

# absolute india

VOL. 7, ISSUE 132, BHOPAL | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI

**NATION****>02**

SC allows registration of BS-6 light, heavy diesel vehicles...

**HOLLYWOOD****> 06**

Brittany Snow felt 'safe' filming intimate scenes for 'X'...

**SPORTS****> 07**

Dubai 2022 World Para Athletics GP: Dharambir and Devendra...

**INFLATION BURNING HOLE IN COMMON MAN'S POCKET**

# INFLATIONARY BLOW

The common man is likely to suffer more with the rising prices of commodities with the most recent blow being the rise in the price of the domestic cooking gas cylinder (LPG). The cylinder got dearer by Rs 50 while the prices of petrol and diesel have risen by 80 paise each per litre. It is not just the petrol, diesel or LPG cylinder, several other daily use commodities have shown an upward trajectory for the past some time. On March 5, milk brand Mother Dairy announced an increase in the milk price by Rs 2 per litre in Delhi NCR area. In Bhopal, Sanchi milk brand has also increased the price by Rs 2/liter because of the rise in the procurement cost. The brand announced the price hike days after Amul and Parag Milk Foods increased prices by Rs 2 per litre each. After the price increase, the full cream milk will cost Rs 58.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

**N**otably, this is 2022's first hike. The common man got a breather for at least 137 days as in that period there was no change in the prices. On November 4, the central government had slashed the prices of petrol and diesel by Rs 5 and Rs 10 respectively, by reducing excise duty on the fuels, just two months before the poll body announced the dates for the Assembly elections in the five states of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Manipur and Goa.

Now, just 12 days after the announcement of the results, the prices have again started picking up pace. Pertinently, it is the 27th day of the Ukraine-Russia war which too has had its impact, globally, on inflation. Accordingly, the increase in the selling price, which includes state levies, central excise and cess amongst other factors, came days after an astronomical rise in crude oil prices due to the war.

In Delhi, the prices of petrol and diesel increased by 80 paise per litre. As per pump prices, petrol now costs Rs 87.47 per litre and diesel Rs 96.21 per litre in the national capital.



The OMCs revise the transportation fuel cost based on various factors such as rupee to US Dollar exchange rate, cost of crude oil and demand for fuel amongst others. Resultantly, the final price includes excise duty, value added tax and dealer's commission.

It was widely expected that the OMCs will revise the current prices due to high crude oil cost. Lately, crude oil prices have been volatile surging by nearly 35-40 per cent on fear of tight supplies. Furthermore, it is feared that current sanctions

against Russia will curtail more global supplies and stifle growth.

In the case of India, the crude oil price range is a cause of concern as it may ultimately add Rs 15-Rs 25 in petrol and diesel selling prices. At present, India imports nearly 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements.

On March 8, the Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) price in the national capital and adjoining cities was hiked by Rs 0.50 per kg while in Noida, Greater Noida, and Ghaziabad, it got dearer by Re 1. Just a week back, Nestle's Maggi's price

**CONGRESS FLAYS MODI GOVT OVER FUEL PRICE HIKE**

New Delhi: The Congress on Tuesday slammed the BJP-led Centre over the hike in fuel prices just 11 days after the Assembly polls results with Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge saying that the only affordable things in the Modi government are "communalism and hatred." Party leader Shashi Tharoor said: "They were just waiting for the elections to be over."

was also hiked by Rs 2. The packet which used to cost Rs 12, is now Rs 14. Even the prices of tea and coffee have risen. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi just a few days ago asked the government to act quickly over the rising inflation in the country as the Russia-Ukraine war may further escalate prices. Meanwhile, the upper house of Parliament, on Tuesday saw an uproar over the hike in LPG prices, following which the Speaker was forced to adjourn the House twice.

Recommendations of SC-appointed panel on farm laws 'corporate biased': AIKS



Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day after one of the members of the Supreme Court appointed Committee on now-repealed three farm laws released their report, the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) on Tuesday termed the panel's recommendations "corporate biased".

"The AIKS strongly condemns the recommendation by the Supreme Court-appointed Committee to bring back the three farm laws. AIKS would like to highlight the fact that the members of the SC appointed Committee were known for their strong faithfulness to the three Farm Acts unilaterally brought by the Union government. That is why the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) had called for boycotting the SC-appointed Committee," the AIKS said in a statement.

The AIKS is part of the SKM that had been agitating since mid-2020s, against first the ordinances and then the Acts and suspended

their agitation in mid-January 2022, more than a month after the three contentious farm laws were repealed by the Parliament.

Claiming that it is obvious that all the recommendations of the said Committee are aimed to facilitate pro-corporate reforms in agriculture, and hence, needs to be viewed critically, the AIKS said: "The observation that 85 per cent of the farmers in the country are in support of the farm acts is nothing but a concerted effort to distort the facts and to create a pro-reform environment to facilitate corporate takeover of agricultural land, agricultural markets and agro produces."

"There is no institutional system of representation of the farmers' organisations existing, hence the argument that a silent majority is in support of the farm acts is a day-dream of pro-corporate leaders like Anil Ghanwat, it added.

It was Ghanwat who had released the report on Monday.

## MP GOVT TO SET UP LUXURIOUS OLD-AGE HOME WITH NOMINAL RATES

Team Absolute | Bhopal

**T**he Madhya Pradesh government has decided to set up a luxurious old-age home for senior citizens in Bhopal by the end of this year. It would be a government-owned old-age home, which would be available at nominal rates.

The government claimed that it would be a first it's kind of old-age home, which will be equipped with luxurious facilities for the inmates. The building will be designed in such a manner that the senior citizens will feel relaxed.

It would function under the supervision of the social justice department of the state government, though the management of the old-age home would be handed over to a private firm.

The department claimed that the building where the old-age home would be set up is

A senior official in the social and justice department said that it would be a pilot project, which is likely to made operational by December this year. If it gets good response from the people, the same facility would be provided in some other district in the future.



being constructed with an estimated cost of Rs 10 crore in Bhopal.

**RUSSIA ASKS FOR VOTE ON UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON UKRAINE**

Moscow: Dmitry Polyansky, First Deputy Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN, said that the Russian side has requested for a vote on its draft humanitarian resolution on Ukraine on March 23. "Yes, we have asked for a vote. We think this is the right time," Ria Novosti quoted him as saying. RT reported. On March 18, it was reported that Russia cancelled the vote on a resolution on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine in the UN Security Council. Earlier, Russia had cancelled the vote on the resolution on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine in the UN Security Council. This was stated by the Russian Permanent Representative to the organisation, Vasily Nebenzya.

## Houses set ablaze after killing of TMC leader, 10 burnt alive in WB



Team Absolute | Kolkata

At least 10 people died and several others were injured in violence that allegedly broke out after the murder of deputy

Panchayat Pradhan at Baguti village in West Bengal's Birbhum district, officials said on Tuesday.

While 11 people have been arrested, both police and the ruling Trinamool Congress have denied

political motives behind the incident.

The state government has formed a special investigation team under ADG, CID, Gyanwant Singh, DIG, Western Range, Sanjay Singh and DIG, CID, Operations, Miraj Khalid to probe the Baguti incident.

The events at Baguti in Rampurhat are unprecedented in the recent history of West Bengal, reliving the death of 14 people in Nandigram during the dying years of Left Front rule. The fire brigade which went to Baguti on Monday night recovered three bodies last night, while the remaining seven were found this morning.

Among the 10 dead, six were women and two were children, local leaders claimed.

Director General of Police Manoj Malaviya, however, said that no political motive behind the arson could be established yet.

CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty alleged the violence was a result of internal rivalries in the TMC.

## ALL INDIAN NATIONALS BOUND TO REPLY TO CENSUS QUERIES: GOVT



New Delhi: Every Indian national is legally bound to reply to the census questions and all requisite steps are being taken to carry

out the census and compilation of the National Population Register (NPR) exercise smoothly. Minister of State for Home Nitin Gadkari told the Lok Sabha in reply to a question.

He also said that under the provisions of the Census Act 1948, the state governments appoint census officers to aid or supervise the census exercise.

Ministry officials also said that the housing listing phase of the census and the exercise to update the NPR were scheduled to be carried out across the country from April 1 to September 30, 2020 but were postponed due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The government has put the census operation on hold but is yet to announce the new schedule.

## Delhi most polluted capital in world; 63 Indian cities in top 100

► North India is worse. Delhi is the world's most polluted capital for the fourth consecutive year, with pollution rising almost 15 per cent over the previous year.

► While Delhi's air pollution ranks at No. 4 globally, the world's most polluted place is Rajasthan's Bhuj, followed by Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad on Delhi's eastern border.

► With 63, Indian cities dominate the list of 100 most polluted places. More than half are in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

► Ten of the top 15 most polluted cities are in India and mostly around the national capital.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's air pollution worsened in 2021, according to the World Air Quality Report released by IQAir, a Swiss firm. This ends a three-year trend of improving air quality. The average air pollution, measured in the lethal and microscopic PM2.5 pollutant, is 58.1 micrograms per cubic meter, which is more than 10 times the World Health Organisation's (WHO) air quality guidelines. No city in India met the WHO's safety limits, with PM2.5 clocking in at 96.4 micrograms per cubic meter for the annual average. The safe limit is 5. Air pollution levels in Delhi were almost 20 times above the WHO's safety limits, IQAir said

An air quality 'life index' developed by the University of Chicago shows that residents in Delhi and Lucknow, for instance, could add about a decade to their life expectancy if air quality levels met the WHO's standards.

The major sources of air pollution include vehicular emissions, coal-fired power plants, industrial waste, biomass combustion for cooking and the construction sector. In fact, in November last year, several large power plants around Delhi as well as many industries were shut down for the first time because of severe levels of air pollution. The economic cost of the crisis to India is estimated at over \$150 billion annually. The health impact is far worse with an estimated three deaths every minute linked to air pollution in addition

to heart and lung diseases and many other severe health effects.

All six metro cities except Chennai saw a rise in air pollution levels last year. Interestingly, government data for 2021 also shows that air quality in Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai worsened. A recent note in parliament showed that 'poor' to 'severe' air quality days numbered 168 in Delhi last year, up from 139 or a steep 21 per cent jump in one year; Kolkata had 83 such days vs 74 and Mumbai 39 vs 20 in the previous year. However, when asked about India's poor showing in an earlier edition of the World Air Quality Report in 2020, the centre had dismissed such ranking, saying it was mainly based on satellite and other secondary data not validated by "proper ground truthing."

## 'INDIA WILLING TO OFFER VAX MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY TO OTHER COUNTRIES'



New Delhi: Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday said India is willing to offer its robust vaccine manufacturing industry for developing vaccines for BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries as well as the world.

"India has one of the world's largest vaccine manufacturing industries which supplies vaccines to more than 150 countries and meets 65-70 per cent of the WHO's vaccine requirements," he said.

Mandaviya launched the BRICS Vaccine R&D Centre and Workshop on Vaccine Cooperation through video-conference here.

With the commitment of BRICS countries towards strengthening their cooperation in various fields, special emphasis was given to vaccine research and development.



# CENTRE APPROVES UNIFICATION BILL TO MERGE DELHI CIVIC BODIES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday approved the unification bill to merge the three Municipal Corporations of Delhi.

The decision to merge these three agencies of the MCD was approved by the Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday.

As per government sources, the Bill for "The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2022" is likely to be tabled in Parliament during the coming week and will unify the MCD by subsuming the existing three bodies.

The erstwhile MCD was trifurcated into three civic bodies - South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC), North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC), and East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) -- in 2011 through the Delhi Municipal Corporation Amendment Act, 1911 (Delhi Act, 12 Of 2011).



However, this trifurcation of the corporation was uneven in terms of the territorial divisions and revenue generating potential of each corporation. As a result, there was a huge gap in the resources available to the three

corporations, vis-a-vis their obligations. The gap then widened over a period of time, increasing the financial difficulties of the three civic bodies, leaving them incapacitated to make timely payment of salaries and retirement benefits to their employees and thereby creating serious impediments in maintaining civic services in Delhi. Earlier, the government had postponed the announcement of the elections to the civic bodies hinting that these three bodies will be merged. Calling the postponement of the MCD elections a threat to the nation's democracy, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that this was the first time the Centre had written to the State Election Commission to postpone polls.

He also asked the government what were they doing all these years if they so urgently wanted to merge these civic bodies into one.

He also said that the government wrote to the EC few hours before the poll schedules of the MCD elections were to be announced.

## No provision for re-examination if candidate fails to appear, UPSC to SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has informed the Supreme Court that there is no provision to conduct a re-examination, if a candidate fails to take the test on the scheduled date for any reason.

In an affidavit, filed in the top court, the UPSC said it usually holds 13 examinations, apart from several recruitment tests, during a year and there is no provision for holding a re-examination in case a candidate fails to appear in the examination, for any reason including any ailment or accident incapacitating him or her.

It said it conducts the civil services examination strictly in accordance with the rules of examination framed annually by the government. It clarified that any decision regarding age relaxation and compensatory/extra attempt is a policy matter falling under the domain of the



that in the past, it has not held any re-examination under similar circumstances.

It said a cycle has evolved, which includes recruitment, training and final appointment and upsetting it can likely have cascading effects in future as well.

The commission said the matter of

compensatory/extra attempt had been decided by the top court, against the backdrop of hardships faced by the aspirants due to the pandemic, but the same was not granted. It said the DoPT is also a stakeholder in the process of conduct of civil services exam and its stand should also be considered in the matter. The top court has scheduled the matter for further hearing on March 25.

Two out of the three petitioners had to leave the main exam, held from January 7 to 16, in between after appearing in some initial papers. The third aspirant could not appear in any of the papers due to Covid.

Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)

On Monday, the top court was informed that the call regarding extra attempts to appear in the UPSC examination will have to be taken by the DoPT.

The commission's response came on a plea by three aspirants who had cleared the UPSC-2021 pre-lims exam but could not appear in all papers of the main exam after testing positive for Covid-19, and moved the top court seeking an extra attempt to take the exams.

The UPSC emphasised

## SC allows registration of BS-6 light, heavy diesel vehicles

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed the registration of light and heavy diesel BS-6 vehicles, which are used for public utility and essential services.

Senior advocate A.D.N. Rao, who was appointed as amicus curiae, submitted before a bench headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao that BS-6 light and heavy diesel vehicles are used for public utility and essential services, and they may be allowed to get registered.

The bench, also comprising Justice B.R. Gavai, directed the authorities concerned that they should not seek court orders for the purpose of registration of these vehicles.

"We are of the considered view that the registration can be permitted in respect of BS-VI light and heavy diesel vehicles used for public utility and essential services," it said.

The bench emphasised that the registering authorities should not insist on a court order to register public utility and essential services vehicles.

During the hearing, counsel informed the



bench after an observation by the National Green Tribunal against the registration of heavy-duty vehicles, the authorities had insisted on court orders.

The top court was hearing various pleas seeking permission for registration of BS-6 diesel vehicles. The bench also examined a plea of relaxation for sale of BS-4 vehicles in Jammu and Kashmir and asked the applicant to approach the High Court for relief.

## Mother killed infant daughter, hid body inside microwave

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The investigation in the gruesome incident where a baby girl's body was found in a microwave oven has discovered that the two-month-old was allegedly smothered by her own mother who then hid the body inside the appliance, Delhi Police said on Tuesday.

The incident was reported from south Delhi's Chirag Dilli area on Monday evening and the woman, identified as Dimple, 26, was arrested on Tuesday. DCP, South, Benita Mary Jaiker said that at around 4.30 p.m., police received information about a child going missing and when a team reached the spot they found that the said baby had been taken to Madan Mohan Malaviya hospital.

"The hospital staff informed us that



the child was brought dead," the DCP told media persons.

As the police began enquiring about the matter, it was found that at the time of incident, the mother was alone at the house with her 3-year-old son and her infant daughter.

"We questioned several people in and around the house and the needle of suspicion pointed towards the mother of the deceased infant," Jaiker said.

Based on the circumstantial evidence, the police took the mother

into custody.

"During questioning, she seemed mentally disturbed as she was continuously changing her statement while narrating the incident. However, when I asked her this morning, she partially confessed to the crime," the DCP said.

The deceased infant's post-mortem examination has also been conducted and prima facie, the doctors told police that the death could be due to smothering, however, the exact cause of death will only be clear only after the post-mortem report is out.

"The doctors were not even to tell us anything about the injury marks on the infant's body. We are awaiting the PM report," Jaiker said.

Police are yet to establish the motive of the crime.

## AFTER AZAD, SONIA NOW MEETS ANAND SHARMA & MANISH TEWARI

New Delhi: Days after meeting Ghulam Nabi Azad, Congress President Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday met senior party leaders Anand Sharma and Manish Tewari to discuss the proposal mooted by



the disgruntled G-23 group. Sonia Gandhi in her effort to put a united face is reaching out the dissidents in the party who have been demanding sweeping reforms. Azad, who met the party chief on March 18, had said that there was no vacancy currently for the post of President and nobody asked her to quit. Distancing himself from the views of senior party leader and fellow G-23 leader Kapil Sibal on leadership change, Azad had noted that Sonia Gandhi's offer has been rejected by all groups, including the one he belonged to, and "we wanted her to continue". His remarks bolster indications that the Congress' internal battle seems heading towards a truce as Gandhis have been proactively reaching out the dissenters with senior party leader Rahul Gandhi, who has been not having a good equation with former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, met him on March 17 and listened to his grievances. Later, Hooda met the G-23 leaders.

## FOUR TDP MLAs SUSPENDED FROM AP ASSEMBLY

Amaravati | Agencies

Four members of the opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) were suspended from Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly for the rest of the budget session on Tuesday.

Taking serious note of the unruly behaviour of the legislators, Speaker Tammneni Seetharam announced their suspension.

The TDP members created a ruckus in the House to demand a debate on deaths due to illicit liquor in Jangareddygudem town of West Godavari district. As soon as the House met for the day, the opposition legislators were on their feet insisting for a debate on the issue.

The Speaker rejected their notice for the adjournment motion on the ground that the issue was closed last week after Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy made a statement, clarifying the government stand.

However, the TDP members alleged that the government was hiding the truth by branding liquor deaths as nor-



mal deaths and demanded debate on the issue. They trooped into the well of the House and raised slogans even as the question hour was taken up in the House.

The Speaker admonished some TDP

members who allegedly blew the whistle. He said they were bringing disrepute to the august House through their unruly behaviour. He named the four members and announced their suspension for the rest of the ongoing session.

## THREE LE T MILITANTS INVOLVED IN SRINAGAR SHOOTOUT IDENTIFIED

Srinagar: J&K Police said that the militants who were engaged in a shootout with the security forces on Tuesday, in which a policeman was killed, have been identified.



Talking to reporters on the sidelines of the wreath laying ceremony of the slain policeman, Imran Ahmad, Kashmir IGP Vijay Kumar said that the militants engaged in the shootout at Soura have been identified and are being tracked. Earlier, doctors at the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura, where the injured police constable was being treated, had said that after being 'assessed dead', they had revived the cop. He, however, succumbed to his critical injuries later despite the best efforts of the doctors.

"A quick reaction team (QRT) of the police was following the three militants who were travelling in a red vehicle. They were engaged in a brief shootout at Soura in which a policeman sustained injuries and later succumbed," the IGP said. The IGP said the group of three militants belonging to Lashkar-e-Taiba was headed by Basit, who has taken over LeT's command in the region after the killing of Mehran Shalla, the self-styled commander of LeT-TRF, last year.

## Major fertiliser scam busted in Assam, 9 held

Guwahati | Agencies

The Assam Police's CID has busted a major fertiliser scam in Assam and arrested nine people, including owners of various retail and wholesale outlets and hoarders, officials said on Tuesday.

A police spokesman said that following the direction of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the CID had earlier registered a criminal case and conducted raids at various places in Morigaon, Kamrup, Darrang, Cachar, Goalpara, and Darrang districts recently.

Of the 9 accused have been arrested so far, eight are owners of various retail and wholesale outlets who were selling urea at a much higher price than the rate prescribed by the government. Some were found hoarding the stocks and diverting them to middlemen and traders.



The owner of a truck which was used to transfer the diverted urea has also been arrested.

All the nine accused are presently under CID custody for thorough interrogation.

The spokesman said that so far it was found that both the wholesalers and retailers were selling the urea at around Rs 350 to Rs 450 per bag against the government's prescribed rates of Rs 266 per

bag. These retailers are bound to sell the urea only to the farmers of their gram panchayat, but they have been selling to other people beyond their jurisdiction and also to those who are not farmers, and as a result, ineligible persons are buying the same for hoarding and diverting the stocks whereas the genuine farmers of that area are deprived.

## Van driver beaten up on suspicion of ferrying beef

Mathura | Agencies

A 35-year-old driver of a pick-up van was mercilessly beaten up by cow vigilantes in Raial village over suspicion of 'ferrying beef and smuggling cattle' in his vehicle.

Several purported videos of the driver, identified as Mohammad Aamir, being thrashed by 2-3 men with belts while his shirt had been ripped off, surfaced on social media on Monday night.

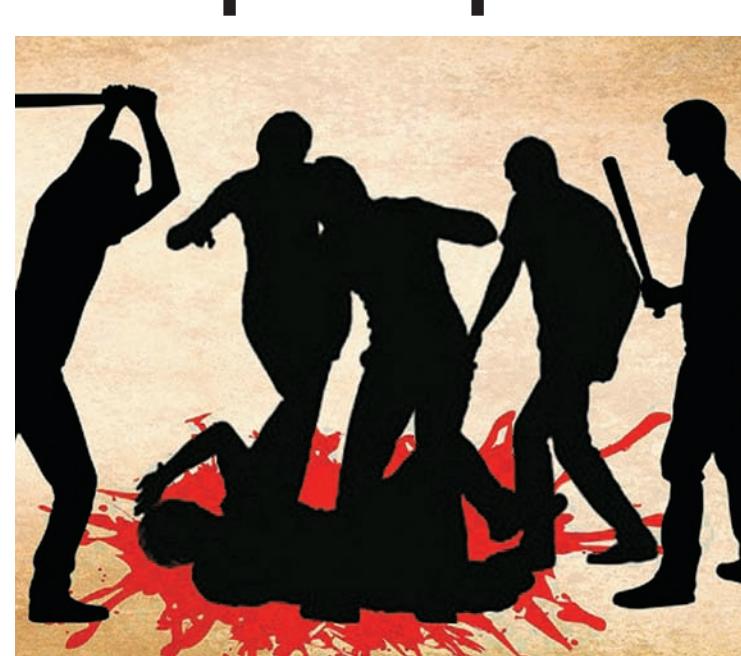
The man is seen begging them to stop, but they show no mercy. They were also abusive.

SP (City) M.P. Singh said that the van, which was heading to Sikandraraop in Hathras from Mathura's Govardhan, was intercepted by local residents and cow vigilantes from a right-wing outfit in Raial village.

However, during the preliminary investigation, nothing, except some animal carcasses for which Aamir had a licence, was found in the van, Singh said.

The suspects allegedly held the driver hostage and beat him up brutally, he added.

Two other men were also beaten



up by the public over suspicion of their links with the van driver, said the SP, adding that they rescued all the three men from the mob and sent them for medical treatment.

According to doctors, Aamir had

received bruises on his face and shoulder. "He did not suffer any major injuries," doctors said.

The SP (City) further said that two FIRs have been registered in the matter at Jait police station. One was

lodged on a complaint filed by Aamir while the other was given by Vikas Sharma, convenor of Gau Raksha Vibhag of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).

Police said that 16 identified people, including Vikash Sharma and Balram Thakur from VHP, and some unidentified persons have been booked under relevant IPC sections, including 307 (attempt to murder), on a complaint filed by Aamir.

In the FIR, Aamir stated that "Sharma and Thakur intercepted his vehicle in Raial village and after knowing that animal carcasses were being taken to Hathras, they began thrashing him badly."

Meanwhile, Sharma, in his complaint, accused local residents of Raial village of beating him up along with his associate Balram Thakur, who is secretary of the committee, over suspicion of their involvement with Aamir.

Fourteen identified and 150 unidentified people were booked under relevant IPC sections on Sharma's complaint.

Several attempts to contact Aamir's family members proved futile as their numbers were switched off.

## CM Will Hold Meeting With Exporters in New Delhi

# EXPORT GROWTH STRATEGY IN THE INTEREST OF FARMERS OF THE STATE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will discuss with the exporters in New Delhi on March 24 about the increase in export of quality wheat of Madhya Pradesh. Chouhan told the media representatives in the Holi get together programme on Monday evening that the strategy is being implemented so that the farmers of Madhya Pradesh can benefit more. Chief Minister said that in view of the increase in the prices of food grains at the international level at this time, efforts would be stepped up to ensure maximum benefit to the farmers of the state. Wheat of Madhya Pradesh is better in terms of quality, it is also in great demand. The meeting with the exporters in New Delhi with Union Industries and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal will prove to be important in the interest of farmers. Apart from Goyal, the concerned Union Ministers will also be consulted. Chief Minister said that at present the rates of wheat have increased in the world market.



Madhya Pradesh is also a leader in mustard production. At present, mustard is being sold at seven and a half thousand to eight thousand rupees per quintal. The farmers of the state are getting the benefit of crop insurance scheme. Decisions have been taken to pay the interest of

the loan of defaulter farmers by the government, prior to this to deposit the premium of crop insurance scheme for the year 2019-20, to give exemption from depositing the amount of electricity bills of Corona period. Certainly, the farming community is getting direct benefit from this. Chouhan said that record production of wheat is going to take place in Madhya Pradesh this year. Continuous efforts are being made in this direction that Madhya Pradesh should get more benefits from the export of food grains and other commodities. It is noteworthy that this year the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has set a target of Dollar 400 billion in commercial exports in the sequence of "Local Goes Global" for the world "Make in India." The implementation of concrete strategy has also been finalised by holding continuous meetings with Export Promotion Council (EPC), Commodity Board and authorities and other stakeholders. Export efforts will be boosted to increase the economic prosperity of the farmers of Madhya Pradesh.

## Tawa Mahotsav to be celebrated with gaiety: Kamal Patel

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Farmer Welfare and Agriculture Development Minister Kamal Patel has informed that Tawa Mahotsav will be celebrated with gaiety on Wednesday. Water will be released by Water Resources Minister Tulsi Ram Silavat and MLAs and peoples representatives of Timarni, Seoni, Narmadapuram, Sohagpur and Pipariya from Tawa Dam of Narmadapuram on Narmadapuram on Wednesday 23 March 2022 for irrigation of summer moong. Patel informed that the government is working continuously in the interest of farmers. Under the guidance of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, water is being released from Tawa Dam for

# WOMAN GANG-RAPED IN MP, BULLDOZERS RUN OVER ACCUSED'S HOUSE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In another case of sexual assault, a 28-year-old woman was gang-raped in Shahdol district of Madhya Pradesh.

Rajesh Singh and Sonu George.

Police said Shadab Usmani was in a relationship with the woman for the past one-and-a-half years. On Saturday, he took her for a picnic in Kshirsagar area, around 20 km from the district headquarters Shahdol. "After reaching Kshirsagar, Usmani called his two friends over to the spot and consumed alcohol. They then took turns to rape the woman. The victim was force-fed a poisonous substance, which led to her death in the hospital," a senior police officer told IANS. According to the police, while the main accused - Usmani fled the spot, the other two accused left her outside the district hospital. Upon reaching



the hospital, they (Rajesh and George) tried to pass it off as a case of excessive consumption of alcohol.

Meanwhile, one of the accused informed the victim's family on phone that she had consumed alcohol was admitted in the hospital in a critical condition, police said.

"Post-mortem report has confirmed that the woman was gang-raped and she died because of consumption of some poisonous substance. All three accused have been arrested and further process was underway," police said. On Tuesday, the district administration, along with the local police, reached Usmani's

house with a couple of bulldozers and demolished his house located in Javara locality in Shahdol district. Speaking to IANS, Shahdol district collector Vandana Vadya said: "House of main accused Shadab Usmani was demolished today. While, two other accused

involved in the case were living a rented accommodation." On Monday, bulldozers were used to demolished houses in Sheopur district after a minor girl was gang-raped by three persons.

Crime against women in Madhya Pradesh has been a serious concern and the opposition Congress has been targeting the Shivraj government on this issue. Recently, chief minister Chouhan had held a meeting with top police official in the state to discuss the law and order situation. Recently, former Director General of Police (DGP) Vivek Johari who retired on March 4, during his farewell speech he has also mentioned that growing crime against women in the state is a bigger concern for Madhya Pradesh police.

# Every effort will have to be made to save rain water and to conserve water: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Jal Jeevan Mission activities are in progress in the state so that every house gets water from taps, instead of hand pumps. The area under irrigation is to be increased from 43 lakh hectare to 65 lakh hectare. But all this requires water. We have to take all possible measures to save rain water. Chouhan was reviewing the activities to be taken up to save water in the state at his residence office on the occasion of World Water Day.

Chouhan will dedicate Har Ghar Me Nal, Har Nal Me Jal Yojana on March 30 in rural areas of Burhanpur district under Jal Jeevan Mission. Shri Chouhan will also attend the District Water Parliament organized in Burhanpur. Under Jal Jeevan Mission, ground water based sources have been created in villages to ensure water supply to every household through taps. Mukhyamantri Jal Shakti Abhiyan will be launched with the objective of ensuring water conservation and ground water recharge to make these sources sustainable. Chief Minister said that collecting rain water is top priority. The goal of constructing various water structures like stop dams, check dams, etc. under Jalabhishek campaign, was to conserve rain water as much as possible. The work of reviving the rivers was also started on a large scale. These activities had stopped during the Covid period, but now again work has to be done on a large scale in the field of saving water. Chouhan said that along with making rainwater harvesting system to conserve rain water, a movement to build water structures for water conservation in urban and rural areas

## HOLI CELEBRATED WITH GREAT POMP IN ALL RELIGIONS



**Bhopal:** Under the joint auspices of the Sarvadharma companion Group, the festival of Holi, symbolizing the victory of truth over untruth, is celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm. All the people play Holi with herbal colors, Gulal and flowers. They also played Holi of flowers together and wish everyone a happy life. The member of the group, Saroj Kapoor, while giving all the blessings, said that we have to stay away from evil in every aspect and this festival is a festival of colors, we love it. It is celebrated with great enthusiasm, love and brotherhood. In fact, this festival is a festival to overcome evil and walk with good and brighten your life like colors. All the children also showers water from the roof. Special participants in this ceremony was Shiv Kumar Singh, Ravindran Krishnamurthy, Ravi Kapoor, Suresh Gawande, Sanghamitra Gawande, Preeti Kapoor, Meenakshi Nema, Brijendra Singh Rajput, Shanti Devi Singh Rajput, Mukesh Chauhan and Bhavna Chauhan.



conducted in a big way when the rainy season starts. Trees play an important role in conserving rain water. Trees absorb water. Rivers like Narmada ji survive only by the water absorbed by the trees. Chouhan directed that special care should be taken for the continuity and sustainability of water sources from which water will be supplied to villages and habitations under Jal-Jeevan Mission. During the meeting, information was provided on the implementation of Jal Abhishek Abhiyan. The works which are to be implemented in the campaign for rain water conservation and ground water harvesting will be identified by April 5. Technical and administrative approval for these works will be issued by April 9. All these works in Jal Abhishek Abhiyan will start from April 10. All the work will continue throughout the year.

on March 30 under Jal Abhishek Abhiyan. Jal-Jan Jagran Abhiyan will be launched to save water and conserve rain water. This year, under the Jal Abhishek Abhiyan, Pushkar Dharohar Samridhi Abhiyan is being run for the revival of old water structures. Under the campaign, new works of rain water conservation and ground water improvement, ground water recharge, river rejuvenation work, water conservation and promotion works in forest areas, plantation, in private farms, activities like water harvesting and promotion of drip and sprinkler irrigation will be conducted with public participation under various government schemes. Awareness and orientation activities will be conducted on a large scale for community participation in the Jal Abhishek Abhiyan. The works which are to be implemented in the campaign for rain water conservation and ground water harvesting will be identified by April 5. Technical and administrative approval for these works will be issued by April 9. All these works in Jal Abhishek Abhiyan will start from April 10. All the work will continue throughout the year.



श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी, प्रधानमंत्री

# 12 से 14 वर्ष के बच्चों का टीकाकरण

शुभारंभ : 23 मार्च 2022 से मध्यप्रदेश में

चिह्नित कोविड-19 टीकाकरण केन्द्रों पर टीका लगाया जाएगा।

12 से 14 आयु वर्ग के सभी बालक और बालिकाओं को यह टीका लगवाएं।

कोविड-19 बीमारी से प्रभावी सुरक्षा पाएं।

• दो डोज पूर्ण-सुरक्षा संपूर्ण, पहले वैक्सिनेशन-फिर वैकेशन



लोक स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग मध्यप्रदेश शासन द्वारा जनहित में जारी

हमेशा मास्क पहनें | साबुन से हाथ धोते रहें | शारीरिक दूरी बनाये रखें



श्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान, मुख्यमंत्री





## EDITOR'S SPECS

## 'Early Warning and Early Action'

**F**orecasts of what the weather will be have no longer enough. Impact-based forecasts that inform the public of what the weather will do are vital to save lives and livelihoods. Yet, one in three people are still not adequately covered by early warning systems, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said ahead of the World Meteorological Day 2022 on March 23. Weather, climate, and water extremes are becoming more frequent and intense in many parts of the world as a result of climate change. More of the world regions are exposed than ever before to multiple related hazards, which are themselves evolving as a result of population growth, urbanization, and environmental degradation. Covid-19 has complicated the challenges facing society and weakened coping mechanisms. Being prepared and able to act at the right time, in the right place, can save many lives and protect the livelihoods of communities everywhere, both now and in the future. World Meteorological Day on March 23 this year, therefore, has the theme 'Early Warning and Early Action', and spotlights the vital importance of hydro-meteorological and Climate Information for Disaster Risk Reduction. Over the past 50 years, there were more than 11,000 reported weather, climate, and water-related disasters, resulting in just over 2 million deaths and \$3.64 trillion in economic losses. That breaks down to a daily global average of 115 deaths and \$202 million in economic losses. According to WMO's 'Atlas of Mortality and Economic Losses from Weather, Climate and Water Extremes 1970-2019', the number of disasters increased five-fold between 1970 and 2019 while the economic losses increased even more -- by a factor of seven. The WMO Global Multi-hazard Alert System (GMAS) seeks to address the challenges by increasing the availability of authoritative warnings and information from the WMO Severe Weather Information Centre and to support early action.

## RUSSIA URGES WASHINGTON TO QUIT ESCALATING TENSIONS

**Washington must stop escalating tensions if it wishes to normalize ties with Moscow, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Tuesday.**

Moscow | Agencies

**W**ashington must stop escalating tensions if it wishes to normalize ties with Moscow, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Tuesday.

"They need to stop their escalation, both verbally and in terms of pumping the Kiev regime with weapons," Ryabkov said, adding that the US must also stop threatening Russia, Xinhua news agency reported citing Russian media reports.

"In the meantime, we are seeing a downward trend in relations," said Ryabkov,



who faults the US for the state of ties.

"We regret this. However, this doesn't have any effect on our determination to

## absolute edit

## INDIA CAPTURES ONLY 8% OF 4K BILLION CUBIC METERS OF RAIN

Pavan Kaushik

**M**any historians and archaeologists believe that the Indus Valley Civilisation that existed about 2,500 years ago mysteriously lost its existence and disappeared suddenly due to catastrophic water scarcity caused either by shifting rivers or by drastic climate change.

In India, a major portion of the population does not have a reliable and constant means of getting water for their daily needs. About 70 per cent of our sources are contaminated and country's major rivers are dying because of pollution. In June 2019, a report suggested that 65 per cent of all reservoirs in India reported below-normal water levels, and 12 per cent were completely dry.

A NITI Aayog report of 2018 clearly stated that nearly half of India's population, about 600 million people, is set to face extreme water stress in coming years. NITI Aayog also estimated that 21 major cities, including Delhi, would run out of groundwater by 2030.

With time, India has become the world's largest extractor of groundwater, accounting for 25 per cent of the total available water. Agriculture consumes over 85 per cent of water in India, contrary to the popular belief that domestic usage or industrial usage captures most of the water. With only 40 per cent assured irrigation, the farmers depend heavily either on rains or on groundwater for their needs.

Surprisingly, the irony is, the demand for water through rains is much less than actual rainfall received during the year. Even though the monsoon season in India extends over four months, and we barely get 30 days of heavy rainfall in all, India has not put-in much required efforts to wishfully capture this abundance of rainwater.

India needs a maximum of 3,000 billion cubic meters (BCM) of water a year while it receives 4,000 billion cubic meters of rains. The country captures only 8 per cent of its annual rainfall, which is amongst the lowest in the world. This also means that rain water harvesting and replenishing the ground water, and also conserving the available water resources seems to be one of the most efficient and doable solution, that has scope and



opportunity to resolve water scarcity.

There are many lessons in traditional water harvesting system in India too. One of the most popular rainwater conservation practices has been raindrop conservation. Water from the rooftops was collected during the rains and stored in tanks.

Water in community areas was collected and stored in artificial wells. Another method was harvesting monsoon water by diverting water from overflowing streams to be stored in water bodies.

The traditional procedures for saving water had their own methods too. The PATS of Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh are irrigation panels. These irrigation panels are fed using water that is diverted from fast moving hill streams. Then there is JAUHAD, the earth-

check dams that were meant to collect rainwater. Because of their earthen nature, water percolated easily into these systems. This resulted in tremendous rise of the groundwater levels. SANJHA KUWAN are wells built on a partnership basis. With multiple users, these SANJHA KUWAN were primarily used for irrigation. A group of farmers usually had one made amongst themselves. TALAAB have been very famous in the golden old days and even today. These are reservoirs -- natural, as in Bundelkhand, or man-made, as in Udaipur. These reservoirs were used to meet irrigation and drinking water requirements. These constructions lasted only as long as the monsoon. Post-monsoon, the beds of these water bodies were cul-

tivated with rice. Rajasthan has PAAR, a harvesting practice used in the desert areas of Rajasthan. This involves collecting rainwater from the catchment to let it percolate into the soil. According to Central Water Commission's report, India would reach a population of about 1.66 billion by 2050. The annual food requirement will also exceed 250 million tonnes. This also means that demand for water will also increase substantially.

Certainly, we do not want to be a civilisation that became extinct just because we could not preserve the most precious natural resource -- the Water.

## international

## SL oppn charges India-funded MRCC is a threat to security

**Sri Lanka's opposition has charged that India-funded Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centre (MRCC) is a threat to the country's security and might lead to geopolitical clash with China.**

Colombo | Agencies

**S**ri Lanka's opposition has charged that India-funded Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centre (MRCC) is a threat to the country's security and might lead to geopolitical clash with China.

Main Opposition, United People's Power (UPP) MP Harin Fernando claimed that under the project, entire Sri Lankan airspace is sold to India under the guise of a security system.

Sri Lanka Cabinet announced on Tuesday that approval has been given to build a MRCC in Sri Lanka with a grant of \$6 million from India. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa who is also the Defence Minister has presented the proposal and a MoU is to



be signed between Lanka government and an Indian Government-owned aerospace and defence electronics company, Bharat Electronics.

Claiming that the government was selling national resources to foreign countries, MP Harin Fernando said the proposed MRCC would be set up inside the Sri Lanka Navy Headquarters and eight other sub-units will be positioned around the country including one in Hambantota, where the China-run harbour is positioned.

"While Hambantota harbour is

given to China, a MRCC has been set up in the same area. This is a foolish decision that would lead to a war," Fernando claimed.

The MP also said under the agreement India is to provide three Dornier maritime surveillance aircraft to Sri Lanka, while the Sri Lanka Navy is to receive a 4,000 MT floating barge from India.

Responding to the Opposition's allegation, Joint Cabinet Spokesperson Minister Ramesh Pathirana denied selling of national resources to India and said the agreement will focus on increasing bilateral relations and training programme between India and Sri Lanka. He said the agreement is to be submitted to Parliament before it is signed.

Meanwhile, MP Fernando also alleged that allowing India to have the digital identities including biometrics of all Sri Lankans with the project Unified Digital Identity Framework is a threat to all Sri Lankans. "The digital identities of all Sri Lankans will be in the hand of India," he complained.

The Cabinet on Tuesday announced that an MoU is to be

signed between India and Sri Lanka with regard to implement Sri Lanka Unified Digital Identity Framework on an Indian grant of Indian Rs 300 million.

Meanwhile Leader of the Opposition MP Lakshman Kiriella in Parliament accused Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa of signing agreements with India secretly while keeping the parliament in the dark.

"Basil Rajapaksa who has not attended parliament for last three months is selling resources to India to buy food," MP Kiriella said in Parliament on Tuesday.

However, addressing the Parliament, former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe noted that it was fortunate to receive such amount of money from India at this difficult period but government has a responsibility to be transparent.

"This is special as this is the first time that India has helped Sri Lanka in this way. However, there are various stories that are spread about this. There is a responsibility on the part of Finance Minister or the Foreign Minister to clarify on this," Wickremesinghe said.

## BIDEN SAYS US MUST LEAD 'NEW WORLD ORDER'

Moscow | Agencies

**U**S President Joe Biden has raised eyebrows after he claimed a "new world order" would soon be established and that it was up to the US to lead it. During a speech on Monday at Business Roundtable's CEO Quarterly Meeting, Biden claimed the world was at "an inflection point" which "occurs every three or four generations" and that it was up to the US to determine the outcome, RT reported. "As one of the top military people said to me in a security meeting the other day, 60 million people died between 1900 and 1946, and since then we've established a liberal world order and that had not happened

## PTI dissidents reject Imran Khan's 'forgiveness' offer

**Rejecting Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's offer of "forgiveness" ahead of voting on the no-confidence motion, the ruling PTI's dissident lawmakers have refused to rejoin the party, The News reported.**

Islamabad | Agencies

**R**ejecting Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's offer of "forgiveness" ahead of voting on the no-confidence motion, the ruling PTI's dissident lawmakers have refused to rejoin the party, The News reported.



Kumar said stability is a must to steer Pakistan in the right direction. The disgruntled lawmaker said that he put up all issues before the Prime Minister, but nothing was done for the welfare of the minorities. Responding to a question, he said that three or four of the dissidents were elected on reserved seats while the remaining are all senior politicians. "If

there is the issue of lifetime disqualification, they would prefer contesting elections again," he added. Lamenting on the inappropriate language being used against him by PTI leaders and supporters, dissident Noor Alam Khan said he would move court against the abusive language.

Another PTI dissident, Ahmad Hussain Dehr, said the parliamentarians are yet to be allocated funds. In such a state of affairs, how can the government accuse the dissidents of accepting money to leave the party, he asked.

He said the Prime Minister should tell him how much money he spent on winning the loyalty of seven PML-N MPs six months ago. He said everything is not for money. He neither went to the Sindh House nor met the opposition leaders. He claimed that the Prime Minister doesn't listen to their problems and he only recalls them when he needs their votes, the report said.

## Putin weighing up use of chemical weapons in Ukraine: Biden

**Russia's false accusation that Ukraine has biological and chemical weapons is a "clear sign" that a desperate President Vladimir Putin is considering using them himself, US President Joe Biden said.**

Washington | Agencies

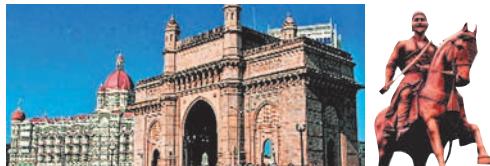
**R**ussia's false accusation that Ukraine has biological and chemical weapons is a "clear sign" that a desperate President Vladimir Putin is considering using them himself, US President Joe Biden said.

The US President said Putin's "back is against the wall and now he's talking about new false flags he's



setting up including, asserting that we in America have biological as well as chemical weapons in Europe - simply not true. I guarantee you", the Guardian reported. and allied countries, who have accused Russia of spreading an unproven claim that Ukraine had a biological weapons programme as a possible prelude to potentially launching its own biological or chemical attacks.

Biden spoke after the Pentagon said it had seen "clear evidence" Russian forces were committing war crimes and that it was helping collect evidence.



# ED ATTACHES PROPERTIES OF MAHA CM'S BROTHER-IN-LAW

**In a major development, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Tuesday that it has attached immovable properties worth around Rs 6.45 crore belonging to Pushpak Group's entity, Pushpak Bullion, in Thane.**

**Team Absolute | Mumbai**

**In a major development, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Tuesday that it has attached immovable properties worth around Rs 6.45 crore belonging to Pushpak Group's entity, Pushpak Bullion, in Thane. These include 11 flats in the**

Neelambari project in Thane, belonging to Shree Saibaba Grihanirmitti Pvt Ltd, which is owned and controlled by Shridhar Madhav Patankar.

Patankar is the brother-in-law of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray (brother of Thackeray's wife Rashmi Thackeray).

The action follows a money-laundering case registered in March 2017 against Pushpak Bullion and other group companies under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the ED said. Till date, the central probe agency has attached other properties worth Rs 21.46 crore owned by Mahesh Patel, Chandrakant Patel, their family members and companies controlled by them, in connection with the case. Subsequent probes

revealed that Mahesh Patel had siphoned off and layered funds of Pushpak Group's concern, Pushpak Realty, in connivance with Nandkishore Chaturvedi, who provided the 'accommodation entry'. Under the garb of a sale, Pushpak Realty transferred funds to the tune of Rs 20.02 crore back to Chaturvedi after layering it through various connected/unconnected entities, said the ED. The ED said Chaturvedi, who operates several shell companies, further transferred these monies through his bogus company, Humsafar Dealer Pvt Ltd, under the cover of extending 'unsecured loans' of more than Rs 30 crore to Shree Saibaba Grihanirmitti Pvt Ltd. Accordingly, the agency said that the money siphoned off by Mahesh Patel in connivance with Chaturvedi was

finally parked in the realty projects of the housing company owned/controlled by Patankar, the CM's brother-in-law.

The development came soon after Shiv Sena MP and its chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut accused the BJP of letting loose various central probe agencies against the state leaders in a bid to topple the Maha Vikas Aghadi government comprising Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress.

Reacting to the latest ED action, BJP activist and ex-MP Kirit Somaiya said that Thackeray's brother-in-law (brother of Rashmi Thackeray) is involved in "money laundering scam" with "use of shell companies" and "scammers will not be spared." However, there have been no reactions yet from the Thackeray family or the MVA partners to the ED move.

## Mistake to take Anil Deshmukh's resignation: Shiv Sena

**In a significant statement, the Shiv Sena on Tuesday said that it was a "mistake" to take the resignation of former State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, who was nabbed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) last November in an alleged money-laundering case.**

**Nagpur | Agencies**

**I**n a significant statement, the Shiv Sena on Tuesday said that it was a "mistake" to take the resignation of former State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, who was nabbed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) last November in an alleged



over 23,000 raids in the past seven years. They are trying to create 'fear' and topple the Maha Vikas Aghadi government here. We shall not bow down before Delhi's diktats," Raut asserted.

The Sena leader pointed out that he had submitted evidence of around 100 cases to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "but why is the ED not taking action" in those matters.

"Even I have been threatened with ED action. I am not scared and shall not be pressured by them. Several of our leaders are being harassed similarly by the Central agencies, but we shall continue our fight against them," Raut said.

## Price Rise: Non-subsidised LPG cylinder gets costlier

**In another hit to the wallet of the common man, oil marketing companies have raised the prices of non-subsidised LPG cylinders after a gap of over 5 months.**

**Team Absolute | Mumbai**

**I**n another hit to the wallet of the common man, oil marketing companies have raised the prices of non-subsidised LPG cylinders after a gap of over 5 months.

In Delhi, the 14.2-kg non-subsidised cylinder will now cost Rs 949.50.

Besides, price in Kolkata rose to Rs 976 per cylinder, while that in Chennai and Mumbai stood at Rs 965.50 and Rs 949.50 per cylinder.

Accordingly, this is the first hike since October 6, 2021.

The increase in selling price came days after an



astronomical rise in crude oil prices due to the Russia-Ukraine war. Furthermore, the state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) also raised petrol and diesel prices after more than four months of stable rates. At present, India imports nearly 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements.

**FROM JUNE, THE HALLOWED PORTALS OF THE COUNTRY'S PREMIER TRI-SERVICE TRAINING INSTITUTE, THE NATIONAL DEFENCE ACADEMY (NDA) LOCATED IN KHADAKVASLA, PUNE, WILL OPEN ITS DOORS TO WELCOME THE FIRST BATCH OF 19 GIRL CADETS, AN OFFICIAL SAID HERE ON TUESDAY.**

**Team Absolute | Pune**

**F**rom June, the hallowed portals of the country's premier tri-service training institute, the National Defence Academy (NDA) located in Khadakwasla, Pune, will open its doors to welcome the first batch of 19 girl cadets, an official said here on Tuesday.

The NDA is fully geared up for the unprecedented 'culture change', which will see more girls joining the armed forces in the future. As per the current plans, girls aged between 16-and-a-half and 19 shall be admitted for the first course starting June, with 10 seats allotted for the Indian Army, six for Indian Air Force and three for Indian Navy. Akin to their male counterparts, the female cadets will be required to clear the UPSC-NDA written exam, Services Selection Board interviews

and medicals before they can join the rigorous three-year training at the NDA. Sprawled across over 7,000 acres of land in Khadakwasla, the NDA plans to make "minimum changes to the existing curriculum, and the training in academics, drill, outdoor training etc. will be conducted in an absolutely gender-neutral manner". However, owing to physiological differences between male and female cadets, the physical training aspect may undergo certain changes for the training of girl cadets at the 69-year-old institute.

"The training objective at the NDA shall continue to remain as a centre of excellence for producing military leaders equipped with professional, moral and physical attributes required for leading the troops to victory in the future battlefields," said an official. Simultaneously, the NDA will provide dedicated support staff for

facilitating the training of girl cadets, though majority of training activities shall be conducted jointly keeping their employability in mind, wherein the women officers are required to command the troops of men.

Similar training methodology already exists in other pre-commissioning training academies like OTA Chennai, INA Ezhimala and AFA Hyderabad. For the stay of the girl cadets, one of the squadrons has been identified and is being refurbished with amenities and requirements specific for their training, and preparations are on to augment the existing infrastructure. Other necessary modifications shall also be undertaken to conform to the gender-specific lifestyle requirements, but for the long term, a separate squadron is being envisaged exclusively for girl cadets, said the official.

## Culture Change: NDA to welcome first 19 girl cadets in June

## 'People packed like sardines on trains': Maha to SC on need for vax mandates

**Team Absolute | New Delhi**

**T**hree state governments - Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh - on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that vaccine mandates to avail public transport and access public places were necessary in public interest.

Advocate Rahul Chitnis, representing the Maharashtra government, submitted before a bench, headed by Justices L. Nageswara Rao and comprising Justice BR Gavai that the vaccine mandate is in public interest and pointed out that a large number of people use public transport in Mumbai.

"People are packed like sardines on the trains. In a train, it is difficult to maintain 6 feet social distance and keep your mask up," he said, emphasising on the utility of vaccine mandates while using public transport. He added that the mandate was a reasonable restriction fulfilling the tests of proportionality.

Chitnis also refuted the submission that the mandate is manifestly arbitrary and it violates the Article 14 of the Constitution, arguing that it is a measure to protect the right to life of the people

under Article 21. "Rights have to be balanced. State would be justified in protecting a larger number of people," he submitted.

Counsel for Madhya Pradesh adopted the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta regarding the need to balance the rights in the context of Covid vaccination. The counsel informed the bench that a notice making vaccination mandatory to avail ration has been withdrawn. Additional Advocate General Amit Anand Tiwari, representing Tamil Nadu, submitted that the state has made vaccination mandatory for accessing public spaces and added that it is required for larger public interest.

"It is to provide security from a higher outbreak," he submitted.

The top court was informed that the state government derived the power to impose the vaccine mandate from the Tamil Nadu Public Health Act, 1939 and the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

Tiwari brought on record reports establishing that when more people are vaccinated, the number of infections reduces. "When you are vaccinated, the likelihood of your hospitalisation is also lower," he added. It was submitted

before the bench that vaccine mandates were justified -- it prevents mutation of the virus and unvaccinated people cause health risk.

Counsel for Bharat Biotech, manufacturer of Covaxin, refuted the claims of advocate Prashant Bhushan, representing the petitioner, that Phase 3 trial of the vaccine has not been published. The counsel said the Phase 3 trial data was published in Lancet medical journal in November 2021. "Our trials are going on and informed consent is taken," counsel said. Citing Mehta's submissions, the counsel added that over 180 crore vaccines have been administered and adverse events were reported in decimal percentile. After detailed arguments in the matter, the top court reserved its verdict.

Bhushan argued that due to vaccine mandates, "my fundamental right to move freely cannot be restricted in arbitrary manner". The top court was hearing a petition filed by Jacob Pulyel, a former member of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, seeking the data of clinical trials and adverse effects of Covid vaccines and also challenging the vaccine mandates issued by some state governments.

**In an unprecedented and extremely rare surgery in India, doctors at a Mumbai hospital removed cucumber-sized stones from a 70-year-old man's right knee and made him mobile again.**

**Team Absolute | Mumbai**

**I**n an unprecedented and extremely rare surgery in India, doctors at a Mumbai hospital removed cucumber-sized stones from a 70-year-old man's right knee and made him mobile again.

The patient - Laxmikant Madhekar, a labourer from Amravati - had been suffering from severe pain in the right knee for a year, preceded by swellings for the past decade or so. "It affected his overall mobility, difficulties in walking, climbing stairs, or even

getting up after sitting," said S.L. Raheja Hospital, Mahim's Consultant Orthopedic and Joint Replacement Surgeon Dr Siddharth M. Shah.

After the patient was admitted to the hospital, Dr Shah conducted tests, diagnosed the problem as an extremely rare condition called 'Multiple Giant Synovial Chondromatosis' of the knee joint, and prepared a suitable treatment plan for Madhekar.

He explained that this condition affects one person in every 1,00,000 people in which the inner lining of the knee joint produces nodules of cartilage instead of the normal secretion of a lubricating

fluid. "These modules break off, become loose bodies inside the knee, usually small like pills or bigger ones the size of a marble. In Madhekar's case, there were multiple, giant nodules, more prominent in size, which is an even rarer variant of this condition," said Dr Shah. For instance, the largest stone size extracted from Madhekar was 12x6x5.5 cms which had to be broken and removed in two pieces, and a total of four such giants and dozens of smaller stones were taken out of his knee joint. Such massive and multiple stones, along with the entire inner lining of the knee are unknown to have been

removed from the knee joint anywhere in India and this is stated to be the second-largest knee-stone removal in the world, Dr Shah added.

The much-relieved Madhekar said he underwent immense suffering since 2010 and felt there was a lot of liquid in his knee joint resulting in swells and discomforts in his movements.

Initially, the water was removed through an injection, but it did not offer any long-term solutions and greatly affected his movements after which he came to the Mumbai hospital and underwent the successful 'knee-stone' removal procedures.

## St. Xavier's College adamant on offline exams

**Team Absolute | Mumbai**

**S**t. Xavier's College, Mumbai is having a "mock exam" on Thursday, to "acclimatise students in the practice of writing". The South Mumbai Autonomous College, has decided to hold offline examinations despite appeals by students against the decision.

Students say, they have not attended lectures physically for the last two years due to Covid lockdowns and restrictions. All lectures till date have been conducted online; this includes practicals for science stream students.

The students have collected a total of 1,287 signatures against this decision in an online appeal made out to the college authorities but to no avail. The principal in response "offered outstation accommodation at various venues, and including the college hostel."

Principal Rajendra Shinde has stuck to his decision. He has given the appeals from 'outstation' students, who find it difficult to travel to Mumbai as well as find accommodation for a short period of time, a pass.

The college has made some 'cosmetic'

changes to the 'Exam Time Table' but according to a student, who did not want to be named, "it hardly matters."

The college on its website has put up the seating arrangements for the examinations which will begin on March 28 at 8.15 a.m.

Lectures are scheduled to end on March 26. The students are neither being given 'study leave' nor extra time to attempt the theory questions in the paper.

Students had approached higher education minister Uday Samant and he directed the Joint Director Education to write a letter to colleges.

Sonali Rode, Joint Director said: "We are requesting colleges who have decided to hold Semester 6 examinations offline to hold them online since there will be a disparity in marks and students will not be tested on common grounds. To ensure there is no academic loss to the students we are requesting colleges to hold exams online."

Uniform statutes under Section 72 (10) of the Maharashtra Public Universities Act 2016 allow autonomous colleges to evolve methods to assess a student's performance, conduct examinations and notify results.

Colleges that have decided to adopt the offline mode of examination are being shielded by this rule.

Colleges like St. Xavier's maintain that University Grants Commission (UGC) gave colleges autonomy to raise academic standards. The directive received from the Joint director is not legally binding. However, the autonomous colleges issue graduation certificates under the seal and signature of Chancellor of the Mumbai University.

In a long message addressed to students of St. Xavier's College, Principal Shinde has justified his decision suggesting to the students that they could appear for "additional exams in October 2022". However, students rejected this appeal. They think the decision comes across as being 'cold and inhuman'.

"The college has ditched us at the last moment. How can Principal Shinde suggest that we take the additional examination in 2022. Will we want to forfeit this academic year? Shinde said our online scores will not be accepted abroad but how does it matter in a

Covid year. What about students from Mumbai University. He has succeeded in pulling the wool on our eyes," a student said on the condition of anonymity.

"All we want is for us to be treated at par with the other students of Mumbai University. The assessment of all students should be common for all of us. If we are being asked to write offline exams then the rest of the university students should also be assessed through offline exams," added the student.

"The psychological impact of being asked to suddenly write an examination paper within a stipulated time period, even if it is a combination of MCQs and lengthily answers, has not been assessed by the college," said a professor of St Xavier's College on condition of anonymity.

"The issue has become one of prestige. Human sympathy has been thrown out of the window. Students are finding it difficult, financially, to travel to Mumbai to take the exams. The Deputy College controller of examinations Dr. Sangeeta Shetty, who has no love lost for students is actually calling the shots."

Xavier's was the first college to be granted autonomy by the University of Mumbai in 2010. It was founded by the Jesuits on January 2, 1869.

Anu Aga who led Thermax; Teresa Albuquerque, Historian; Norma Alvares, Goan environmentalist; Zeenat Aman, Actor; Mukesh Ambani; Head of Reliance Industries; Shabana Azmi, Actress and Vidya Balan, Actress are some of its alumni.

Sophia College has decided to shift the offline exams to online mode after receiving a letter from the office of the joint director higher education (Mumbai division) dated March 11, requesting for a change in mode of conducting final semester examinations.

This was in keeping with the decision of the University of Mumbai to hold Final Exams in online mode.

However the directive is not binding on the colleges. Other Mumbai-based colleges, N.M. College, Mithibhai and Jai Hind, have adopted offline examinations.

Mithibhai College claimed "100 per cent students attended the offline exams."



# DANIELA MELCHIOR JOINS 'FAST & FURIOUS 10'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Daniela Melchior is the latest to join the cast of 'Fast & Furious 10'. 'Aquaman' star Jason Momoa recently became the first big addition to the cast, joining series stars Vin Diesel, Tyrese Gibson, Ludacris, Michelle Rodriguez and Sung Kang, who all are expected to return with Justin Lin on board to direct. Diesel and Lin are producing, reports 'Deadline'.

Plot details are unknown about the film, which is set to bow on May 19, 2023.

The most recent pic in the lucrative franchise, 'F9', bowed this past summer, grossing more than \$720 million at the global box-office to make it one of the biggest films of the year.

Melchior is coming off playing Ratcatcher 2 in James Gunn's 'The Suicide Squad' opposite Idris Elba and Margot Robbie. Next up for her she has the thriller 'Marlowe' with Liam Neeson and 'Assassins Club' opposite Henry Golding.



## Red Hot Chili Peppers get a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame



Los Angeles | Agencies

Six-time Grammy-winning alternative rock band Red Hot Chili Peppers, who wrote themselves into music history with their ageless number, 'Californication', will finally get a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame.

The aging rockers, who have sold more than 100 million records since they formed the band in 1983, will receive the honour at an unveiling ceremony scheduled for Thursday, March 31, reports 'Variety'.

The star -- the 2,717th on the Walk of Fame -- is located in the second row at 6212 Hollywood Boulevard, adjacent to Amoeba Records on the south side of the street, and next to TV producer Harry Friedman's star.

The stars of 'Wheel of Fortune' host Pat Sajak and the legendary second host of 'The Tonight Show', Jack Paar, will neighbour that of the Chili Peppers' to the west and east, respectively.

George Clinton, who produced the band's famous 1985 album 'Freaky Styley', will unveil the star alongside actor

and playwright Woody Harrelson, LA musician and recovering drug addict Bob Forrest and emcee Nicole Mihalka, who's also the chair of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce board.

The Chili Peppers' forthcoming album 'Unlimited Love' is due on April 1, according to 'Variety'. The band will then embark on a world tour, its first since the 2016-17 run that accompanied their previous album 'The Getaway'.

'Unlimited Love' also marks the return of John Frusciante, who first joined the Chili Peppers in 1988 and played on some of the band's most successful albums, including 'Mother's Milk', 'Blood Sugar Sex Magik', 'Californication', 'By the Way' and the 2006 double LP 'Stadium Arcadium'.



## Jake Gyllenhaal, Lizzo, Jerrod Carmichael to host 'SNL' in April

Los Angeles | Agencies

Comedy show 'Saturday Night Live' has set the lineup of hosts for its next batch of shows, tapping Jerrod Carmichael, Jake Gyllenhaal and Lizzo.

While Lizzo will be pulling double duty as her own musical guest, Gunna and Camila Cabello will perform alongside the other two hosts, reports 'Variety'.

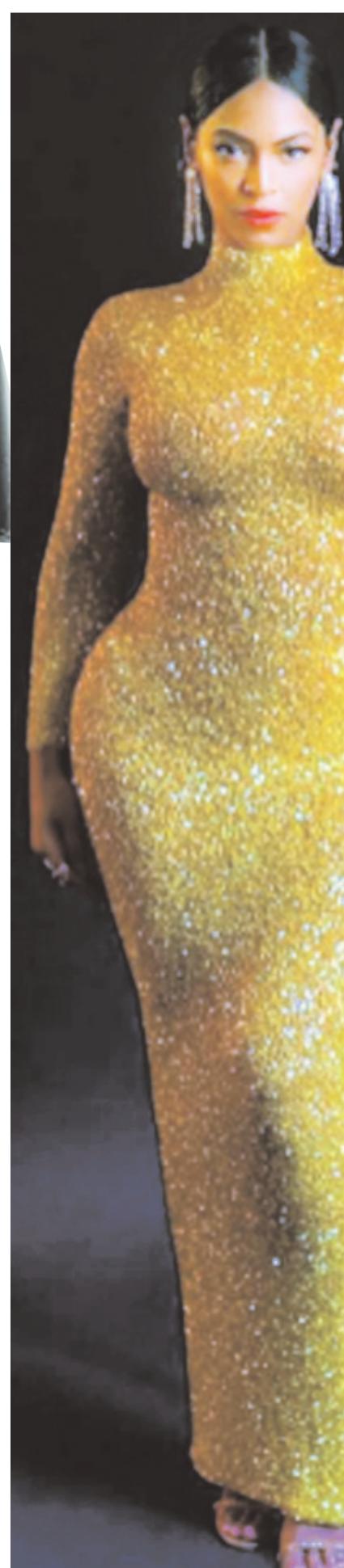
Carmichael will make his 'SNL' hosting debut April 2.

Carmichael's new special, 'Jerrod Carmichael: Rothaniel', debuts April 1 on HBO. He will be joined at Studio 8H by Gunna, who is also marking his first time as an 'SNL' musical guest.

The Grammy-nominated

artist's latest album, 'DS4Ever', debuted at No. 11 on the Billboard 200 chart. The following week, April 9, Gyllenhaal will emcee 'SNL' for the second time. The Academy Award-nominated actor next stars in 'Ambulance', coming to theatres

the day before he hosts the show. Cabello will join him that night, making her second appearance as 'SNL' musical guest. The Grammy-nominated artist's highly anticipated new album, 'Familia', will be released April 8.



## Beyoncé in talks to perform in Oscars

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Beyoncé is in talks to perform on Oscars telecast from Compton tennis courts. Organisers behind the big award event are pulling out all the stops to land an iconic performance from best original song nominee Beyoncé, multiple sources close to the show told 'Variety'.

While the superstar made many an awards campaign stop over the past months in support of her track 'Be Alive', co-written with artist Dixon for the film 'King Richard',

Beyoncé's camp has been in deep talks with producers to mount a satellite performance of the song -- one that would possibly open the show, and broadcast live from tennis courts in Compton, California. According to 'Variety', the concept began solidifying last Monday, three individuals with knowledge of the talks said.

The location, of course, is where sports legends Venus and Serena practiced relentless drills in their youth under the watchful eye of their father, Richard. One possible scenario

would have Will Smith, who plays the titular character in the film, appear onsite with Beyoncé and then presumably head north to Hollywood in time to take his seat for the announcement of the best actor category, sources added. An Academy spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment. A Beyoncé spokesperson couldn't immediately be reached for comment.



## BRITTANY SNOW FELT 'SAFE' FILMING INTIMATE SCENES FOR 'X'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Brittany Snow plays adult film star Bobby-Lynne in Ti West's erotic slasher film 'X' but felt comfortable filming intimate scenes because there was a lot of "consideration and care" during filming and everything was discussed at length beforehand.

She said: "I think I felt safe (filming the sex scenes) because there was so much consideration and care about every single shot in that movie." "Nothing was shown that wasn't talked about at length beforehand. Nothing was off the cuff. Everything was very methodical in terms of why we were showing this, how we were going to film it," Snow added, femalefirst.co.uk.

The 'Hairspray' actress explained that the film's intimacy co-ordinator, Tandi Wright, was keen to make sure that all graphic scenes in the film were done solely out of interest for the characters. In an interview with Collider, Snow said: "There was an intimacy coordinator on set, Tandi Wright, who we worked really closely with who was an angel and made sure that everything was based in character and not gratuitous sort of shock and awe." "I think that was necessary for me to do the movie. And Ti was really at the forefront of making sure that everyone, the females and men in the movie felt comfortable." The film also stars Mia Goth as aspiring adult film actress Maxine Minx and Martin Henderson as her boyfriend Wayne who embark on a road trip with Bobby-Lynne and fellow actor Jackson Hole (played by Scott Mescudi) with the intent of shooting a movie to release on video, but things go awry when tensions build during filming in an old farm guesthouse.



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



## 'Game Of Thrones' star Lena Headey to make directorial debut

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Game of Thrones' and '300' star Lena Headey is to make her feature directorial debut on psychological thriller 'Violet'. Based on the successful recent novel by SJI Holliday, the story follows two solo female travelers who immediately hit it off and decide to team up for the next leg of their adventure, reports 'Deadline'. According to 'Deadline', as the journey continues things start to unravel -- because neither of the women is who they claim to be. Producers describe it to us as having elements of 'The Talented Mr. Ripley' and 'Single White Female', while publishers have also compared it to 'Killing Eve'. The book originally was optioned by Dark Alliance Film. Ed Boase and Marcus Stamps from the company are aboard as executive producers. Production is slated to start in October.

Headey wrote and directed 2019 BAFTA-nominated short film 'The Trap' and directed her GoT costar Maisie Williams in a music video for singer Freya Ridings. The Emmy nominee recently starred in Netflix action-thriller 'Gunpowder Milkshake' and upcoming 'The White House Plumbers'.

Headey said: "Susi's Violet is a compulsive page turner that stayed with me long after I finished the book -- it's exciting that my first feature as a director will be such an intense female thriller. It's a wild ride to the finish with vast cinematic scope, centering around two very complex women who will completely unravel over the course of the film. I can't wait to get rolling."

Eva Longoria



WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

## YASTIKA BHATIA, SNEH RANA STAR IN BIG INDIA WIN OVER BANGLADESH



Hamilton | Agencies

**Y**astika Bhatia scored a half-century, while Sneh Rana came up with all-round heroics (27 and 4/30) in a must-win situation as India secured a convincing 110-run victory over Bangladesh in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup league match at Seddon Park here on Tuesday.

The win helped the runners-up of 2017 edition of the tournament move up to third spot on the points table with three wins and an equal number of losses. But more importantly, it's the healthy +0.768 Net Run Rate (NRR) that could help India make the semifinal knockouts if multiple teams finish their assignments on identical points.

Not to forget that the Mithali Raj-led India will also have to win their last league game against South Africa at Christchurch on March 27.

It wasn't all smooth sailing for India, though, as they were struggling

at 176/6 before Sneh Rana and Pooja Vastrakar finished with a flurry to set Bangladesh a target of 230. Yastika Bhatia was the star of the show with a patient 80-ball 50. As wickets kept falling, she stitched two crucial partnerships with Harmanpreet Kaur and Richa Ghosh to keep the scoreboard ticking in the middle overs.

Rana was brilliant with the ball as well, finishing with four wickets that broke the back of Bangladesh's batting line-up. All the Indian bowlers looked unplayable from the word go and were rewarded for their tight bowling with wickets as the required run rate kept climbing for the opponents. Bangladesh's chase never took off as only five batters registered double-digit scores, with Salma Katun top-scoring with 32.

Defending 230, India chose to open the bowling with pace-bowling stalwart Jhulan Goswami and spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad. Rajeshwari broke through first by dismissing Sharmin Akter while the veteran

pacer kept things tight at the other end. India struck once again in the Powerplay through Pooja Vastrakar, who trapped Fargana Hoque in front of the stumps.

With spinners operating at both ends on a slow track, Bangladesh found getting runs tough. Sneh Rana, who created several chances in her first spell, was rewarded with the wicket of Nigar Sultana, who holed out at mid-on attempting to accelerate. Poonam Yadav claimed her first World Cup wicket by dismissing Moshida Khutun, whose 54-ball 19-run innings came to an end in the 16th over.

Rumana Ahmed's stay at the crease didn't last long either, with Rana picking up her second wicket of the game as Bangladesh lost half their side. Lata Mondal and Salma Khutun provided some resistance with a 40-run stand before Goswami got in on the act to remove Rumana. Rana picked up wickets in consecutive overs and eventually finished with a four-for.

Goswami finished things off with a wonderful yorker to dismiss Ritu Moni as Bangladesh fell short by 110 runs. Shafali Verma tried to hit one out of the ground and was stumped, before skipper Mithali Raj hit her first ball straight to Fahima Khatun at cover as India were quickly reduced to 74/3. Bhatia and Harmanpreet Kaur repaired the innings but it came at the cost of the run rate falling - their 34-run partnership came in 70 balls before Hoque's direct hit caught Kaur short of her crease. India once again had to rebuild their innings with Ghosh joining Bhatia at the crease. The wicketkeeper-batter took the attack to the bowlers early on, smashing Lata Mondal for consecutive boundaries in the 30th over. The duo kept finding the boundaries regularly but just when they looked set, Ghosh was caught behind trying to cut a ball that was too close to the body. Bhatia got to her second fifty of the tournament but fell off the very next ball attempting the paddle sweep. At 180/6 at the end of 44th over, India needed to finish well and Rana and Vastrakar did just that. Their partnership of 48 in 38 balls propelled India to 229/7.

**Brief scores :**  
India 229/7 in 50 overs (Smriti Mandhana 30, Shafali Verma 42, Yastika Bhatia 50, Richa Ghosh 26, Pooja Vastrakar 30 not out, Sneh Rana 27; Ritu Moni 3/37) beat Bangladesh 119 in 40.3 overs (Salma Khutun 32; Jhulan Goswami 2/19, Pooja Vastrakar 2/26, Sneh Rana 4/30) by 110 runs.

FIFA U-17 WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

## Tournament could be conducted in partial bio-bubble



Navi Mumbai | Agencies

**T**he FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup, scheduled to be held in India in October 2022, will be conducted under partial bio-bubble conditions and probably in fewer venues than earlier envisaged.

Though a final decision is yet to be taken, Jamie Yarza, Director of FIFA Tournaments, said on Tuesday that as of now it appears that they may not have conduct the event in strict bio-secure conditions.

"We do have an open mind on such matters but as this moment it looks like we may not have to implement strict bio-bubble protocols. But the pandemic is

not over so we will take all necessary safety measures. At the end of the day, the health of the players is very important," said Yarza.

With the global Covid-19 pandemic still raging, the international football federation, FIFA, is re-evaluating its various options and its delegations are currently visiting India, visiting the various venues to assess the situation before the sport's world governing body takes a final call regarding the U-17 Women's World Cup.

The 16-team biennial event, originally scheduled in 2020, could not go ahead because of the Covid-19 pandemic. FIFA has instead allocated the 2022 edition to India which as per original plan is scheduled to be held as soon as possible but would consider all issues before taking a final call so as not to regret later that they should have taken a different decision.

at Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Kolkata, Goa and Navi Mumbai, from October 11-30. A FIFA team led by

Jamie Yarza, Director of FIFA Tournaments, on Tuesday inspected the DY Patil Sports Stadium, the training facilities and options for team hotels. The team will next visit Goa and Bhubaneswar. Another team had a few weeks back done a similar inspection of Kolkata and Bhubaneswar and will also submit its report. Yarza said they are planning to take a decision as soon as possible but would consider all issues before taking a final call so as not to regret later that they should have taken a different decision.

## Djokovic regains No.1 ATP ranking; Taylor Fritz biggest mover

New York | Agencies

**S**erbian tennis stalwart Novak Djokovic has wrested back his world No.1 spot on the ATP Rankings from Russia's Daniil Medvedev -- who slipped to No. 2 --, even as American Taylor Fritz is the top mover this week, climbing seven spots to a career-high No. 13 following his maiden Indian Wells title triumph on Sunday. The 24-year-old Fritz jumped into the top-15 of the ATP Rankings for the first time after he captured his maiden ATP Masters 1000 title at the BNP Paribas Open,



defeating Spanish stalwart Rafael Nadal in the final.

Fritz became the first American man to lift the trophy in Indian Wells since Andre Agassi in 2001. It is the second time he has tri-

umphed after a tour-level event, following his victory in Eastbourne in 2019, according to atptour.com. Nadal, the winner of a 21 Grand Slams, too moved up a spot after he made it to the title round at Indian Wells. The 35-year-old, who clinched the crown in Indian Wells in 2007, 2009 and 2013, earned hard-fought wins against Australian Nick Kyrgios and countryman Carlos Alcaraz to improve to 20-1 this season. The other notable overs this week are, No. 10 Hubert Hurkacz, (plus-1), No. 24 Gael Monfils (plus-4), No. 28 Alex de Minaur (plus-3)

Team Absolute | New Delhi

**T**he Indian Premier League is an opportunity for many players to discover themselves as a future captain for the Indian cricket team, former India coach Ravi Shastri said on Tuesday.

Shastri, however, lavished praise on the India skipper Rohit Sharma, saying he is doing a remarkably good job, but India will be looking at who will be captaining the team in the future.

"Virat has already relinquished his job. Rohit is an outstanding captain in white-ball cricket. But I think, this IPL India will be looking at who will be captaining the team (in future) --



there is Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant, KL Rahul," Shastri said on Tuesday during a press conference organised by Star Sports, the official broadcaster

of IPL 2022.

Shastri said that in every edition of IPL, some players showed their talents.

"The beauty of IPL is that it keeps surprising you. Last IPL we saw Venkatesh Iyer, no one had heard of him and by the time it got over he was in the Indian team. So you expect the unexpected," he said.

Shastri said that the whole country will be "very closely watching" newly appointed Gujarat Titans' captain Hardik Pandya's every move in the upcoming IPL.

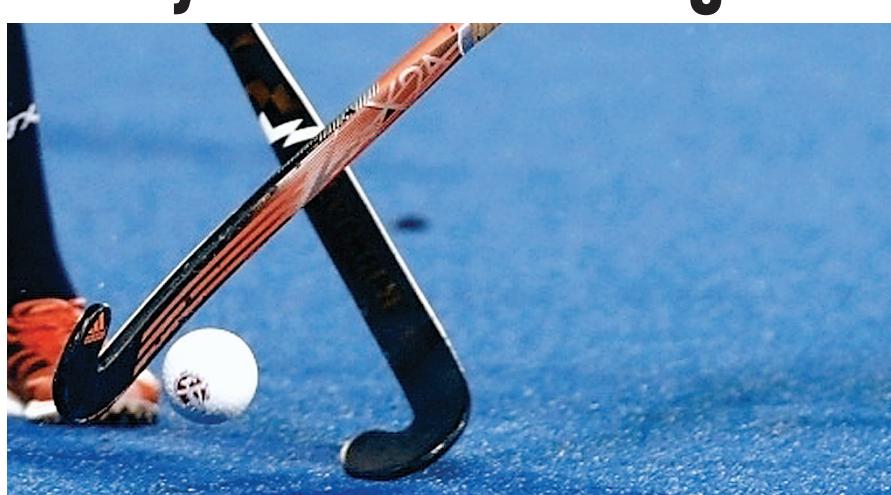
"The whole country would be very closely watching Hardik Pandya in the IPL, we all know what he is capable of," Shastri said.

## Domestic hockey season set to begin in Delhi today

Team Absolute | New Delhi

**S**six teams will vie for top honours in the second Hockey India Senior Women Inter-Department National Championship 2022, while 29 teams will compete in the second Hockey India Sub-junior Men Academy National Championship 2022, scheduled to commence in New Delhi and Ghumanhera (South West Delhi), respectively from Wednesday.

The senior women's tournament will be held at the Major Dhyani Chand National Stadium. The teams will play five matches each in the pool



stage and the top two teams will play the final on March

30. The finalists of the previous edition, Railway Sports

Promotion Board (RSPB) and Sports Authority of India

(SAI) will play the opening match of the tournament on Wednesday.

RSPB coach and former Indian women's team captain Pritam Siwach said her team is prepared to defend the title. Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) coach Pradeep Singh, whose side finished third in the previous edition, is confident of putting up a better show this year. As many as 29 teams will compete in the second Hockey India Sub-junior Men Academy National Championship which will be played at the Major Dhyani Chand Hockey Stadium in Ghumanhera on Wednesday.

3RD TEST, DAY 2

## Pakistan 90/1 at stumps, trail by 301 runs against Australia

Lahore | Agencies

**P**akistan were 90/1 at stumps, trailing by 301 runs against Australia on the second day of the third and final Test at the Gaddafi Stadium, here on Tuesday. Abdullah Shafique (45 not out) and Azhar Ali (30 not out) were unbeaten at the crease, when play ended on Day 2.

Resuming the day at 232/5, Australian batters -- Alex Carey and Cameron Green batted through the opening session to regain control of the match. The batters slowly built their partnership, steadily pulling Australia out



of the delicate situation. But a change of end did the trick for Australia, as

Cummins, in the very first ball of the 13th over, dismissed Imam on 11, trapping him in front of the stumps. Shafique, joined by Azhar Ali, then stitched together a solid partnership and ensured that Pakistan were not in any trouble for the remainder of the day's play.

**Brief scores :**  
Pakistan 90/1 (Abdullah Shafique 45 not out, Azhar Ali 30 not out; Pat Cummins 1/27) trail Australia 391 (Usman Khawaja 91, Cameron Green 79; Naseem Shah 4/58, Shaheen Afridi 4/79) by 301 runs

## Lanning's batting guides Australia to another easy win

Wellington | Agencies

**A**ustralian skipper Meg Lanning made a tricky chase look easy as the 29-year-old batting stalwart hammered an unbeaten 135 off just 130 deliveries against South Africa to guide the six-time ICC Women's World Cup champions to their sixth consecutive win in the tournament at the Basin Reserve on Tuesday. Thanks to another Lanning master-class, Australia remained unbeaten in the World Cup, chasing down the Proteas' 271/5 in just 45.2 overs for an emphatic five-wicket victory. Earlier, opener Laura Wolvaardt continued her rich run of form with a stylish 90 as the Proteas posted a decent total from their 50 overs. But that total was never going to be enough with Lanning in combat mode, despite two wickets apiece to seamer Shabnim Ismail (2/33) and spinner Chloe Tryon (2/44) for South Africa.



**Brief scores :**  
South Africa 271/5 in 50 overs (Lizelle Lee 36, Laura Wolvaardt 90, Sune Luus 52, Marizanne Kapp 30 not out) lost to Australia 272/5 in 45.2 overs (Meg Lanning 135 not out, Tahlia McGrath 32; Shabnim Ismail 2/33) by five wickets.

## Dubai 2022 World Para Athletics GP: Dharambir and Devendra clinch silver

Dubai | Agencies

**P**ara athletes Dharambir and Devendra Singh claimed a silver each as the Dubai Para Athletics Grand Prix concluded at the Dubai Club for People of Determination grounds here.

Overall, India took three medals on the opening day on Monday with Jyoti Behera claiming bronze in 400m women's T37/38/47 final.

In men's club throw final F32/51, Dharambir, the 2018 Asian Para Games silver medallist in Jakarta, threw the club to a distance of 31.09 metres in his second attempt to finish second behind Algeria's Walid Ferhab who stayed ahead right from the first throw and saved his best for the last heave -- 37.42m. With the effort, Dharambir also set a new Asian record. Great Britain's Stephen Miller took the bronze with 29.28 metres.

Devendra settled for silver in men's discus throw F44 after hurling it to a distance of 50.36 metres in combined F42/43/44 category. Kuwait's Faisal Sorour, the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic bronze medallist, took the F42 gold with a throw of 47.61m, which was also an Asian record, while France's Badr Touzi took bronze in F42 with a 39.16-metre throw. Six records were broken on the opening day, including a world record, thanks to the efforts of Columbia's Tokyo 2020 Paralympic champion Jose Gregorio Lemos Rivas, who stole the limelight in men's javelin final



F12/13/38. The 30-year-old hurled the javelin to a distance of 60.58 metres in his fourth throw, for a world record and the gold medal.



## WHY POOJA HEGDE SIGNED UP FOR ROHIT SHETTY'S UPCOMING FILM ?

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctress Pooja Hegde, who is constantly shuffling between Tamil, Telugu and Hindi film industry with multiple releases in the pipeline, reveals why she decided to act in Rohit Shetty's upcoming film 'Cirkus'.

On one hand, Pooja will be next seen in Vijay Thalapati's 'Beast' that is releasing on April 13 and on the other hand, she also has two Bollywood films - Salman Khan's 'Bhajaaan' and 'Cirkus', Rohit's directorial also starring Ranveer Singh.

She will also be seen in Telugu film 'Acharya' starring Chiranjeevi and Ram Charan.

The actress shares the major reason behind doing a Rohit Shetty film.

Pooja told reporter: "I have to mention that in our house even though all of us love watching Rohit sir's films because they are super entertaining, my father is the biggest fan of Rohit Shetty. My father is one of those movie buff in the house who live with the character, behave like them for as long as one week post the watching of the movie."

"I mean, who put a tika on the forehead and a rudraksha bracelet and change his voice like Mr Bachchan and talk to me and my brother like the way he was doing in the film 'Sarkar'! My father did (laughed)."

While Pooja shared that 'Singham', 'Golmaal 1', 'Simmba' were some of her personal favorites, she shared another incident of how her father reacted to few of these films.



## MEHREEN PIRZADA PENS SOLEMN NOTE ABOUT STARDOM AND ITS PITFALLS

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

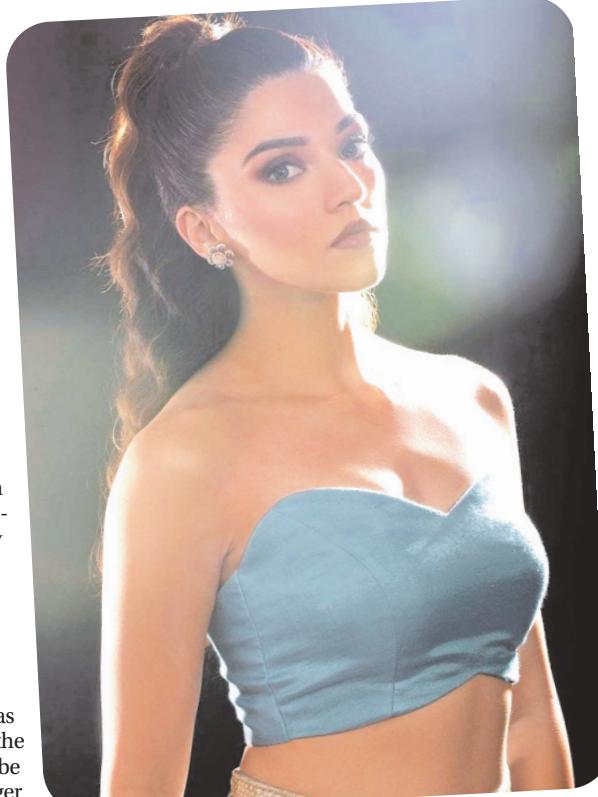
**M**ehreen Pirzada, who will be seen next in Anil Ravipudi's commercial entertainer 'F3', has penned a lengthy note about stardom and its darker side.

Through her recent Instagram story, the 'Krishna Gadi Veera Prema Gaadha' actress grabbed massive attention, revealing the pitfalls of every star. "There must be something crazy about the artists, that we willfully choose the life of uncertainty. A lifetime with no guarantee", Mehreen's post reads.

Mehreen further mentioned how the actors have to go through two extremes, unprecedented success, and monumental failure any time.

"We sit, stand, wake, sleep, starve, ache in awkward spots, glued together by a shared thrill," Mehreen stated.

The post also talks about the extremity in the lives of the stars, as they need to work irrespective of the situation, while they also need to be away from their families for a longer time. "We push ourselves to a breaking point, all for a piece of art," she concluded. Mehreen's post has left her fans and followers to ponder over what difficulties celebrities go through. The 'F2' actress' fans comment that despite the fact that the celebrities get to enjoy unlimited attention, they also have their struggles.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctor Mohit Malik is making his debut in the world of OTT with an upcoming exciting crime thriller by Tanveer Bookwala. The actor will be seen in a new light with the project. Touted to be an intense crime thriller, the Voot special show will see Mohit playing a role completely contradictory to his previous onscreen characters.

Says a source, "Mohit has been a very versatile actor on screen, and each of his roles he has played till date have been very different from the other. So he seemed like a very adaptable face to fit this particular character for the series. This role requires a balance of mental and physical strength and Mohit was the correct fit for the role".

The series will also star Sanaya Irani alongside Mohit in the lead role. Mohit and Sanaya are going to be playing exciting characters in this much awaited series.



## MOHIT MALIK TO MAKE OTT DEBUT WITH AN INTENSE CRIME THRILLER

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctress Nushrratt Bharuccha says she is on cloud nine as she has back-to-back releases. Her latest is an announcement of a film and a song release at the same time.

The actress has recently made the headlines with the virality of her recent love song, featuring Sunny Kaushal alongside the announcement of her upcoming lead project, 'Selfie', co starring Akshay Kumar and Emraan Hashmi.

Speaking about the same, the actress mentioned, "It's definitely an exciting time professionally because I am finally getting to share some of the things I have been working on, with the audience. Yesterday our song, 'Kya Yehi Pyaar Hai' released and we also announced 'Selfie' so these 2 projects coming together, while I am shooting for other various projects, really feels like I'm walking on Cloud Nine."

Nushrratt  
on  
back-to-back  
releases: I'm  
walking on  
cloud nine

"It is definitely very motivating and makes me want to push myself and keep putting out my best." The actress is to be seen with Sunny Kaushal and Emraan Hashmi for the first time, for 'Hurdang' and 'Selfie', respectively.

The actress will be next seen in 'Ram Setu', 'Janhit Mein Jaari', 'Chhorii 2', 'Hurdang' and 'Selfie'.



Kangana Sharma

## If Amitabh Bachchan had refused this role I wouldn't make the film: Ajay Devgn

Team Absolute | Mumbai



**B**ased on a true event, Runway 34 revolves around Captain Vikrant Khanna played by Ajay Devgn, a flying prodigy, whose flight takes a mysterious course after take-off from an international destination. The trailer of Runway 34 was launched in the presence of the film's Director and lead actor, Ajay Devgn, along with the rest of his cast, Rakul Preet Singh, Angira Dhar and Aakanksha Singh.

The film also stars Amitabh Bachchan and Boman Irani in pivotal roles. For the uninitiated, Ajay Devgn and Amitabh Bachchan have worked in several movies together including Satyagraha, Khakee, Major Saab and more.

When asked about directing and working with Amitabh Bachchan, Ajay Devgn recalled directing a schedule of their film Major Saab, when his director Timu Anand fell ill. He said "But this is the first time I worked with him in a full-fledged film (as a director). I've known him ever since I was a child. I would visit his set often. Later, I went on to work with him in nearly six films. To say anything about him would be a cliché because I haven't seen any other hardworking, professional actor. The energy and dedication he works with is amazing. Even if he is facing any problem, once he's on set, he forgets everything. I feel inspired to do better work when I look at him," he added. Further speaking about casting, Ajay Devgn revealed that he might not have made the film if Amitabh Bachchan hadn't agreed to come on board. Runway 34 is scheduled to release on the big screen on April 29.

## 'Baahubali' is a game changer of my career: Prabhas

Team Absolute | New Delhi

**P**an-India star Prabhas credits his 2015 film franchise 'Baahubali' as a game changer for his career in the world of cinema. 'Baahubali: The Beginning' released in 2015. The Indian epic action drama film is directed by S.S. Rajamouli. It also stars Rana Daggubati, Anushka Shetty, Tamannaah, Ramya Krishna, Sathyaraj, and Nassar. The first of two cinematic parts, the film follows Shivudu / Shiva, an adventurous young man who helps his love Avanthika rescue Devasena, the former queen of Mahishmati who is now a prisoner under the tyrannical rule of king Bhallaladeva. The story concludes in 'Baahubali 2: The Conclusion'.

In a conversation with reporter, Prabhas talked about his game-changing project: "It is 'Baahubali'. It is definitely 'Baahubali' for my life. It was super exciting for me. Anywhere I come (people recognise me)... If this happened because of 'Baahubali'. So, everything in my life is 'Baahubali' even if I get lucky and bigger but it's all that film." His latest release is 'Radhe Shyam'. Prabhas plays the titular role in 'Radhe Shyam', a palmist who can find out about both the past and future of a person. Pooja Hegde essays the part of his love interest in the Radha Krishna Kumar directorial.

Prabhas's upcoming movie line-up, meanwhile, suggests that he will be busy in the coming months. He will be seen in the multi-lingual mythological film 'Adipurush', 'Salaar', 'Project-K', 'Spirit', and another movie with director Maruthi.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

