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ONE PLUS R VALUE IN 8 STATES A MAJOR CONCERN: HEALTH MINISTRY

Reproduction or reproduction number is a measure that highlights the number of people a coronavirus positive person infects, thereby reflecting the severity of its spread. A number of one or below one indicates a slowly spreading virus while any number above 1 indicates a rapid spread. An official said the pandemic is far from over, and the second wave, as far as India is concerned, is still not over. The daily new COVID-19 cases being reported across the world are still high as more than 4.7 lakh infections are being recorded every day, the official added.

- ▶ A total of 18 districts across the nation have showed the increasing tendency on Covid trajectory from last four weeks.
- ▶ It includes 10 districts from Kerala, 3 from Maharashtra, 2 from Manipur and one each from Arunachal, Meghalay and Mizoram.
- ▶ A total of 60 per cent Covid cases are being reported from Kerala and Maharashtra only.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The case trajectory of Covid-19 in India has registered substantial decline, from over four lakhs per day at the peak of the second wave to 30,549 on August 3, said Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry, Luv Agrawal, at a press conference here on Tuesday.

UP RECORDS 25 NEW COVID CASES IN 24 HOURS

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh has recorded just 25 new Covid cases across 17 districts in the past 24 hours. Ten districts in the state are already free from the pandemic with active cases touching zero. According to the health department release, the state has now 646 active cases with Mainpuri (52) and Kushinagar (50) accounting for the maximum burden. The release said that 56 districts in the state have 20 or fewer active cases. This includes 38 districts with less than five active cases.



Maharashtra (19.43 per cent) and Karnataka (5.94 per cent). Analysing the district-wise Covid data, Agrawal said that in total, 279 districts reported over 100 cases in the first week of June. However, after one month, such districts' numbers were confined to 107 and currently only 57 districts are reporting over 100 cases. Agrawal said that only these 18 districts contribute 47.5 per cent of daily Covid cases. The 10 districts of Kerala have reported around 40.6 per cent of Covid cases. India's active caseload has significantly declined and stands at 4 lakh currently. Kerala has over

1.65 lakh of active cases. In total nine states have over 10,000 active covid cases as of now. India continues to keep positive trends of recovery rate at 97.3 per cent. However, he

Scientists find drug cocktail effective against Delta, Beta variants

Singapore: A team of researchers here has found a combination of antiviral and anti-inflammatory drugs that can be used to treat Covid-19 patients with mild to moderate disease. The team from National University of Singapore (NUS) found that a combination of antiviral molnupiravir and anti-inflammatory baricitinib can be effective against the Beta and Delta variants of the virus, the Strait Times reported. The combination could strongly inhibit the SARS-CoV-2 virus in laboratory tests, making it suitable for further clinical evaluation. The molnupiravir-baricitinib combination was identified for possible treatment, the report said.

said that 44 districts have over 10 per cent of positivity rate. In total, 5 crore vaccine doses have been administered in the last five days, he added.

Kalonji may help in treatment for Covid-19 infection

Sydney: Australian researchers have found that seeds of the plant, Nigella sativa, better known as Kalonji, could be utilised in the treatment of Covid-19 infection. The flowering plant, native to north Africa and western Asia, has been used for centuries as a traditional remedy for multiple medical conditions, including inflammation and infections.



A team from the University of Technology in Sydney found an active ingredient of Nigella sativa can prevent the SARS-CoV-2, the virus leading to Covid-19, from causing a lung infection.

"There is growing evidence from modelling studies that thymoquinone, an active ingredient of Nigella sativa, more commonly known as the fennel flower, can stick to the Covid-19 virus spike protein and stop the virus from causing a lung infection," said lead author Kaneez Fatima Shad, Professor at the varsity. "It may also block the 'cytokine' storm that affects seriously ill patients who are hospitalised with Covid-19," Shad added.

CBSE class 10 results out, 99.04% students declared passed



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Tuesday declared the class 10 results. Students can check their results on CBSE's official website and Digilocker.

Thiruvananthapuram topped the country with pass percentage of 99.99 per cent followed by Bengaluru at 99.96 per cent. Chennai shared the third position at 99.94 per cent with Pune at 99.92 per cent, while Ajmer came in fourth with 99.88 per cent and Panchkula occupies the fifth position with 99.77 per cent. Patna came in sixth with 99.66 per cent, Bhubaneswar ranked seventh with 99.62 per cent, Bhopal at eighth position with 99.47 per cent and Chandigarh ninth with 99.46 per cent.

Due to the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown in different states of the country, the class 10 and 12 examinations were cancelled this year. Instead, the CBSE prepared the 2021 results of class 10 and 12 students on the basis of internal assessment.

As much as 98.19 per cent students in the Delhi region have passed the CBSE class 10 board exams. The pass percentage of foreign students is 99.92 per cent while all students of the Kendriya Vidyalayas have been declared successful.

Earlier on July 30, the CBSE had declared the results of class 12 students across the country. Students across the country can check their result by

Rahul Gandhi rides bicycle to Parliament to protest fuel hike

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday rode a bicycle to the parliament in protest of rise in fuel prices particularly petrol which has crossed Rs 100 per litre mark in various parts of the country.

Earlier in a show of unity, 15 opposition parties attended the breakfast meeting hosted by Rahul Gandhi at Constitution Club. During the meet Rahul Gandhi said, "the most important thing in my view is that we unite this force. The more this voice of the people is united, the more powerful this voice will become, it will be more difficult for BJP-RSS to suppress."

They also discussed the current political situation after the Pegasus snooping project was revealed. The parties which attended the meeting included -- Congress, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Shiv Sena, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Samajwadi Party, CPI-M, CPI, IUML, RSP, KCM, JMM, National Conference (NC), Trinamool Congress, DMK and LJD. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Bahujan Samaj Party, however, stayed away from the meeting. After the meeting, Rahul Gandhi also sent out a tweet saying, "One priority - our country, our people."



discussion on the Pegasus snooping row but the government says that after the IT Minister's statement only clarification can be sought. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi has termed it as a "non issue".

BSNL MERGER OR SATYAM TYPE FIRE SALE; WHAT NEXT FOR VODAFONE IDEA

New Delhi: A difficult decision awaits Vodafone Idea after one promoter, Kumar Manglam Birla offered to give up his stake.

The Modi government where the matter now rests will have to now take a tough call on a possible merger with BSNL which is already in financial problems or do a fire sale a la Satyam as Birla has already offered his equity but that is a long drawn out process.

The issue which is not clear is the Vodafone stance on Birla offering his equity as the other big stakeholder is Vodafone.

Till the final decision emerges there will be considerable uncertainty around Vodafone Idea and the ball is now in the government's court.

Kumar Manglam Birla, the chairman of Aditya Birla Group, has written to the Cabinet Secretary saying that he is ready to hand over his stake in Vodafone-Idea to any government entity.

UP elections will be lesson for BJP: Farmers' body



Team Absolute | Mathura

Protesting farmers are seriously considering voting against the ruling Uttar Pradesh government in next year's assembly polls to teach the BJP-led Centre a lesson, the Rashtriya Kisan Manch said on Tuesday.

"Farmers will settle scores with the anti-farmer BJP party in the forthcoming assembly elections in UP,"

said Shekhar Dixit, National President, Rashtriya Kisan Manch, while talking to reporters here. He said future course of action will be decided on Wednesday by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha at the ongoing 'Kisan Sansad'. On the basis of the next strategy, the agitation would be intensified, Dixit said. He questioned the propriety of the Centre to impose a farm law on farm-

ers, which in fact is "anti-farmer and pro-capitalist". The government should make public data, if any, of its pro-farmer development that it touts in parallel with the corridors/expressways of the country. Protesting farmers under the Rashtriya Kisan Manch will 'gherao' the UP Vidhan Sabha in Lucknow if the arrears of sugarcane growers is not paid in time, he said.

ARMY HELICOPTER CRASH: BOTH PILOTS SAFE



Jammu: Both pilots of the army helicopter that crashed on Tuesday in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district are safe, defence sources said.

Army's aviation ALH Dhruv helicopter that had taken off from Pathankot in Punjab crashed Tuesday morning into the Ranjit Sagar Dam. "Both the pilots are safe. The weapon system integrated helicopter had taken off from Pathankot and met with an accident during a routine sortie", defence sources said. The area of the Ranjit Sagar Dam where the crash occurred is in Kathua district of J&K. A rescue operation is already underway at the crash site, sources added.

PM to chair open debate on maritime security at UN Security Council

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually chair an open debate on maritime security at the United Nations Security Council on August 9, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Tuesday. It will be the first time that an Indian Prime Minister will preside over an open debate at the world body.



On August 1, India took over the rotating presidency for the month at the 15-nation UN Security Council, and on January 1, India began its two-year tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC. It is India's seventh term.

India has planned high-level engagements with the world community on key focus issues like maritime security, peacekeeping and counter-terrorism during the month of August. India has been in the forefront in helping friendly countries in pursuit of the country's 'Act East' policy and to enhance military cooperation with the friendly countries.

Yo Yo Honey Singh's wife accuses him of domestic violence, sex with multiple women

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Shalini Talwar, the wife of rapper and music composer Hirdesh Singh, popularly known as Yo Yo Honey Singh, filed a case of domestic violence against him at the Tis Hazari courts here on Tuesday.

In her 118-page complaint, Talwar has accused Honey Singh of engaging in extra-marital sex with various women. She has also provided details of the physical, verbal and emotional abuse that she had allegedly been subjected to by the rapper and his family. Honey Singh, his wife alleged in her complaint, "began having frequent casual sex with multiple women" when he was travelling and "to further his sexual intents and illicit relationships, never disclosed to the public ... that he was married". The rapper and Talwar



got married at a Delhi gurudwara in 2011. Talwar alleged Honey Singh kept trying to conceal his proclivities from the time they got married at a Delhi gurudwara in 2011. She accused him of engaging in substance abuse and even having an affair with a Punjabi movie actress. Taking cognizance of the com-

plaint, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Tania Singh issued a notice to Honey Singh to appear before her on August 28. The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate passed interim orders restraining the rapper from disposing of the property he jointly owned with his wife as well as her 'stridhan'.

Mizoram faces shortage of medicines, writes to Centre on blockade

AIZAWL | Agencies

The Mizoram Health Minister has urged Prime Minister, Union Home and Health Ministers to intervene as the state has been facing severe crisis of medicines including life saving and Covid-19 related drugs due to the "economic blockade" on the National Highway-306.

On Tuesday Mizora health minister said in Aizawl that the hilly state has been facing acute crisis of vital medicines and urged the center to intervene at the earliest to prevent any health crisis that may soon engulf Mizoram and

which would be beyond the control of anybody.

His letter detailing the medicine crisis due to the "economic blockade" on the National Highway-306, which connects the hilly state with the rest of the country via Assam.

Lalthangliana said that following the border dispute and clash on July 26, the Assam government on July 29 summoned all the transporters (in Guwahati) who have been operating between the two states to stop transporting any goods into Mizoram due to "security concerns".



GKPD ASKS CENTRE TO DISSOCIATE FROM MEENAKSHI LEKHI'S 'VICTIM SHAMING' REMARKS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Global Kashmiri Pandit Diaspora (GKPD) has called on the India government to disassociate itself from Union Minister Meenakshi Lekhi's provocative "victim shaming" remarks on Kashmiri Pandit genocide and their return and rehabilitation.

In a public programme on August 1, Lekhi made a series of statements which betrayed her complete abdication in the duty of care that the state owes its citizens generally and Kashmiri Pandits specifically, it said.

In seeking to project "normalcy" and equating their ethnic cleansing to a migration and putting the burden of the return of Kashmiri Pandits on individual members of the community, she has condoned genocide, it said. Her statements have invited a near unanimous condemnation within the Kashmiri Pandit community.

A GKPD statement said as a lawyer, Lekhi is well aware that under international law, the Indian government is liable for non-refoulement when the return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri



Pandits happens in their homeland. As the Minister of Culture, Lekhi should be taking ownership of her responsibility as to how to resurrect the 5000-year-old Kashmiri Hindu civilization which is being systematically eradicated. "As the Minister of State for External Affairs Ms. Lekhi should not be giving a clean chit to Pakistan and its proxies by her rhetoric of 'where is the problem?' when terrorist activities targeted the Kashmiri Pandits, killed over 1,600 innocent community members and these killings continue to this day. Insensitive statements such as 'Government is doing its bit...' when even after 31 years the Government still has not met the representatives of the Kashmiri Pandit community to address their core concerns of Justice, Restitution and Return will only be seen as political eye wash," it said.

The GKPD calls upon "Minister Lekhi to withdraw her ill-advised comments, and the Government of India to partner with the Kashmiri Pandit community to come up with a long term, equitable solution to Kashmiri Pandit genocide," it said.

Pak terrorist who escaped July encounter killed in J&K gunfight



SRINAGAR | Agencies

Pakistani LeT terrorist Babar Ali, who had escaped from Shokbaba encounter on July 24, was on Tuesday killed in a gunfight with security forces who had tracked him down to a forested area of Jammu and Kashmir's Bandipora, police said.

"On July 23/24, three terrorists of proscribed terror

oufit LeT, including Sharik Altaf (who had ex-filtrated in 2018), were killed in the Shokbaba encounter. However, terrorist Babar Ali had managed to escape from the said encounter site and was being continuously tracked rigorously thereafter. In furtherance of the tracking and after pinpointing his presence in Chandajji forest area today, a joint operation was launched by police, 26

Assam Rifles & CRPF in the said area," police said. Police said during the search operation, the hiding terrorist fired upon the search party, which was retaliated, leading to an encounter. In the ensuing gunfight, Babar Ali, a resident of Punjab's Pakistan province, was killed and his body was retrieved from the site.

Akali Dal-BSP alliance promises free power in Punjab



Chandigarh | Agencies

Seeking to woo voters ahead of the Punjab Assembly polls, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) President Sukhbir Badal on Tuesday announced providing free electricity up to 400 units per month to all households and waiving outstanding power dues of residential bills of 'blue' card holders.

The disconnected household elections connections will be restored, he said.

Over 1.44 crore blue card holders are getting subsidised atta-dal every month under the scheme in the state. Badal, who said his party is known

for fulfilling all pre-poll promises in the past, tried to woo the farmers by announcing reducing state taxes up to Rs 10 for every litre of diesel purchased for agricultural purposes. He also promised to provide the minimum support price for vegetables, fruits and milk. The state Assembly will pass a law to repeal the three farm laws of the Centre. To empower women, he said: "We will give 50 per cent reservation to women in government jobs. All women heads of blue card holder families will receive an honorary allowance of Rs 2,000 per month under Mata Khivi Ji Rasoi Seva Scheme."

PEGASUS ROW: EDITORS GUILD MOVES SC SEEKING PROBE INTO SNOOPING SCANDAL

New Delhi: The Editors Guild of India has moved the Supreme Court seeking an SIT probe into the alleged Pegasus snooping allegations and also a disclosure from the Centre on the alleged use of spyware for hacking and surveillance between 2017 and 2021. The journalists body also sought issuance of guidelines on surveillance on Indian citizens and safeguarding them from electronic surveillance, spying and hacking.

The plea said surveillance has a chilling effect on public actors holding the government accountable and also termed it unconstitutional and illegal, as surveillance impedes the free flow of ideas and information.

The plea said: "This has a severely detrimental impact on the ability of politicians and public officials to freely exercise their freedom of profession."

'Both heal patients': SC for same treatment to ayurvedic, allopathic doctors

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said the doctors, both under Ayush and the central health services (CHS), render service to patients and on this core aspect, there is nothing to distinguish between them as it held that ayurvedic doctors are also entitled to the benefit of enhanced superannuation age of 65 years (raised from 60 years), at par with allopathic doctors.

The North Delhi Municipal Corporation had argued before the top court that classification of Ayush doctors and doctors under the CHS in different categories is reasonable and permissible in law.

A bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Hrishikesh Roy said: "This however does not appeal to us and we are inclined to agree with the findings of the Tribunal and the Delhi High Court that the classification is discriminatory and unreasonable since doctors under both segments are performing the same function of treating and healing their patients."



It emphasised that the only difference is that Ayush doctors are using indigenous systems of medicine like ayurveda, unani, etc. and CHS doctors are using allopathy for tending to their patients.

"In our understanding, the mode of treatment by itself under the prevalent scheme of things, does not qualify as an intelligible differentia," said the bench, in its 19-page judgment.

It added that such unreasonable classification and discrimination based on it would surely be inconsis-

tent with Article 14 of the Constitution.

The bench said the municipal corporation not paying the ayurvedic doctors their salary and benefits, while their counterparts in CHS received salary and benefits in full, "must be seen as discrimination".

It emphasised that 'no work should go unpaid' should be the appropriate doctrine to be followed in these cases where the service rendered by the ayurvedic doctors have been productive both for the patients and also the

employer.

The top court said they must be paid their lawful remuneration, arrears and current salary, as the case may be. "The state cannot be allowed plead financial burden to deny salary for the legally serving doctors. Otherwise, it would violate their rights under Articles 14, 21 and 23 of the Constitution," it said.

It directed that doctors are entitled to their full salary arrears and the same is ordered to be disbursed, within 8 weeks from Tuesday, and any late payment will carry 6 per cent interest from the date of this order until the date of payment.

The top court judgment came on an appeal by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation against a Delhi High Court judgment which had upheld a Central Administrative Tribunal order holding that applicants, who were ayurvedic doctors under Ayush, are also entitled to the benefit of enhanced superannuation age of 65 years, like allopathic doctors.

7 held for killing 38 monkeys in Karnataka's Hassan

Hassan | Agencies

The forest department and police have arrested seven persons, including a woman in connection with the killing of 38 monkeys in the Hassan district.

The police said on Tuesday that all the arrested persons were monkey catchers and villagers had funded them to catch monkeys.

The accused have been identified as Ramu, Yashoda, Manja, Manje Gowda, Iyanganari, Srikanth and Ramanuja Iyengar. All of them have been sent to judicial custody.

The incident had taken place in the Chowdanahalli village on July 29. Miscreants had stuffed the monkeys in gunny bags and thrown them by the roadside.

The incident had come to light when the local youths, after finding the gunny bags lying on the roadside, opened them. Initially, the reports suggested that 30 monkeys were killed. Later on, it was confirmed that 38 monkeys were killed in the incident.

Taking suo motu cognisance of the incident, the High Court of Karnataka had ordered a PIL in the matter.

The forest department and police intensified investigations and arrested the accused persons



from the surrounding villages.

The investigations revealed that villagers of Udane after becoming wary of monkey menace had approached the accused persons asking them to help them to get rid of monkeys.

They had collected and paid Rs 80,000 to them. The accused fed biscuits, bread and other food items to the monkeys for a week. Then, they were trapped in a box. The accused stuffed them into

gunny bags and threw them by the roadside in a distant village.

The monkeys died due to suffocation and the post mortem report is awaited.

It is learnt that the villagers who hired the monkey catchers performed a special pooja ceremony at the local temple to wash away their sins as monkeys are worshipped and seen as lord Hanuman in the Hindu religion.

HC issues notice to B.S. Yediyurappa in corruption case

Bengaluru | Agencies

In a major setback to former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, the Karnataka High Court on Monday issued notice to him in connection with alleged corruption in a housing project.

A single judge bench of Justice S. Sunil Dutt Yadav also issued notice to Yediyurappa's son and BJP state Vice President B.Y. Vijayendra, former minister S.T. Somashekar, and others in connection with the case. Activist T.J. Abraham had approached the high court seeking inquiry, after a special court dismissed the case for want of sanction to prosecute as Yediyurappa held the Chief Minister's post and Somashekar was a minister. The allegations included receiving kickbacks from a contractor in a housing project launched by the Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA). The development comes even as Yediyurappa is trying hard to get cabinet berths for Vijayendra and his followers.



Militants kill 2 BSF jawans in Tripura, loot arms

Agartala | Agencies

Outlawed extremists gunned down two Border Security Force (BSF) personnel including a sub-inspector rank official and looted their sophisticated arms in Tripura on Tuesday, police said.

A police official in Agartala said that during patrolling, the suspected National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) militants attacked the BSF troopers at Manikpur tribal village leading to a fierce encounter in which two paramilitary personnel were killed on the spot.

The martyred BSF men include sub-inspector Bhuru Singh and constable Raj Kumar. The tribal guerrillas have taken away two sophisticated arms of the slain BSF jawans before they fled from the area, which is close to India-Bangladesh border under Dhalai district in northern Tripura.

BSF official said that as per the blood stains available at the spot, militants have



reportedly sustained some injuries. "Both our martyrs have fought valiantly before succumbing to their injuries. Massive search operation has been launched in the area to nab the militants," the BSF official said.

Senior BSF and police officials have rushed to the spot, 150 km north of Agartala. Further details of the incidents are awaited.

FOUR, INCLUDING PRIEST, HELD FOR RAPE & MURDER OF 9-YR-OLD IN DELHI

New Delhi: Delhi Police have arrested four persons on charges of raping and killing a nine-year-old girl and then cremating the body at a village crematorium near Delhi Cantonment on Sunday evening, the police said on Monday. The four accused persons, including a priest, allegedly cremated the body of the girl without her parents' consent or informing the police. The matter surfaced after the victim's family staged a protest along with the local people on Sunday night. The police said that the accused persons told the victim's mother that the child was electrocuted to death. They even told the girl's family members that if matter reaches the police, the body will be sent for autopsy, and the doctors will take out her vital organs and sell them. The four arrested persons have been identified as Radhey Shyam, the 55-year-old priest of the crematorium, and Salim, Laxmi Narayan and Kuldeep, said Ingit Pratap Singh, DCP, South West Delhi. According to the DCP, at around 5.30 pm on Sunday, the girl, who lived with her parents near the crematorium, went to fetch water from the water cooler of the crematorium. At around 6 pm, the priest and the three men known to the family called the girl's mother and showed her the girl's body. They claimed that the girl died of electrocution while having water from the cooler. They also showed burn marks on her wrist and elbow, claiming that her lips had turned blue due to the shock. The Delhi Police have registered a case under Sections 302, 376 and 506 of the Indian Penal Code, along with the relevant Sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the SC/ST Act.

Ambulance stuck during President's visit, injured carried on stretcher

CHENNAI | Agencies

After the main road in Rajiv Gandhi Salai and its arterial roads were blocked for the visit of President, Ram Nath Kovind, an injured worker was carried on stretcher by paramedics and motorists. The ambulance in which he was taken from the TIDEL park site where he suffered the injury to the VHS hospital which is a kilometer away, could not overcome the roadblock due to piling up of vehicles.

The incident which happened on Monday led to reactions on social media with several users blaming the administration for not providing proper inputs to the people on the VVIP visit and the duration of the roadblock.

Pushpa Subramanian, a software professional who used to take the Rajiv Gandhi Salai was stuck in the traffic as



roads were blocked. While speaking to IANS, Pushpa said, "We can understand the security required for a VVIP visit but the police have not informed the public properly so that we could have planned our journey. It is learnt that the roads were blocked since the President left Raj Bhavan and was kept like that till he returned after a one and hour-long programme at the Legislative assembly." Most arterial roads and interior roads had huge pile-up of vehicles as city police had stopped vehicular movement on Sardar Patel road citing security reasons.



Chouhan reviews excessive rains and floods from Situation Room

HEAVY RAINS AND FLOODS AFFECT 1171 VILLAGES, 1600 PEOPLE RESCUED: CM

No need to pay heed to rumours, all dams safe

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that about 1171 villages in Shivpuri, Sheopur, Datia, Gwalior, Bhind and Rewa have been affected due to excessive rains and floods. A total of 200 villages are submerged in water. SDRF, NDRF teams have rescued about 1600 people and shifted them to safer places. Armed forces have been called. Five Air Force helicopters took off from Gwalior this morning. They went for 8 miles but could not land for rescue due to bad weather. Chouhan has appealed to the people of the affected villages to remain alert. We are worried about you. Instructions have been given to arrange relief camps and food. Do not pay heed to rumours. All dams are safe, have confidence. The government is making every effort. People of the affected areas should remain motivated. Chief Minister was addressing the media after observing and reviewing the situation of floods and excessive rainfall from the Situation Room at Mantralaya.

Chouhan said that as soon as the weather improves, helicopters will again leave for relief and rescue work. About 22 villages in Shivpuri and Sheopur particularly, are submerged in water. Yesterday 11 people were rescued by the Air Force. 70 teams of SDRF and 3 teams of



NDRF are engaged in rescue operations. The central government has been requested to send more teams.

Chouhan said that excessive rains and floods have resulted in a dire situation. Shivpuri and Sheopur received 800 mm of rain in two days. Flood situation has been created due to unexpected rains. It felt like the clouds had burst. Boats are unable to sail due to the flow of water. Three people who were stuck on a tree in Beechi village of Shivpuri, have been rescued. Villages have a deserted look. A priest is stuck on the roof of the temple. We are worrying about them and making arrangements for food and relief. We are making efforts to pacify people. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that me

and my ministers are constantly monitoring the situation.

Chouhan said that discussions have been held with Sehrawat of Air Force. Collectors of the affected districts Shivpuri, Datia, Gwalior, Ashoknagar are constantly in touch. Water was released due to excess water in Madikheda Dam. Earlier, 12 thousand 500 cusecs of water was being released from the dam, now it has been reduced to 10 thousand 500 cusecs. Villagers affected by the release of water from the dam have been alerted. The effect of rain has also reduced. Now the situation is likely to improve soon.

Chouhan said that Home Minister Narottam Mishra, Water Resources Minister Shri Tulsi Silavat and Revenue Minister Govind Singh

Rajput are monitoring the situation closely. Minister Yashodhara Rajee Scindia and Minister-in-Charge of Shivpuri, Mahendra Singh Sisodia are coordinating relief and rescue operations from Shivpuri Control Room. Chouhan held an emergency meeting from the Situation Room in Mantralaya regarding the floods in Gwalior-Chambal division. The meeting was attended by the concerned Minister, Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bais, DGP Vivek Johri and high administrative official of SDRF, NDRF and Air Force. Senior officials of the district apprised the VC about the current situation. In the meeting, instructions were given to provide all possible help to the flood affected districts from Bhopal.

Chief Minister Chouhan addressed before the meeting of the Cabinet

PM Modi will address Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana programme: CM

- Event will be held at 25 thousand 435 fair price shops
- Ministers and officers of other states will also participate
- MPs Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana programme will become a paradigm in the country



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana programme to be organised in the state on August 7 is an ambitious programme of the state government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the programme. Ministers and officers of other states are coming to Madhya Pradesh to participate in the programme. Just as the corona management and vaccination campaign of the state by the Crisis Management Committees has been a topic of discussion in the whole country, similarly the Annotsav being organised under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana has also become a topic of discussion in the whole country. Efforts are being made that Annotsav should become an example in the

country. Chouhan was addressing the ministers before the meeting of the Cabinet. The meeting of the Council of Ministers began with the recitation of Vande-Martam. Chief Minister informed the ministers about the latest status regarding excessive rainfall, flood and corona infection in the state.

Chouhan said that Annotsav would be organised on August 7 at all 25 thousand 435 fair price shops in the state. Ration material will be distributed in bags to 100 beneficiaries at each shop. This event should be ensured by following the precautions of Covid-19. A nodal officer should be appointed for each shop.

Chouhan informed that the Annotsav programme on August 7 will commence at 10 AM and OM Modi will virtually join the program at 11 A.M. The general public will also be connected to the programme through electronic

and social media along with the beneficiaries present at all the fair price shops. The ministers in charge should ensure necessary coordination for the preparations of the programme in their districts.

Chouhan said that there is a need for constant vigilance in the state regarding corona infection. Cases are increasing in Sagar division, it is a matter of concern. It was informed in the presentation that there are 139 active cases in the state. Corona cases are present in 9 districts of the state namely Sagar, Bhopal, Damoh, Indore, Rajgarh, Balaghat, Chhatrapur, Jabalpur and Satna. There is no case in the remaining 43 districts. 70 to 75 thousand tests are being done daily in the state. The vaccination campaign is continuing. Two crore 78 lakh people in the age group above 18 years have been given the first dose and 53 lakh persons have been given the second dose.

Woman Alleges Rape By Ward Boy In Government Hospital: Police

■ The incident took place at the Maharaja Yeshwantrao Hospital (MYH) on July 28 and an FIR was registered against the 32-year-old accused on Monday night, the police said.

Team Absolute | Indore

A 50-year-old woman patient was allegedly raped by a ward boy at a government hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place at the Maharaja Yeshwantrao Hospital (MYH) on July 28 and an FIR was registered

against the 32-year-old accused on Monday night, Sanyogitaganj police station in-charge Rajiv Tripathi said. The accused is on the run.

The woman, a resident of neighbouring Dhar district, had come to the MYH for dialysis on July 28 when the ward boy allegedly took her to an isolated room for changing clothes and committed the offence, the official said. When she resisted, the accused raised the fear of social stigma to dissuade her from approaching police and got her admitted to a private ward of the hospital for two days. Later, the ward boy gave ? 1,000 to the woman and sent her back home, the official said. Two days later, the woman informed about the alleged incident to media and a video of the same surfaced on social media.

Heavy Rains Trigger Floods, Rescue Operations On

■ Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, assured all possible help to flood-hit Madhya Pradesh, said Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

No respite from torrential rain seems likely in Madhya Pradesh's worst-hit Gwalior-Chambal region in the next 24 hours. The Met department has sounded a red alert for Shivpuri, Sheopur, Guna and two other districts, besides orange alert for nine and yellow alert for other eight districts.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured help to Madhya Pradesh, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan tweeted. "PM Modi has assured all possible help to Madhya Pradesh in this time of crisis, for which I am deeply grateful to him."

Chouhan held a detailed discussion over the telephone with the PM.

"He (PM Modi) has been apprised about the flood situation in Madhya Pradesh and



the ongoing rescue operation. Due to the situation getting worse, I have also discussed with him about taking help from the Indian Army in the flood-hit areas," he added.

Chouhan said, "We have asked for four columns of the army so that they are able to rescue the people who are stranded due to the floods. SDRF team is doing good work. Two ministers are in Shivpuri and are monitoring the situation and are in talks with me. One column of army is of 80 persons. They are sending one column each for four dis-

tricts. From Jhansi, they are mobilising for Gwalior and Datia and from Babena (UP) for Shivpuri and Sheopur."

The Indian Air Force's three ALH and B-17 helicopters have taken off from Gwalior and two more B-17 helicopters will fly shortly for rescue operations in flood-hit districts of Gwalior-Chambal region. Three villagers stuck on trees in Shivpuri have been rescued.

Five trains have been cancelled partially or are being run through diverted route (via Bina) by West Central Railway's Bhopal

Division as the rail tracks are submerged in rain and flood water between Shivpuri and Mahona stations of Guna-Gwalior section.

Five IAF teams have been waiting for the weather to improve. Mr Chouhan has requested the IAF teams to accord priority in rescuing those taking shelter on trees in Shivpuri district's Bichi village since last night.

The chief minister also chaired an emergency meeting in Bhopal to take stock of rain and flood situation of Gwalior-Chambal region. According to the latest updates, the authorities informed the chief minister that about 1,171 villages are affected due to heavy rains and floods in Parvati, Kuno and Sindh rivers in Shivpuri, Sheopur, Datia and Gwalior district. So far, 1,600 people have been rescued from flood hit areas of Gwalior-Chambal region. "I'll soon visit the flood hit areas," informed Chouhan. Over 200 villages in Shivpuri and Sheopur districts are badly hit by heavy rains and floods. Shivpuri district reported 470 mm rainfall in last 24 hours and 798 mm rain in 48 hours. 100 people rescued from 22 villages of the district in morning. Efforts underway to rescue those taking shelter on trees in Dongar and Bichi villages.

"KATH BANAM," A string instrument is IGRMS's exhibit of the month

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the popular museum series 'Exhibit of the Month' of Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, a traditional object is displayed in the appearance for a whole month. The exhibit for the month of August, 2021 - "KATH BANAM" (A string instrument) from Village Ghosaldanga, Bishnubati, Birbhum, West Bengal, is on display in the indoor exhibition building - Veethi Sankul. The 'exhibit of the month' was inaugurated by PK Mishra (Director, IGRMS), and renowned people present on this occasion. This exhibit of the month had been collected and composed by Soma Kiro, Assistant Curator.

About the exhibit displayed in the exhibition Soma Kiro, Assistant Curator told that Banam is a bowed monochord wooden fiddle. This is one of the ancient musical instruments of the Santhal tribe. It is carved out of a single piece of Shisham wood in which lower part is hollowed and covered with lizard skin. The upper portion of the instrument is carved with an image of a human face that adorns a crown like decoration depicting human miniatures on which four human figures are shown in standing posture indicating the Guru and his disciples. The body of instrument is designed with linings. This traditional Banam is played with the bow popularly known as Retawak. The notes are produced by gentle pressing of the fingers of the left hand on the string of the instrument.

Typologically three types of Banam are found among the Santhals. 'Dhodro-Banam' is the largest Banam whereas Reta Banam/Hukka Banam, are made of coconut shell and bamboo. The third one is Pheton Banam which is a plucked instrument rather than bowed monochord.

Banam and its Craftsmanship - Among the Santhals Banam making is a highly skilled craftsmanship. The making of Banam is declining as the old skilled craftsmen are unable to transmit their skills to younger generation. The Banams are now-a-days made of wood of variety of trees like Giloj, Shisham, Saptaparni and Gamar. To complete a Banam the

craftsman must make a long journey because mostly it is not their professional work, but they craft it during their leisure time. After collecting the desired wood the craftsman prepares it in desired shape and size as per his creative thoughts by using different types of carpentry tools like adze, axe, chisel, etc. Later on it is smoothened and polished. Different types of carvings can be seen in the Banam like human face, animals, birds, dancing figures and abstract figure of Bonga etc. Sometimes the whole structure of a Banam is carved like a human figure. The hollowed portion is covered with Lizard/animal skin and finally a string mostly made of palm fibre is tied from its lower end to the head portion and tight-

ened through wooden pegs. The Banam is played through a stringed bow commonly known as Retawak.

Origin Myth of Banam- Among the Santhals there are various stories and myths prevalent on the origin of the Banam which are mostly related to the Gods and Goddesses. Among these a highly symbolic origin myth of Banam is the story of five brothers and one sister. The story reveals that the five brothers, killed their only sister, and cooked her flesh to make a delicious food. The youngest brother saddened over the killing of his only sister. So, he buried his share of flesh, in the backyard of their house. Over the years, a tree grew up from that place. Passing by that tree a 'Koimar-Jugi', a clan member, who's profession was singing and begging got attracted to the tree. He cut a branch and made a Banam out of it. Then he started to sing and beg by playing the Banam. One day the youngest brother heard the melodious tune of it, which resembled the sweet voice of his sister. He took that Banam, from Jugi, and kept with him. This is believed to be the first Banam of the Santhals. Since then they started to make Banam.

Socio-cultural Significance- The Banam is important in Santhal culture not only as a musical instrument but also because of decorative motives and sculptural forms embodied in it. These motives and forms speak about the significance of the Santhal society and culture. Traditionally the Banam makers carve the sign and symbols of Gods and Goddesses followed by their ancestral remembrance. Some makers depict the abstract image of their guru or spiritual guide which reminds them of their ancestors and spiritual way of life.

The women figure symbolises the music as Santhal believes that the music begins from the women. The face of a human indicates the power which comes from the mouth of human being. The dancing figures describe their fairs and festivals. The Banam thus helps to preserve the Santhal musical traditions as well as the community's aesthetics, ancestral myths and memories which are passed on through successive generations.

CM PLANTS PEEPAL SAPLING

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a Peepal sapling in Smart City Park today. Chouhan plants saplings every day in fulfilment of his resolve. Peepal is a shady tree. It purifies the environment. It also has religious and Ayurvedic significance. In view of the positive energy of this tree, the sages and Mahatmas meditated sitting under the Peepal tree and acquired knowledge. According to natural science, Peepal tree releases oxygen day and night which is important for our environment. Apart from this, Peepal tree is also called Akshay tree because this tree is never without leaves. Meaning it does not shed all leaves together. Leaves keep falling and new ones keep coming. Due to this quality of Peepal, it is said to be a symbol of life-death cycle.



CM APPRISES PM OF EXCESSIVE RAINFALL AND FLOODS SITUATION IN STATE

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan apprised the Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the situation of excessive rainfall and floods in the state. Chouhan informed Prime Minister Modi over phone that due to continuous rainfall in Gwalior-Chambal region of the state, a disastrous situation is prevailing. Chief Minister Chouhan gave information about the ongoing rescue operations in the state and also discussed about the help of the Army in the flood-affected areas. Prime Minister Modi has assured of all possible assistance by the Centre government.

CM INFORMED DEFENSE MINISTER ABOUT EXCESSIVE RAINFALL IN STATE

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan over phone discussion with Defense Minister Rajnath Singh apprised him about the grim flood situation in some districts of Madhya Pradesh due to excessive rainfall during this season. Chouhan thanked Defense Minister for sending NDRF and Air Force and also requested to send Army at the hour of need. Defense Minister assured Chief Minister that all possible help would be extended to Madhya Pradesh.



229 NEW COVID-19 CASES REPORTED IN THANE, 8 MORE DEATHS



Mumbai: Thane has reported 229 new coronavirus cases, raising the infection count in the district to 5,45,280, an official said on Tuesday. Thane has reported 229 new coronavirus cases, raising the infection count in the Maharashtra district to 5,45,280, an official said on Tuesday. These new cases were recorded on Monday, he said. The virus also claimed the lives of eight more people, which took the death toll in the district to 11,047, he said, adding that the COVID-19 mortality rate in Thane stood at 2.02 per cent. In neighbouring Palghar district, the COVID-19 case count has gone up to 1,33,410, while the death toll has reached 3,203, another official said.

Governor trying to create two power centres: NCP

The senior NCP minister claimed the governor is not only touring the state but also holding meetings with district collectors and seeking information about various government works.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra cabinet minister Nawab Malik on Tuesday criticised Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, saying he is trying to create two power centres in the state, remarks that reflect another episode in the tussle between the Shiv Sena-led ruling coalition and the Raj Bhavan. Malik said Koshyari inaugurated some projects without communicating about them to the state government. Speaking to reporters here, he said, "The Maharashtra governor is trying to create two power centres in the state, where powers are delegated to chief minister after he takes oath. He has also gone ahead with inauguration of some



state projects without communicating about them to the state government." The senior NCP minister claimed the governor is not only touring the state but also holding meetings with district collectors and seeking information about various government works. "If he needs to know something, he can always write to the chief secretary for the same," said Malik, whose party NCP is a key constituent of the Maha Vikas Aghadi government. In the past too, the MVA government and the Governor have clashed on a number of issues, including nomination of members to the Maharashtra Legislature Council and opening of places of worship during the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

'Official work': Pawar says amid speculation over meeting with Shah

Team Absolute | New Delhi

NCP supremo Sharad Pawar on Tuesday met Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi, sparking off speculations. Pawar himself sought to clear the air, terming it an official meet. "Had a brief meeting with Union Co-operation Minister Shri Amit Shah in New Delhi today along with Shri Jaiprakash Dandegaonkar, President of NCFCS (National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd) & Prakash Naiknavre to discuss issues faced by the sugar co-operative sector," he said. The meeting gained significance as it came on the same day as Pawar's daughter Supriya Stule attended the breakfast meeting of opposition leaders hosted by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. The Congress and the Shiv Sena, who are the Nationalist Congress Party's allies in the Maharashtra, however, dismissed any political significance of the meeting. The meeting came a day after Shiv Sainiks went on a rampage, tearing down a brand new hoarding erected by the Adani Airport Holding Ltd (AAHL) outside Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) to protest against what they alleged was AAHL's unilateral move to abruptly 'change' the name of CSMIA and replace it with the Adani Group brand name. Pawar has been meeting the ruling party leaders and ahead of monsoon session on July 17, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and talked for about 50 minutes, the Prime Minister's Office said.

Cong demands resuming local trains for vaccinated people

Covid in Maharashtra:

"Local trains are a lifeline for several commuters in Mumbai. Due to the pandemic-induced lockdown, many people are already struggling with earning their livelihood, and with the halt in the local train service, they are unable to travel to their workplace," Mumbai congress chief Bhai Jagtap said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As the Maharashtra government on Monday announced ease in the ongoing Covid restrictions in 22 districts of the state, Mumbai Congress chief Bhai Jagtap demanded that the local train service should at least restart for those inoculated with both doses of Covid-19 vaccine. "Local trains are a lifeline for several commuters in Mumbai. Due to the pandemic-induced lockdown, many people are already struggling with earning their livelihood, and with the halt in the local train service, they are unable to travel to their workplace. Now as the num-

ber of positive cases is decreasing, the government must consider restarting local trains of those who have taken two doses of Covid vaccine," Jagtap said. Local trains being the primary and the most convenient mode of transport in Mumbai and its suburban area, several train commuters associations and the general public are demanding restarting of the service for all. During the second wave of Covid-19, the Maharashtra government had put restrictions on local train travel fearing the spread of the virus. Currently, the local trains are running only for staff related to essential services.

FLOOD RELIEF: MAHA APPROVES RS 11,500 CR AID PACKAGE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday announced the much-anticipated relief package of Rs 11,500 crore for emergency relief, repairs and long-term rehabilitation measures for the victims of the recent devastating floods which hit 9 districts last month. The decision was taken at a crucial cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray in the presence of Deputy CM Ajit Pawar and ministers of the three allies -- Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress, said Relief & Rehabilitation Minister Vijay Wadetiwar. As an immediate measure, the government will provide Rs 10,000 for all affected families, Rs 1.50-lakh for those who have lost their houses completely, he said. Besides, the government will extend Rs 50,000 to all shopkeepers



who have suffered damage, and streetside vendors will be given aid of Rs 10,000 for losses, said Wadetiwar. Minorities Affairs Minister Nawab Malik said that around 4 lakh hectares agriculture lands have been completely ravaged in the flood and 20 per cent of the balance work of recording panchnams is still underway. However, all the affected people will be provided sufficient aid to help them rebuild their lives and he urged the Centre to come forward and help the state grappling with the huge crisis.

India hosts international conference on clouds and precipitation

Team Absolute | Pune

Cloud seeding is being considered in many countries but science-based guidelines are needed for effective planning and ensuring best use of resources, Earth Sciences and Science and Technology Secretary, Prof Ashutosh Sharma said on Monday. "The recent cloud aerosol interaction and precipitation enhancement experiment programme has successfully completed and results are being evaluated and protocols are being formulated. With this, India will be among the selective countries to have conducted such an experiment," Sharma said at the virtual inauguration of the 18th International Conference on Cloud and Precipitation (ICCP) in Pune. The Indian Institute of Tropical

Meteorology (IITM), Pune, is hosting the 18th ICCP conference that is happening for the first time in Asia. Described as the 'Olympics of Cloud Physics', the ICCP is conducted every four years, by the ICCP Commission, an international body of scientists and students. More than 500 scientists working in cloud and related sciences are participating in the conference. Almost 25 per cent of the papers that would be presented at the conference will be by Indian scientists. Explaining the importance of and unpredictability of the Indian



monsoon, India Meteorological Department's Director General, Meteorology, Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said: "Apart from monsoon, India also experiences different characteristics of the clouds and hence precipitation in other seasons." For example, NE Indian states experience floods in the month of April or May because of intense convective clouds leading to heavy downpour, which leads to lot of floods and landslides. Similarly, during winter season, India experiences western disturbances, which passes through the western and north-western parts of the country, and causes different forms of precipitations like hailstorm and snow-

storms apart from rainfall, he said. Stating that lightning is one of the severest killers, claiming 2000-3000 people every year, Mahapatra said: "Therefore cloud physics and integration modelling is still challenging and I hope this conference will help us fine tune our approach and to come out with solutions." Earlier, setting the tone for inauguration, IITM scientist Dr Thara Prabhakaran at Pune said: "What happens at a cloud droplet level or inside a cloud has considerable implication on weather and climate forecast. And therefore we need better observations and detailed understanding of the basic processes to improve our models." "The take home message from the conference would be invaluable. Forecast of monsoon is a major problem for all models.

Mumbai logs sharpest hike in data centre capacity in Asia Pacific

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai has recorded the sharpest increase in data centre capacity in the Asia Pacific region, adding 56MW in the first quarter this year, a report showed on Tuesday. Mumbai now has total data centre capacity at 753MW. The digital push from the pandemic has resulted in acceleration of data centre supply in Mumbai. Pandemic influenced push for digital services resulted into an acceleration of new supply in 2020 with an additional 252MW or 50 per cent added to its development pipeline, according to international property consultants Knight Frank. This marked up the total

supply to 697MW in the year 2020. Between 2016 and 2019, Mumbai's IT power capacity increased from 148MW to 456MW, said the report published in partnership with data centre research and analytics platform DC Byte. "Mumbai is among the better-established data centre hubs in the APAC region. The city's location has a strategic importance as a landing destination for undersea data-cables connecting the east and west," said Shishir Bajjal, Chairman and Managing Director at Knight Frank India. "The rise of emerging markets in APAC has brought Mumbai under the focus of multiple international operators, who wish to establish

themselves in this region," he added. Expansion in other markets in India, notably Chennai, is also gaining attention. In Asia Pacific markets, total supply increased by about 200MW in Q1 2021, reflecting a similar pace to 2020 take up -- recorded just over 800MW, making a total supply of 5800MW across the region. "Cloud companies are continuing to develop a substantial cloud network in Mumbai, which is aided by an ongoing stream of demand. This has facilitated the creation of multiple new hyper-wholesale colocation facilities. The increased supply can provide plenty of opportunity for creating a rise in take-up in the near future," the report noted.

Maharashtra govt's unlocking order upsets hospitality industry, retailers happy

The Maharashtra government on Monday revised the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in the state. While the new order has left the restaurant and hotel industry in shock, the retailers seem to be happy with the same

Team Absolute | Mumbai

With no relief given by the Maharashtra government in its unlocking order, the hospitality industry is unhappy with the new rules on easing of curbs in the state. As the hospitality industry has suffered huge losses due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Pradeep Shetty, Senior Vice President, Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) said that the government's decision on not giving major relief to the industry has shocked them. "In the first wave of the pandemic, the industry was closed for 11 months and four months during the second wave. This communication from the government for the hospitality industry has come as a shock to us. There is no reason for imposing restrictions on restaurant timings. If it is going to continue, then the least the state government needs to do is waive the applicable statutory charges for restaurants," Pradeep Shetty said. He added that there are more than 25 districts in the state with a positivity rate of less than 1 per cent, while in Nagpur, it is less than 0.5 per cent. Despite this, the state government has imposed level 3 restrictions in these districts, he asserted. Drawing comparisons from



the neighbouring states, Pradeep Shetty stressed that the industry needed a roadmap for its functioning in order to make informed decisions as it was not receiving any help from the government. "Most of Maharashtra's neighbouring states have eased the lockdowns. Gujarat has allowed the commerce industry to remain open till 10 pm, permitted social gatherings of up to 400 people and has also offered financial relief to businesses. Kerala, too, has announced industry-specific relief, that is not collecting the statutory levies from its businesses apart from several relief measures to support its hospitality industry. Here, we neither

have the permission to conduct business nor are we being compensated," he remarked. In its latest order released on Monday, the Maharashtra government allowed ease of restrictions in 25 districts of the state. In Mumbai, the hotels and restaurants are to remain open till 4 pm even on weekends. Earlier, they were allowed to operate till 4pm only on weekdays. The restaurant industry has been demanding relaxation in operating hours, citing losses in crores and job losses owing to the closure during the pandemic. On the other hand, the ease of restrictions has come as a major sigh

of relief for the retailers. Now, non-essential shops can remain open till 10 pm. Viren Shah, President, Federation of Retail Traders Welfare Association (FRTWA) said that the development is one of the finest news that they have heard during the pandemic. "From Tuesday, all non-essential shops can remain open in Mumbai till 10 pm. We thank the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) commissioner and the Disaster Management Committee. We ensured that our staff got fully vaccinated and shopkeepers will follow Covid appropriate behaviour to control the spread of the virus," he said.

SOME CURBS GONE, MUMBAI LOCAL TRAINS BAR COMMONER FOR 17TH MONTH

Mumbai: Partially easing the lockdown restrictions, the Maharashtra government has permitted a few additional activities in 22 districts, but the remaining 14 continue under Level-3 curbs as before, including the Mumbai suburban trains which remain out of bounds for common commuters for the 17th consecutive month, an official announcement said here on Monday. The 14 districts are: Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara, Ahmednagar, Pune, Solapur, Beed, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Palghar, Thane, Mumbai and Mumbai Suburban district. For Mumbai, Mumbai Suburban district, Thane, Satara, Ahmednagar and Sindhudurg districts, considering the higher number of positive cases and fresh emerging cases, the local Disaster Management Authority will take the decision to impose effective restrictions. The lifeline of Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) - the suburban trains - will still not permit ordinary commuters, affecting the people in Palghar, Thane, Raigad and Mumbai, who have been struggling since the past 17 months under the pandemic related restrictions.

State launches doorstep survey after first Zika virus case found in Pune

Chikungunya, dengue cases detected, too; Centre sends high-level team to Maharashtra to support state authorities



Team Absolute | Pune

In Pune's Belsarvillage, where a 50-year-old woman was found infected with the Zika virus, six persons have been found to be infected with chikungunya and one with dengue. They are currently undergoing treatment. The district health department in Purandar, in a collaboration with the community, has launched house-to-house surveys and an awareness campaign in 10 villages. Meanwhile, the Union Health Ministry has sent a multidisciplinary team to Maharashtra to monitor the situation and support the state authorities in the management of Zika virus cases. Maharashtra state surveillance officer Dr Pradeep Awate told the Free Press Journal, "The Central team is expected to visit Belsar either on Tuesday or Wednesday. They will be informed about

the status and how the health department, with the administration and villagers, is containing the mosquito population by chemical, biological and personal protection. Community participation and health education is being undertaken simultaneously," he said. Dr Awate said eight to 10 adjoining villages have a population of 10,000 residents. So far, they have covered 3,000 during the ongoing house-to-house survey. A government medical team visited Belsar on Saturday and met the sarpanch and gram panchayat members and instructed them about preventive measures, the health department said. Zika virus spreads through the bite of the aedes aegypti mosquito and most patients do not have symptoms. Typical symptoms include fever, body ache and conjunctivitis, and pregnant women should be more careful, said Dr Awate.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Indian homes are under cyber attack

Nearly one third (28.22 per cent) of PC home users in India are at high risk of cyber attacks, according to a report by digital security and privacy provider Avast. Avast's latest Global PC Risk Report also looked into the possibility of users facing advanced threats -- defined as more sophisticated or threats never seen before, designed to bypass common protection technologies included in security software, such as signatures, heuristics, emulators, URL filtering, and email scanning. For this type of threat, Indian home users have a 5.78 per cent risk ratio, which is higher than the global average. Home users around the world have a 29.39 per cent chance of encountering any type of PC malware, which represents an increase of around 5 per cent compared to the previous year. Geographies with more conflictive socio-political situations, such as the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe, seem to be facing more risk in the online world as well. "The risk ratio has increased worldwide for all malware attacks, and we can see that India is no exception. In the pandemic, the internet has been kind of a 'life saver' for many, empowering them to stay connected with loved ones during the lockdown, to attend virtual workout sessions, get together, classes, and work remotely," said Michal Salat, Director of Threat Intelligence at Avast, in a statement. "But cybercriminals have also taken notice of this, and so we have seen a variety of tailored campaigns taking advantage of increased online activities, such as Covid-19 related attacks, sextortion campaigns, spyware, and ransomware," Salat added. The data included in this report is collected from Avast's threat detection network, and represents a data snapshot, constructed with the threats Avast protected its PC users between March 16 and April 14, 2021.

THE WORRISOME CHINESE SPACE PROGRAMME

Asad Mirza

Most countries around the world whether big or small, developed or developing, pursue a space programme of their own or in collaboration with advanced countries. Most aspects of these programmes are in the public domain and are targeted towards scientific and human advancement. The spectre of a space war between the US and Russia came to an end with signing of the START Treaty in 1991 between the two. However, China has emerged as a country, which pursues a very secretive space programme and may force the mankind in a space war and global dominance. There is enough evidence to prove that China's space programme is targeted to move ahead and use space to dominate not only the US but also the rest of the planet. In terms of the US national security, and for the rest of the world also, China's space capabilities have been defined as one of the most significant future threats to the global peace. China's plans were outlined very clearly when shortly after becoming president in March 2013, Xi Jinping made his ambitions for China's space power very clear. "Developing the space program and turning the country into a space power is the space dream that we have continuously pursued", he said. "The space dream is part of the dream to make China stronger." China's aim is to become the world's leading space power by 2045. In a 2017 editorial, China Daily had said: "China will become an all-round world-leading country in space equipment and technology. By 2045, it will be able to carry out man-computer coordinated space exploration on a large scale." US concerns The advances and secret dimension of the Chinese space programme have been duly noted and concerns have been raised by the United States in this regard. The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission in its 2019 Annual Report to Congress stated that "China is taking steps to establish a command-



ing position in the commercial launch and satellite sectors relying in part on aggressive state-backed financing that western market-driven companies cannot match". US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, in his written testimony prior to his confirmation hearing in January 2021, declared that Chinese and Russian space activities present serious and growing threats to American national security interests. Chinese and Russian military doctrines also indicate that they view space as critical to modern warfare and consider the use of counter-space capabilities as both a means of reducing US military effectiveness and for winning future wars. A Pentagon report in 2020 stated that the PRC continues to strengthen its military space capabilities, despite its public stance against the weaponisation of space.... the PRC is developing electronic warfare capabilities such as satellite jammers.... and China probably intends to pursue additional anti-satellite weapons capable of destroying satellites. Chinese space programme A significant aspect of China's space initiative is the Beidou Navigation Satellite system (BDS), a global navigation satellite system that provides positioning, navigation and timing, in addition to data communication. The Chinese military has created the programme in order not to be dependent on the US-controlled GPS network. A report by the Jamestown Foundation says: "In recent years, the PRC has actively sought to promote the image of Beidou as a civilian-led programme intended primarily

for commercial and scientific purposes, however, the program is under overall military direction, with the People's Liberation Army in charge of Beidou's development." Beidou can also be termed as China's "Space Silk Road", which expands China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its land-based and sea-based versions to space. Beidou makes countries participating in the BRI, dependent on China for precision navigation and other space based services. Malcolm Davis of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute wrote in 2017 that, "Chinese provision of satellite communications, weather monitoring and earth observation add to this vision for a Space Silk Road that overarches and underpins the Belt and Road Initiative. By signing up to the BRI 'Space Information Corridor', the BRI states would become dependent on Chinese-provided space services. That would give Beijing greater power to influence the policy choices of those states, because it would control the vital space capabilities that sustain their economic growth". We have already seen the negative impact on countries like Sri Lanka and Brazil, which participated in the land and sea versions of the BRI. The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission further expressed caution in its 2019 Annual Report thus, "Beijing has specific plans not merely to explore space, but to industrially dominate the space.... Beijing uses its space programme to advance its terrestrial geopolitical objectives,

including cultivating customers for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)... China's promotion of... the Beidou global navigation system under its 'Space Silk Road' is deepening participants' reliance on China for space-based services". China's "Space Silk Road", forms a very crucial part of its ambitious space goals. The commissions' report further states that China has already succeeded in undercutting some US and other foreign launch and satellite providers in the international market, threatening to hollow out these countries' space industrial bases... The aggressive pursuit of foreign technology and talent... continues to be central to this strategy and to China's space development goals in general. Another worrisome development is Chinese cooperation with Russia in this regard. In March, China signed an agreement with Russia to work together to build a research station on the moon, which will carry out research on exploration and crucially, utilisation of the moon. Already in 2013, China launched its first lunar rover to explore the surface of the moon, hoping, among other things, to discover rare earth minerals, which are reportedly abundant on the moon. China's Chang'e 5 lunar probe mission landed on the moon and brought back geological samples to China, which became just the third country to do so after the US and Russia. In view of these developments it is a foregone conclusion that China will also move ahead to use space to dominate not only the US but also the rest of the world. Its plans for the future wars are space-based, in addition to utilising its large stockpile of surface to air missiles, ballistic and cruise missiles - which can strike from 500 to 5,500 km, thus covering a major part of the globe, without putting its soldiers' boots on foreign soil and indeed it may not portend well. (Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi. He writes on Muslims, educational, international affairs, interfaith and current affairs. The views expressed are personal)

international

US ORDERS 24 RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS TO LEAVE BY SEP 3

Washington | Agencies

Anatoly Antonov, Moscow's Ambassador to the US, said that Washington had asked 24 Russian diplomats to leave the country by September 3 due to visa expiration. "We received a list of twenty-four diplomats who are expected to leave the country before September 3, 2021," Xinhua news agency reported on Tuesday citing Antonov as saying to a media outlet. "Almost all of them will leave without replacements because Washington has abruptly tightened visa issuing procedures." Antonov said that "last December the State Department unilaterally established a three-year limit on the assignment period for Russian personnel in the US that, as far as we know, is not applied to any other country".



State Department spokesperson Ned Price responded on Monday that Antonov's "characterisation of the situation is not accurate. It's incorrect". "The three-year limit on visa validity for Russians, it's nothing

new. When visas expire these individuals are expected to leave the country or apply for an extension. That is what is at play here," he told reporters during a daily briefing. The Russian Ambassador's comment came two days after the State Department said it had laid off 182 local employees and dozens of contractors at American diplomatic facilities in Russia as requested by Moscow. Price on Monday denied that the US is using Russian diplomats' visas to retaliate while saying "we reserve the right to take appropriate response measures to Russia's actions". The Russian Foreign Ministry in April announced a complete ban on US diplomatic missions from hiring citizens of Russia or third countries to administrative and technical posts in response to American sanctions and expulsion of Russian diplomats.

IMF approves largest SDR allocation in history

Washington | Agencies

The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) board of governors has approved a new general allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDR) equivalent to \$650 billion, the largest ever in the organisation's history, in an effort to boost global liquidity amid the Covid-19 pandemic. "This is a historic decision, the largest SDR allocation in the history of the IMF and a shot in the arm for the global economy at a time of unprecedented crisis," Xinhua news agency quoted IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva as saying on Monday. Noting that the SDR allocation will benefit all IMF members, address the long-term global need for reserves, build confidence, and foster the resilience and stability of the global economy, Georgieva said it will particularly help the most vulnerable countries struggling to cope with the impact of the Covid-19 crisis. The approval came just weeks after the IMF executive board approved the proposal. Final approval of the SDR allocation by the Board of Governors requires an 85 per cent majority of the total voting power of all IMF members. The SDR can be exchanged among



governments for freely usable currencies in times of need. The general allocation of SDRs will become effective on August 23, according to the IMF. Georgieva said the IMF will also continue to engage actively with its membership to identify "viable" options for voluntary channeling of SDRs from wealthier to poorer and more vulnerable member countries to support their pandemic recovery and achieve resilient and sustainable growth. One key option is for members that have strong external positions to voluntarily channel part of their SDRs to scale up lending for low-income countries through the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT), the statement noted, adding that concessional support through the PRGT is currently interest free.

Pak clarifies IS remarks by FM Qureshi

New Delhi | Islamabad | Agencies

The Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has issued a clarification over Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's earlier statement in which he had said it is the Afghan government's responsibility to monitor and keep Islamic State (IS) terrorists in the country in check. MoFA spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said certain sections of the media had "have misquoted and twisted" Qureshi's remarks on the need for peace and stability in Afghanistan through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process. Chaudhri clarified that the Foreign Minister had "clearly spoken" about the consensus among the international community, the regional players and the Afghans themselves "against the menace of terrorism", News Pakistan reported. "His remarks cannot be in

anyway be misconstrued as advocacy for a particular side in the Afghan conflict. "We have repeatedly stated that Pakistan has no favourites in Afghanistan. We see all sides in the conflict as Afghans who need to decide about their future themselves. We will continue to play a constructive facilitation role in the Afghan peace process," he added. A few days ago, Qureshi's statement in which he categorically stated that it was Afghanistan government's responsibility to monitor presence of the IS in the country and keep it from growing. Addressing a press conference at Multan's Raza Hall on July 31, Qureshi said that the Afghan forces had the capacity to combat the IS group. "Nobody wants Daesh (IS) to grow. They (Afghan government) don't want it, the Taliban don't want it, Iran doesn't want it, (Afghanistan's) neighbours don't want it and the international community doesn't want it."

Afghan Prez blames US withdrawal for violence: Report

New Delhi | Kabul | Agencies

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has blamed the speedy withdrawal of US-led troops for the worsening violence in his country, as government forces are struggling to prevent provincial cities from falling to the Taliban amid a major escalation in fighting, a media report said. Taliban fighters assaulted at least three provincial capitals overnight, Lashkar Gah, Kandahar and Herat, after a weekend of heavy fighting that resulted in thousands of civilians fleeing the advancing militants, the Guardian report said. On Monday, Ghani told Parliament that "an imported, hasty" peace process "not only failed to bring peace but created doubt and ambiguity" among Afghans. In an apparent recognition of the scale of the Taliban advance, Ghani said that his administration would now focus on protecting provincial capitals and major urban areas in the face of a rapid Taliban advance. "The Taliban do not believe in lasting or just peace," he said. Fighting raged in Lashkar Gah,



Helmand's provincial capital, where the Taliban launched coordinated attacks on the city centre and its prison after the government announced the deployment of hundreds of commandos to the area, the report said. Hours after the President's remarks, Taliban fighters seized control of the provincial government's radio and TV building, replacing normal broadcasts with religious songs. The building sits just 400 metres to the north of the provincial governor's office, which was still under the control of the government, along with a few other government installations. The vast poppy

fields in the provinces provide the lion's share of the opium for the international heroin trade, making it a lucrative source of tax and cash for the Taliban's war chest, the report added. The loss of Helmand's capital would be a massive strategic and psychological blow for the government, which pledged to defend provincial capitals at all costs after losing much of the rural countryside to the Taliban over the summer. The Kandahar airport came under attack overnight on Sunday, with the Taliban firing rockets that damaged the runway, leading to the suspension of flights for several hours. The facility is vital to maintaining the logistics and air support needed to keep the Taliban from over-running the city, while also providing aerial cover for large tracts of southern Afghanistan including nearby Lashkar Gah. In the west, hundreds of commandos were also defending Herat after days of fierce fighting. "The threat is high in these three provinces, but we are determined to repel their attacks," the Afghan security forces spokesperson Ajmal Omar Shinwari told reporters on Sunday, adding it was an "emergency situation."

Peru's new govt unveils pro-integration foreign policy

Lima | Agencies

The new Peruvian government's foreign policy will promote Latin American integration based on the principle of mutual respect and reciprocal benefit, Foreign Affairs Minister Hector Bejar said. "We will strengthen Latin American integration and cooperation, without ideological distinctions. We will revalue the Andean Community in its special economic, trade, social, cultural and physical integration aspects," Bejar said. In his first meeting with the press at the Foreign Ministry, Bejar highlighted Peru's participation in the Pacific Alliance trade bloc with members such as Colombia, Chile and Mexico, reports Xinhua news agency. "We export to the Andean Community an amount equivalent to the Pacific Alliance, another vital area

of regional integration, but it is the main regional market for our export manufacturing companies," he noted. Bejar, a sociologist graduated from the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, was appointed Foreign Minister by President Pedro Castillo, who took office on July 28. Bejar stressed that Castillo's foreign policy will also seek to strengthen the Union of South American Nations. "We will promote its reconstitution and modernisation, as the cooperation and consultation body that affirms the entity of South America in world politics," he said. "We will vigorously reinsert the Peruvian presence" in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and "we will work to strengthen it and boost its capacity for action" the Minister added.



Stars Sparkle The Suicide Squad premiere



RITA ORA AND TAIKA WAITITI WALK HAND-IN-HAND

Los Angeles: Rita Ora and Taika Waititi made their red carpet debut as a couple at The Suicide Squad premiere. The singer walked hand in hand with the actor-director as they aired their romance to the world. Rita wore an edgier take on a suit dress that featured a structured skirt that jutted out on the sides and fashioned into a pseudo-bow. The tailored white garment showed off the sides of her midriff and cleavage, and included an open back that showed off her myriad of tattoos. Taika's kept it simple in a grey suit with a slightly unbuttoned white collared shirt and black dress shoes. The pair first sparked romance rumors back in April after she shared a photo of Taika throwing his arms around her neck, though his face was shielded by a baseball cap.



Sylvester Stallone's action man look

Sylvester Stallone commanded an imposing presence as he raised his hands and greeted fans while making his way to the red carpet before posing for a photo with the feature's director, James Gunn at the Westwood premiere of The Suicide Squad. The Rambo star wore a pair of slightly loose-fitting pants and a set of leather shoes, both of which matched his top. The performer's silver hair provided an interesting contrast to the dominant tone of his outfit.



Darren Barnet, Mikaela Hoover's steamy red carpet debut

Los Angeles: Darren Barnet and his girlfriend Mikaela Hoover made their red carpet debut as they attended the premiere of The Suicide Squad together. The couple, who are thought to have been dating for around a year, packed on the PDA for their steamy appearance, which saw them locking lips in front of a crowd of onlookers. Darren donned a textured suit jacket and trousers while Mikaela showcased her toned midriff and shimmered in a sparkly silver bra and high-waisted skirt two-piece. The actress elevated her height with a pair of silver heels and accessorised with earrings in the same colour.

KATE BECKINSALE'S GRACE

Kate Beckinsale graced the red carpet with an eye-catching orange dress and dazzling accessories. The actress appears to be loving the limelight as she posed for a sizzling shot. She wore an eye-catching sleeved orange dress while spending time on the red carpet. The Van Helsing actress beautifully offset the color of her outfit with a pair of sparkling high-heeled shoes. The actress accessorized with a pair of string earrings that added a little bit of shine to her clothing ensemble. The performer's beautiful brunette locks gracefully fell onto her shoulders and the nape of her neck as she spent time at the feature's premiere.



Madonna set Insta Ablaze



Los Angeles | Agencies

Madonna is up to her tricks once more as she took to Instagram to share a steamy new video and a series of snaps, in which she was putting on a steamy display with her boyfriend Ahlamalik Williams. In the new clip, she was seen dancing to Travis Scott and Baby Keem's hit song durag activity, while gyrating and licking the floor. In the images she shared alongside the video, Madonna was seen posing on a Diane Von Furstenberg leopard print rug with an amber-hued electric guitar. The singer looked youthful in the images, with her shock of straight platinum blonde hair hanging straight and parted at the middle. 'Wildin Out...' Madonna captioned the gallery, along with a trio of leopard emojis. The post comes as she recently spoke out against rapper DaBaby, who has landed himself in hot water after making several insensitive remarks about AIDS patients, members of the LGBTQ+ community and women.

Idris Elba: Want people to love cinema again

Los Angeles | Agencies

British star Idris Elba currently awaits the release of his upcoming film 'The Suicide Squad', which will hit theatres on August 5. The actor says he wants people to fall in love with cinema again, which he labels as the "lifeblood" of the industry. Talking about the film, which is coming out at a time when audiences are starting to make their way back to the theatres. Elba, who will be seen playing the character of Bloodsport in the movie based on the DC Universe, said: "I just hope people realise that imagination is not dead. Storytelling is the absolute lifeblood of what we do. So when you've got all these great storytellers telling an incredibly imaginative and empathetic story, I think the audience really enjoys that." The actor shared that the scale of the film, which is directed by James Gunn, is really special. Elba also spoke about his co-star John Cena, who plays Peacemaker in the film. He tagged Cena as "an improvisational genius".



Action-packed trailer for Money Heist: Part 5 released

Los Angeles | Agencies

The action-packed trailer for the 'Money Heist: Part 5 Vol. 1' was released on Netflix's official YouTube channel on Monday. The trailer begins with the show's main character Tokyo, portrayed by Ursula Corbero, dozing off while remaining handcuffed to two walls on both sides of her while Helsinki, played by Darko Peric, carries a corpse up a staircase. The mastermind of the heist, Alvaro Morte's The Professor, is then confronted by inspector Alicia Sierra, played by Najwa Nimri, who fires a gun towards his face and pistol-whips him. After the National Police Corps officer ties up the criminal mastermind, he is put in contact with the rest of the heist's team and confesses that he may not see them again. In the clip, several members from the team are seen preparing for the final act of their robbery while numerous government officials launch a siege on the building.



ELLEN POMPEO HAS NO DESIRE TO ACT AGAIN

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Ellen Pompeo, who is known for her work in the show 'Grey's Anatomy', hasn't ruled out returning to acting one day, but she isn't "super excited" about continuing her acting career. "I'm not saying I'll never act again, I very well may, but I'm not super excited about continuing my acting career. I'm more entrepreneurial at this stage," Pompeo said, reports femalefirst.co.uk. "I have no desire to go sit in trailers at 11 o'clock at night and wait to shoot scenes and have ADs knock on my door and tell me when I can eat lunch. You know, it's for the young at heart. It's for the youth!" Pompeo added. The actress is excited about investing in businesses and starting businesses.



Kenzie Ziegler

INDIA TO FACE GERMANY FOR BRONZE AFTER SEMIFINAL FALL



Tokyo | Agencies

India's brilliant run in the Tokyo Olympics men's hockey tournament came to an end with a 2-5 defeat to world champions Belgium in the semifinals here on Tuesday.

The Indians fought well, went 2-1 up in the first quarter but slack defending and conceding too many penalty corners did them in as Belgium fought back to level the scores and then scored thrice in the fourth quarter to seal a place in the final.

Alexander Hendrickx, one of the most feared drag-flickers in the world, scored a hat-trick to seal Belgium's victory. Hendrickx scored a hat-trick, two off penalty corners in the 19th and 49th minute and converted a penalty stroke

in the 53rd min, to put the match beyond India's reach.

The Indian attacks worked well in the first two quarters but the defence looked stretched from the start of the match -- committing mistakes both in ideation and execution as the Belgians came back from behind and sealed a good victory.

The defence that did so well against Great Britain in the quarterfinals, committed basic errors in their eagerness to thwart the Belgians. Instead of tackling them outside the shooting circle, they tried to stop them inside. The Belgians played smart and, instead of going for field goals, created penalty corners to give their drag-flickers the opportunity to break India's resistance.

Though the Indians lost the match, they were not disgraced as they

matched the Belgians, who lost to Argentina in the Rio Olympics, for three of the four quarters.

India will meet Germany in the bronze medal match while Australia and Belgium, the world's top two ranked teams, will clash for the hockey gold medal at the Olympic Games here on Thursday (August 5).

Australia defeated Germany 3-1 in the second semi-final at the Oi Hockey Stadium on Tuesday. Tim Brand (7th min), Blake Govers (27th min) and Lachlan Sharp (58th min) scored for Australia while Lukas Windfeder scored the lone goal for Germany in 10th minute.

Australia have won their lone Olympic Games gold medal in 2004 in Athens while Belgium had lost to Argentina 2-4 in the final in 2016 in Rio.

Paralympics: Swimmer Mukundan granted bi-partite quota

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a boost to the Paralympic-bound Indian contingent, para swimmer Niranjan Mukundan was on Tuesday granted a bi-partite quota by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Mukundan's qualification means India will have two para swimmers in its 54-member contingent, the largest ever, after Suyash Narayan Jadhav has qualified for the Tokyo Paralympic Games. Jadhav, the 27-year-old from Maharashtra, had booked his slot at the Tokyo 2020 Games with his performances at the Indonesia 2018 Asian Para Games held in Jakarta. He will be competing in the 50m butterfly (S7 category) and the 200m Individual Medley (SM7 category) at Tokyo. Mukundan,



the 26-year-old from Bengaluru, has also made the cut in S7 category where he will be in action in men's 50m butterfly event.

This is also the first time after the 1972 Heidelberg Games that India will participate in para swimming

events. Murlikant Petkar had clinched the country's first ever gold with a world record timing in the 50m freestyle in the 1972 Games.

Paralympic Committee of India President Deepa Malik said, "This is the first time after the 1972 Games that

India will have para swimmers competing. This is a proud moment for us as we look to record the best ever show at the Paralympics. I am hopeful that our para swimmers will produce their personal best timings in their respective events."

SPORTS MINISTER LAUNCHES THEME SONG FOR INDIAN PARALYMPIC CONTINGENT



para-athletes will give their optimum best!" A record number of 54 para athletes will participate in nine sports disciplines in Tokyo. Many of them have qualified with world-record performances, which have raised the medal expectations.

New Delhi: Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur launched the theme song "Kar De Kamaal Tu" -- composed and sung by a 'divyang' (specially-abled) cricketer Sanjeev Singh from Lucknow for the Indian Paralympic contingent for the Tokyo Games -- at a ceremony in New Delhi on Tuesday. "The lyrics of the song motivate not only the athletes but all the people with any form of disability to never underestimate themselves and what they have in them to create wonders," said a statement from the Sports Ministry. Thakur said that, "India is sending its largest ever contingent to the Paralympic Games in Tokyo -- 54 para-sports persons across nine sports disciplines. India will be watching your every move; we will be following your incredible journey at the Games. The sheer determination of our Para-Athletes shows their phenomenal human spirit. Remember that when you play for India you will have 130 crore Indians cheering for you! I am extremely confident that our

Rahul, Vihari emerge options to open for India in 1st Test

NOTTINGHAM | Agencies

Injury-stricken India, yet to get their reinforcements, will take on England in the first Test from Wednesday with hopes of ending a streak of series losses which extend to 2011.

Although it will be a tough task to beat England in England considering that India are struggling to find an opener to provide stability and a pace bowling all-rounder who can bring in the balance.

After Shubman Gill returned home due to injury in his left leg, Mayank Agarwal, who was the other opener available, suffered concussion after being hit on his head during a net session on Monday. He was ruled out from the Test. Gill's replacement Prithvi Shaw is yet to join the squad.

With India adamant in playing Cheteshwar Pujara at No. 3, the



available options to face the new ball with Rohit Sharma are KL Rahul and Hanuma Vihari.

Rahul has opened in the past and scored a century in the fifth and final Test at the Oval while opening the innings. He is a prime candidate although there have been talks about him being more suitable for the mid-

dle-order.

Vihari is the other batsman who can be used to see off the new ball. He has done the opening duties in Australia during the 2018-19 series but opening in England is very different from opening in Australia.

Indian team better prepared, well rested: Kohli (Box)

The Indian cricket team is better prepared this time as compared to previous tours since the one-and-a-half month rest between the World Test Championship final in June and the five-Test series beginning Wednesday has provided time for acclimatisation to the changing weather patterns in England, said skipper Virat Kohli on Tuesday.

"We are definitely much better prepared than we have been in the past. The situation [the break] allowed us to acclimatise and get used to the weather, because it can change quite drastically and quite quickly... As compared to the last tour, we have better experience. The younger players that we have, they are coming here after performing for the second time," said Kohli at a virtual media interaction.

He said that the playing XI would be announced just before the toss on Wednesday.

Tokyo declines additional slot to Paralympian shooter

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court was informed on Tuesday that Tokyo Paralympic organisers have declined to allocate an additional slot for Paralympian shooter Naresh Kumar Sharma.

On Monday, the top court had issued direction to the Paralympics Committee of India (PCI) to include him as an additional participant for the upcoming Paralympics in Japan.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, representing Sharma, submitted before the top court that it is a classic case as Tokyo has declined to allot an additional slot to his client, and added there were 10 slots -- eight for men and two for women participants.

He submitted his client's appeal pending before a division bench of the Delhi High Court could be heard on Wednesday, and it be decided whether his client or the other player should go.

A bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Sanjiv Khanna granted liberty to Sharma to



move the Delhi High Court and request it to take up his plea challenging the single-judge order, which declined to interfere in his non-selection for Tokyo Paralympics.

The top court, in its order, said it is disposing of this petition with liberty to the petitioner to approach the division bench of the high court and request for taking up the appeal expeditiously.

NORWAY'S WARHOLM FIRST TO GO UNDER 46 SECS IN MEN'S 400M HURDLES; WINS GOLD



Tokyo: Norway's Karsten Warholm on Tuesday became the first man in the world to break the 46-second barrier in 400m hurdles, as he clocked 45.94 seconds in the final to win the gold medal in the Tokyo Olympic Games. Coming into the race as the favourite after breaking the 29-year-old world record of Kevin Young (46.78sec) a month ago, Warholm crossed the finish line first in 45.94 seconds, slicing off a sensational .76 seconds off his own world record. He had clocked 46.70 in the Diamond League meeting in Oslo, Norway on July 2.

Rai Benjamin of the United States won the silver in 46.17 and Alison dos Santos of Brazil took bronze in 46.72.

Warholm started off very, very quickly and got into the lead early, blazing away and gliding over the hurdles effortlessly.

American rival Rai Benjamin came up strongly over the stretch and caught up with the Norwegian. But just when it looked like he will fade away, Warholm tapped into some hidden source of energy in his body and raced away to smash the world record.

Benjamin completed his run in 46.17 and would have taken half a second off the previous world record.

Wrestler Sonam Malik bows out after opening-round loss

Tokyo | Agencies

Indian wrestler Sonam Malik's debut at the Tokyo Olympic Games ended with a first-round defeat to Mongoli's Khurelkhuugiin Bolortuyaa in the women's 62kg category.

At the Makuhari Messe in Tokyo, Sonam lost to the Asian championship silver medalist on the basis of the 'highest scoring point' rule after the two grapplers were tied 2-2 on points at the end of the bout.

According to international wrestling rules, in case of a stalemate, the winner is decided on the basis of highest scoring move by the wrestler. Khurelkhuugiin executed a two-point takedown in the second period, while



chance, should their victor make it to the final.

All the Indian wrestler, including Sushil Kumar, Yogeshwar Dutt and Sakshi Malik, who have gone on to win medals at the previous Olympics have made it through the repechage route.

China claims two gold, four silver medals in badminton

Tokyo | Agencies

Eight teams shared a total of 15 medals in badminton at Tokyo the Olympics. The medal table was still dominated by Asian teams, while China stood at the top by snatching two gold medals in the mixed doubles and women's singles. China was the also only team to progress to the finals in all five disciplines. In the mixed doubles, China's Wang Yilyu and Huang Dongping and two-time world champions Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqing bagged gold and silver respectively. Women's singles shuttler Chen Yufei triumphed over Chinese Taipei's world No.1 Tai Tzu-ying to claim another gold, reports Xinhua. The other three silver medals for China came from Li



Junhui and Liu Yuchen in the men's doubles, Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan in the women's doubles, and Chen Long in the men's singles. Zhang Jun, head coach of Chinese badminton doubles and president of the Chinese Badminton Association, said that

he was satisfied with the results because all the players tried their best, even though there were still some regrets. "Our task was more or less accomplished as we reached the finals in all five disciplines. Yet we could have done better to win more golds," Zhang said.

HOCKEY: INDIA WOMEN SEEK GOLDEN END TO FAIRY TALE



The Indian women's hockey team has already made history by reaching the semifinals for the first time. Now they can add a golden hue to their fairy-tale run by beating Argentina in Wednesday's semifinal.

Having beaten world No. 2 Australia in the quarterfinals on Monday, the Indians will be bullish against Argentina. They have exceeded their expectations; they have nothing to lose and all the experience to gain by playing one of the top teams. But they can't be complacent as this is an opportunity of a lifetime to reach the final at the Olympic Games.

Ranked ninth in the world before the start of the Olympics, the Indians have come up the hard way, breaking new grounds to reach the semifinals by beating Australia 1-0 on Monday. It was a clinical display in which they scored an early goal and then absorbed the pressure created by Hockeyroos throughout. The Indian defenders and goalkeeper Savita Punia were exceptional against Australia and they will now have to repeat that performance against Argentina. However, the South Americans are a very different team from the Hockeyroos, more physical though less imposing. They are a very

fit side and do a lot of running up and down. They have a very good short corner specialist in Agustina Gorzelany, who has scored three goals so far, while forward Agustina Albertario has contributed two field goals.

The Indians have some idea about the Argentine team having played them on a tour in January this year. Though those were exhibition matches and the players and not as serious as an Olympics clash, the Indians had some good moments on that tour. Indian Women's have nothing to lose but an Olympic medal to gain for reaching the final will assure a medal.



Akshay, Vaani celebrate 'Bell Bottom' trailer launch

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actors Akshay Kumar, Vaani Kapoor and Lara Dutta arrived Delhi on Tuesday to launch the trailer of their film 'Bell Bottom'. The actors along with producers Jacky Bhagnani and Deepshikha Deshmukh met Ajay Bijli, Chairman

and Managing Director, PVR at PVR Priya for the event.

The team together had a cake cutting ceremony to celebrate the trailer and 'return of theatre'. This is after a long dry spell that the capital saw a film event taking place.

Earlier in the day, the 'Bell Bottom' team was clicked at Mumbai's international airport as they

left for Delhi to launch the trailer. Akshay was also accompanied by wife Twinkle Khanna, son Arav and daughter Nitara.

RICHA CHADHA'S SCRIPT UP FOR GOTHAM WEEK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Richa Chadha's script of her production venture 'Girls Will Be Girls' has been selected as part of the international features section at this year's 'Gotham Week'.

'Girls will be Girls' is an Indo-French co-production between Pushing Burtons Studio (Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal), Crawling Angel and Dolce Vita Films.

Richa said, "We hope to be able to find like-minded investors and collaborators at Gotham Week to join us in making this exciting film."

The team recently wrapped up shoot for a pitch video/teaser, and hope it will help with fundraising at Gotham Week.

Gotham Week is an annual event that brings together storytellers from films, television, and audio and is sponsored by Netflix, Amazon Studios, Audible, SAGindie and WarnerMedia. It will be held virtually this year between September 19 and 24.



AALISHA PANWAR ON HER ROLE IN 'TERI MERI IKK JINDRI'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Aalisha Panwar has been roped in for the show 'Teri Meri Ikk Jindri' to play the character of Avneet. She will be portraying a modern Punjabi girl full of confidence and passion. Panwar who is known for her roles in 'Ishq Mein Marjawan' and 'Meri Gudiya' says initially she was not keen on accepting this project because her character is subdued amidst two lead personalities. 'Teri Meri Ikk Jindri' is a love story of two starkly different personalities - Mahi (Amandeep Sidhu) and Jogi (Adhvik Mahajan). Their love story has been developing well with numerous twists and turns. Bringing forth another interesting angle in Mahi and Jogi's lives will be Avneet, Jogi's childhood friend.

Aalisha divulges details and talks about her character, as she says that this character is quite different from her previous ones and anybody can relate with Avneet very easily.



APARSHAKTI RELEASED PUNJABI VERSION OF 'BASPAN KA PYAAR'

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Actor-Anchor Aparshakti Khurrana recently released a Punjabi version of the viral song 'Baspans Ka Pyaar' sung by a child Sahdev.

About his song, Aparshakti said: "When I heard 'Baspans Ka Pyaar' for the first time, it made me chuckle, but I was equally fascinated by it. That's when I decided to make a rehash of the song that is now making our whole country groove to its tune." He released the full Punjabi version of the viral song on his Instagram page at the request of his followers. Aparshakti released three versions of the song with his own spin to the lyrics. The kid Sahdev has become quite popular with his video 'Baspans Ka Pyaar'. Aparshakti shared he isn't sure if he is going to launch the kid, but would love to meet him. Aparshakti sang his first song in 2016 'Ik Vaari' and 'Teri Yaari' in 2020. He has played pivotal roles in films like 'Dangal', 'Saat Uchakke', 'Badrinath ki Dulhaniya', 'Pati, Patni Aur Woh' and many more to his credit.



Jimmy Sheirgill look back at his debut with Gulzar's 'Maachis'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Jimmy Sheirgill began his film career with filmmaker Gulzar's 'Maachis' in 1996. After that, there wasn't any looking back for the talented actor. "Maachis is where it all started. I always dreamt that Gulzar Sahab should make a movie where even if I get a chance to play a character for just about two days that would be a dream come true for me. I always wanted that to happen," said Jimmy.

Jimmy, 50, had quite a journey in Bollywood after his impactful role in 'Maachis'. Jimmy shared there are a lot of things that stayed with him while working with the legendary director Gulzar. He said: "There are so many things that we learned during the film which have stayed with us for life." Jimmy was last seen in the web series 'Collar Bomb'.

ETERNAL KISHORE KUMAR'S TIME LESS MONSOON MELODIES

Team Absolute | Mumbai

It's been more than three decades since the legendary singer and actor Kishore Kumar moved to divinity but his legacy continues in form of soulful melodies.

Kishore Da was born on August 4, 1929 as Abhas Kumar Ganguly in a Bengali household at Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh. He in his four-decade-long career didn't just become famous for his playback singing, but also gained immense fan following for his acting, writing and direction. He was considered a genius of his era and had won a number of accolades throughout his life. Therefore, on the iconic star's 92nd birth anniversary, here we are with a few of his evergreen romantic hits which you can enjoy during monsoon: Ek Ladki Bheegi Bhaagi Si from Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi released in 1958. The music is composed by S. D. Burman with lyrics by Majrooh Sultanpuri. Bheegi Bheegi Raaton Mein from Ajanabee is yet another melody from Kishore Da and Lata Mangeshkar to reckon on this monsoon. Released in 1974, this song is composed by R. D. Burman with lyrics from Anand Bakshi.

Rimjhim Gire Sawan from Mazil is a song that captures the beauty of this romantic weather. Music for this song is given by R.D. Burman and lyrics were from Yogesh. The movie was released in 1979.

Aaj Rapaat Jaye is one among the playful songs from Namak Halal released in 1982. The music of the song is directed by Bappi Lahiri and Lyrics were penned by Anjaan.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Nora Fatehi