from the outset that several of the allegations made by Azeem were upheld and that sadly, historically, Azeem was the victim of inappropriate behaviour. This is clearly unacceptable. We would like to express our profound apologies for this," added the statement. The county club is yet to release the findings but said it will publish them in the coming days.





## SUPER DANCER: SHILPA SHETTY TO PERFORM 'KANJAK POOJA'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra will be performing a 'kanjak pooja' for contestant Arshiya after her dance act on Vaishno Devi in the dance reality show 'Super Dancer Chapter 4'.

Shilpa says she is an ardent worshipper of Goddess Durga and thus she performed this ritual.

She says, "I am very spiritual and a devoted Devi bhakt. I have had the opportunity to visit the Vaishno Devi temple once and the experience was very inspiring. After seeing this act today, I want to perform a 'kanjak pooja' for Arshiya."

Her performance left an everlasting impact on all the judges. Besides Shilpa, Anurag Basu and Geeta Kapur were also impressed by her dance moves.

Anurag Basu highly appreciated the choreography and praised her guru Anuradha for being such a good storyteller. He said, "I was so lost in the story, it was just amazing."



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actress Priya Bapat, who is seen in the web-series 'City Of Dreams', has hailed the digital space for not being gender-specific and that storytelling is not restricted. "Don't you think women are always fighting patriarchy...and they are doing so well...I am very happy. I think OTT is a great thing because storytelling is not restricted or it is not gender-specific," said Priya. She sees the evolution happening in cinema too and credits the changing mindsets. "The way you look at a story and the way you narrate the story is important. I think how people are changing, mindsets are changing and thanks to OTT platforms that we are creating shows like 'Aarya' also, where you are creating an audience they are accepting and interested in this kind of content," she said.

Directed by Nagesh Kukunoor, 'City Of Dreams' also stars Atul Kulkarni, Eijaz Khan and Sachin Pilgaonkar. It will be released on Disney+ Hotstar.

Priya Bapat: Women get meatier roles on OTT



## TAHIRA KASHYAP ANNOUNCES DIRECTORIAL DEBUT 'SHARMAJI KI BETI'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Tahira Kashyap has announced her first directorial feature film 'Sharmaji Ki Beti'. She has commenced filming this month in Mumbai and Chandigarh.

The film is a multi-generational ensemble comedy-drama about the modern, middle class female experience. The film stars Sakshi Tanwar, Divya Dutta, and Saiyami Kher. The film gives a peek into the lives of urban women, all with the common surname of Sharma. On her first directorial feature film, Tahira said, "Sharmaji Ki Beti is like an extension of my personality as it is inspired by various incidents and characters I have met, experienced and observed in real life." Tahira has directed critically acclaimed short films 'Toffee' and 'Quarantine Crush' in the anthology series 'Feels Like Ishq'.



## Rekha to lend voice for 'Bigg Boss 15' promos

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran actress Rekha will be lending her vocal prowess for a promo for the controversial reality show "Bigg Boss 15". Rekha said, "Bigg Boss is a very 'naayab' show, that has all drama, action, fun and thrill and what's more, you get a crash course of life itself. And if one is patient and resilient, one will evolve to be one's best self! What could be better poetic justice than that." The timeless diva will be doing a special voiceover for a tree in the promos of the show, hosted by Bollywood superstar Salman Khan on television. The new season of Bigg Boss is going to be filled with twists and a lot of "Sankat in jungle" as the contestants will have to endure many challenges before they make their way inside the house.



## RONIT ROY, RICHA CHADHA TO STAR IN DRAMA SERIES 'CANDY'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actors Ronit Bose Roy and Richa Chadha will be seen sharing screen space in the upcoming drama series titled 'Candy'. The series, directed by Ashish R Shukla, is an amalgamation of suspense, fear, hope, politics, ambition and murder mystery.

Ronit, who will be seen playing a teacher, posted a glimpse of the show on his Instagram on Thursday. He wrote: "Rudrakund ke sheher mein, jo dikhta hai wo hota nahin. It's time to #UnwrapTheSin with #CandyOnVootSelect, our newest web-series: stay tuned."

Richa, who will play a police personnel, too shared a glimpse of series on the photo-sharing website.

"It's time to #UnwrapTheSin with #CandyOnVootSelect, our newest web-series: stay tuned," she captioned it.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sidharth Shukla and Shehnaaz Gill a.k.a. 'SidNaaz' will be seen as special guests on dance reality show 'Dance Deewane 3'.

It will be interesting to watch the most loved couples replicating the famous romance king Shah Rukh

Khan and diva Madhuri Dixit's 'Aur paas' scene from the movie 'Dil Toh Pagal Hai'.

On looking at their romantic act, Madhuri Dixit inquisitively asks, "Aapko kaisa ladka chahiye Shehnaaz?" (what kind of guy are you looking for Shehnaaz?) to which she shyly responds, "Ye jo mere paas baitha hai iske jaisa hi"

Sidharth Shukla, Shehnaaz Gill to appear on 'Dance Deewane 3'

(same like the one sitting next to me) pointing towards Sidharth Shukla.

Second-generation contestants Piyush Gurbhele and Rupesh Soni will dedicate their performance to Sidharth Shukla and woo Shehnaaz with their adorable performance on 'Main Deewana'.

## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Shama Sikander