

# absolute india

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## CURRENT BOOSTER SHOTS EFFECTIVE AGAINST VACCINE EVADING OMICRON, SAYS STUDY

# GET YOUR SAVIOR

Omicron has greatly diverged from the ancestral SARS-CoV-2 strain. It consists of several sublineages, including BA.5, which is predicted to soon dominate globally by replacing other variants. The protective immunity generated by the primary vaccine series or prior infection has been severely blunted by Omicron sub-variants. But a booster dose, regardless of the type of Covid vaccine, brings neutralising antibodies against all the Omicron sub-variants to appreciable levels, according to the findings published in the journal Science.

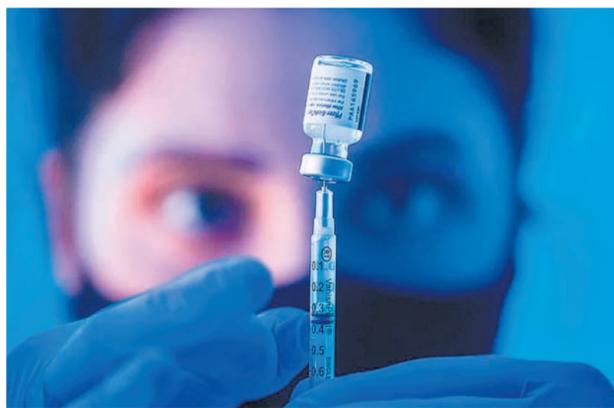
NEW YORK | Agencies

Although Omicron sub-variants have evolved to evade antibody responses from the primary Covid vaccine series, a new laboratory study suggests existing booster doses may elicit sufficient immune protection against severe Covid-19 disease from the highly transmissible strain. Researchers from the University of Washington first examined the functional impact of the mutations in the Omicron sub-variants spike proteins.

They found that the ability of the Omicron BA.5 spike to bind with its host receptor (ACE2) was more than 6 times stronger than the ancestral SARS-CoV-2 strain. The researchers then evaluated, in human plasma samples, the neutralising activity, elicited by vaccines or by prior infection, against the various Omicron sub-variants. Some of the samples came from individuals who had Covid very early on in the pandemic before vaccines were available.

Only 5 of these 24 early-pandemic individuals had detectable neutralising activity in their plasma against any of the four Omicron sublineages tested. Even then, their response was very weak.

Thus, despite the high degree of Omicron subvariant immune escape, the team added booster doses with currently available vaccines will likely offer strong protection against severe disease.



## INDIA LOGS 20,557 COVID CASES, 40 DEATHS

New Delhi: India saw a considerable rise in daily Covid cases with 20,557 new infections in the past 24 hours against previous day's 15,528 count, Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday. In the same period, 40 more deaths took the toll to 5,25,825. Meanwhile, the active caseload has marginally increased to 1,45,654 cases, accounting for 0.33 per cent of the country's total positive cases. The recovery of 18,517 patients in the last 24 hours took the cumulative tally to 4,31,32,140. Consequently, the recovery rate stands at 98.47 per cent. Meanwhile, the Daily Positivity rate has also risen to 4.13 per cent, while the Weekly Positivity Rate currently stands at 4.64 per cent.

## CENTRE REVIEWS COVID SITUATION IN 9 STATES SHOWING UPSURGE

New Delhi: Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting to review the Covid situation in nine states reporting a surge in new daily cases or a rise in positivity.

The Centre flagged concern over low level of testing and vaccination in Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

NITI Aayog's Member, Health, Dr V.K. Paul, who was also present in the meeting, said: "We need to be mindful that Covid has not gone. Looking at the global scenario, we need to be at high alert. There is poor surveillance, poor testing and below average vaccination in many states undergoing the present surge."

He urged states to improve the testing in areas with high positivity, increase surveillance as per the revised surveillance strategy, and speed up vaccination.



**ABSOLUTE COMMENT**  
Zafar Alam Khan

## BJP's fort collapsed in Gwalior - Chambal

The results of the urban body elections in State have raised alarm bells for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. However, these results could be a booster dose for the Congress, that lost its government in 2018 due to defection.

The defeat of the party in respective spheres of influence of its stalwarts has left saffron parties' big stalwarts in worry.

The BJP's defeat in Jyotiraditya Scindia's bastion in the first phase and now in Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar's constituency Morena, has raised concerns among the party-folds.

Notably, Morena also happens to be the hometown of BJP state president Vishnu Dutt Sharma. While, last time there were BJP's mayor in all the sixteen cities of the state. This time too prior to the polls the saffron party was claiming to retain all the sixteen mayoral seats, but managed to win only nine.

The Congress, which did not even have a single Mayor, has won five seats while the debutant Aam Aadmi Party has opened its account with one city and one city has gone to independent, meaning that BJP has lost in seven cities. The party has suffered major defeat in Gwalior Chambal region considered as its strongest fort.

Morena is the parliamentary constituency of Narendra Singh Tomar, one of the strong ministers in the Modi government. He himself was in-command here. Losing seven seats in big cities in MP for the BJP that used to win with the support of RSS and its devoted workers is a matter of introspection.

Congress's advance from Chambal to Vindhya, Mahakaushal has also proved that it is recovering in the state.

BJP has lost both municipal corporations in Gwalior and Chambal. Congress has won two out of three seats in Mahakaushal, Jabalpur and Chhindwara, while BJP lost two out of three in Vindhya. AAP has won Singrauli and Congress has registered victory in Rewa after 23 years.

A strange coincidence has also happened... BJP state president and MP VD Sharma is a resident of Morena, Jabalpur is his in-laws and Katni is in his Khajuraho parliamentary constituency. BJP has lost all three places.

Sources close to the saffron party have indicated that RSS's keeping an eye on election results, internal churning has started in the BJP organization and from Bhopal to Delhi there will be a review of the big defeat in the municipal elections.

## SC grants bail to Zubair, says 'power of arrest should be used sparingly'

As Uttar Pradesh's Additional Advocate General Garima Prasad submitted before a bench headed by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud that Zubair should not tweet after the court granted him interim bail, Justice Chandrachud said: "It is like telling a lawyer that you should not argue. How can we tell a journalist that he will not write? If there are any tweets against law, he will be answerable. How can we pass any anticipatory order that someone will not speak?" As Prasad contended that there should be a condition that Zubair will not tamper with evidence, he replied: "All the evidence is in public domain."

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted interim bail to Alt News co-founder Mohammed Zubair in the six FIRs registered against him by the Uttar Pradesh Police.

A bench headed by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said: "There is no reason for deprivation of liberty of the petitioner...to be released on interim bail in each FIR (UP FIRs)...power of arrest should be used sparingly..."

The bench said SIT constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government, to investigate the UP FIRs, is rendered redundant and is disbanded.

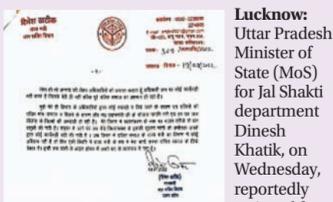
It added that Zubair can move the



Delhi High Court for quashing of the FIRs.

During the hearing, senior advocate Garima Prasad, representing the UP government, argued that Zubair gets paid for the tweets and the more malicious the tweets, the more payment he gets. The counsel added that Zubair had got close to Rs 2 crore and he is not a journalist. Zubair's counsel advocate Vrinda Grover called the cases an orchestrated investigation for stifling dissent. The top court said, "No justification to keep him in continued custody and subject him to endless rounds of custody". It also clubbed all the FIRs against Zubair, and transferred all cases from Uttar Pradesh to Delhi Police.

## UP Minister sends resignation to Amit Shah



UP Minister of State (MoS) for Jal Shakti department Dinesh Khatik, on Wednesday, reportedly resigned from the Yogi Adityanath-led government in the state. Khatik, who represents the Hastinapur Assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh, sent his resignation letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah. In his resignation letter, which has gone viral on social media, the minister alleged corruption in his department and said that officials do not listen to him. He also claimed that his department officials do not adhere to his orders and neglect him as he belongs to "downtrodden section of the society". He was reportedly upset over not being allocated work in the ministry even after passing of over 100 days since the government was formed. Khatik also skipped the council of ministers meeting held on Tuesday, as per reports. However, there was no confirmation of the resignation from the government.

## 7 electric bikes gutted in fire at Pune showroom, overcharging suspected



Team Absolute | Pune/New Delhi

In yet another fire incident involving electric vehicles (EVs) in the country, at least seven electric bikes caught fire at a showroom here reportedly due to overcharging. The fire brigade had to be brought in to douse the fire at the showroom situated near the Gandhadham area of Market Yard on Monday night.

Reports earlier claimed that the EV fire engulfed a showroom that sells electric two-wheelers and bikes from Komaki India.

However, Subhash Sharma, Operation Head, Komaki, told IANS that the recent fire incident caused at a showroom is actually not a Komaki vehicle and doesn't contain the original battery provided with the scooter.

"The showroom is multi-brand. The claim for cause of fire which is described as overcharging is also very suspicious as battery being

charged by dealer in case of over-heating normally should emit smoke only as chemistry of the battery is 'LIPO4' and should heat up to 115 degree Celsius which cannot be ignored," Sharma explained.

Moreover, he said, after going through the service record, "we have proof that the vehicle being claimed as cause of fire was subject to removal of batteries and didn't contain company connectors".

No one was hurt during the EV fire incident.

The staff at the showroom spotted fire in one e-bike, which later spread to six others, destroying them all.

The showroom dealer said in a statement that the cause of the fire was not known yet and they were inspecting the cause of the fire incident. Alarmed at the continuing fire incidents, the government-formed committee to formulate new guidelines for EVs is set to submit its report soon.

## Gujarat school children given jobs under MGNREGS

IN A SHOCKING INCIDENT, FOUR SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN WERE ISSUED JOB CARDS, AND BANK ACCOUNTS WERE OPENED IN THEIR NAMES, UNDER THE MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (MGNREGA) IN GUJARAT'S CHHOTAUDEPUR DISTRICT.

Team Absolute | Chhotaudepur (Gujarat)

District Development Officer Ganga Singh told to reporter that GRS Lalji Durgarbhil had issued four job cards in the names of school children, a departmental inquiry was conducted and now he has been dismissed from service.

"Notices were issued to the village Sarpanch and Talati and both asked to give explanation... if they fail to give satisfactory explanation, action will be taken against them."

Talking to reporter, Ambalal, the husband of Kukarda village's sarpanch Gaunaben Ambalal Durgarbhil, said: "My wife is illiterate, so she signed the employment list prepared by GRS Lalji without verification... Lalji did not show the jobs cards with photos though she had so demanded, while signing documents... it is not her fault."

"I have learned from other villages about three job cards issued in the name of school going children, a boy studying in class 10 and two girl students studying in class 9, and



their bank accounts were opened with Bank of Baroda's Tanakhla village branch. At the most they were paid for a 25 to 26 days job." After withdrawing the money, Lalji had

even bought school stationery for children from the payment, and there is a possibility that children's parents might be involved in it, he alleged.



# DELHI POLICE BUST EXTORTION RACKET BASED ON CHINESE LOAN APP; FOUR HELD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With the arrest of four persons, the Delhi Police have unearthed a multi-crore Chinese loan application racket which was extorting money from people across India, an official said on Wednesday.

The four accused have been identified as Anil Kumar (35), Alok Sharma (24), Avnish (22) and Kannan (35). Apart from these four, the police have also issued notices to 149 persons who were part of a fake call centre.

Furnishing details, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer District), Brijendra Kumar Yadav, said a complaint was lodged by a man on the NCRP portal, alleging that after getting lured by an advertisement on Facebook regarding hassle-free loan of Rs 50,000, he had downloaded a loan app by the name of 'On Stream'.

"While downloading this app, it prompted the complainant to give access to his phone's contacts,



gallery etc., which he did. He was granted a loan of Rs 6,870 following which the accused persons started harassing him using his contacts and photographs stored in the gallery of his cellphone," the DCP said.

To get rid of this problem, the victim paid Rs 1 lakh to the accused persons, but they kept on sending him derogatory messages demanding more money. "The family was under great trauma," the officer said. Based on the complaint, the Cyber

Police Station registered an FIR under Section 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code and began investigating the matter. Later, Sections 384 (punishment for extortion) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) were added to the FIR.

During the course of the investigation, technical surveillance was used which helped trace the culprits near the Ramphal Chowk in Dwarka. "The police found that a big call centre was being run from a building

in Sector 7, Dwarka, for the past two years in the name of Fly High Global Services and Technology," Yadav said. Subsequently, the police conducted a raid and it was found that the whole syndicate was being run by Anil Kumar, the mastermind, through 134 female tele callers, 15 male callers and three team leaders.

"They purchased 300 SIM cards by raising a firm in the name of Silpani International, of which 100 were used to send derogatory WhatsApp messages to compel the victims to fall for their extortion threats. The remaining 200 SIM cards were termed as spam which they discarded," the DCP said. The accused extorted money from innocent victims in connivance with Chinese loan application firms. They also routed proceeds of crime amounting to Rs 10 crore to two Chinese nationals going by the name of Albert and Trey, and got Rs 3 crore as commission in March. "The accused created CRM IDs and kept harassing people by morphing their photographs with derogatory remarks," said the officer.

# Railways placed purchase order of 39K wheels with Chinese manufacturer

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A purchase order for 39,000 wheels for LHB coaches has been placed by Indian Railways with Chinese manufacturer Taiyuan. The rate on which the contract was placed was 1.68 per cent higher than the rate per wheel given in the Letter of Acceptance (LoA) by an Ukrainian firm, the Railway Ministry informed the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said, "Purchase order for 39,000 wheels for LHB coaches has been placed by Indian Railways on M/s TZ (Taizhong), Hong Kong, with manufacturer M/s Taiyuan, China, against global tender."

The ministry said that due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, the supplies against the ongoing contracts with the firms from Russia and Ukraine have been affected.



"Earlier, LoA for 30,000 wheels for LHB coaches was issued on M/s KLV with a manufacturer based in Ukraine. Subsequently, M/s KLV invoked the force

majeure clause due to its inability to supply on account of the war, so formal purchase order could not be issued to the Ukrainian firm," Vaishnav said.

# Over 2K govt schools in Odisha being run with single teacher

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Over 2,100 government-run and government-aided schools in Odisha are being run with only a single teacher, school and mass education minister Samir Ranjan Dash said here on Wednesday.

Replying to a question raised by BJP MLA Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia in the state assembly, Dash said the state has 30,377 primary schools; 19,238 upper primary schools; 2,601 English medium schools and 10,017 high schools. A total of 2,107 schools, functioning in all 30 districts of Odisha, are having only one teacher each. Of them, 1,672 schools are being run under the school



and mass education department while remaining 435 are government-aided schools, said the minister. As per the written reply of Dash, Mayurbhanj district has the highest 190 such schools followed by Ganjam district with 169 schools. Similarly, 153 schools in Keonjhar district,

130 schools in Sundergarh and 119 in Balasore district are also running with a single teacher. In another reply, the minister informed the Assembly that the government's per child expenditure at primary education level has been increased from Rs 9,184 in 2014-15 to Rs 25,041 in the year 2021-22.

# NEET innerwear row: Kerala Police arrest 5, NTA panel to reach spot

Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

Five women, including two low-grade employees of a private college, were arrested on Wednesday for frisking NEET girl aspirants and purportedly making one remove her innerwear during the examination at a centre in Kerala, police said.

The arrested are S. Mariamma and K. Mariamma of Mar Thoma College, Ayur where the incident occurred, and Geetha, Jyotsna Joby, and Beena, who are employees of the Star Training Academy, the private agency that conducted the exam in Kerala.

The arrested were charged under the IPC's Section 354 (assault or criminal force to a woman with the intent to outrage her modesty) and Section 509 (word, gesture, or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman).

The NTA, which is responsible for the conduct of NEET examination, had given the contract for the conduct of examination to a private agency in



Thiruvananthapuram, and this gave the sub-contract to an agency at Karunagapally who employed 10 untrained personnel, who, according to the students, were involved in the incident.

A student who was subjected to the frisking said that she was forced to remove her innerwear and that when she asked how she could write the examination in such a situation, the women told her that every student was going through this.

The Mar Thoma College, Ayur where the incident took place witnessed huge protests from student organisations including violent protests. The SFI, KSU, and ABVP carried out protest marches and the college was vandalised.

Meanwhile, the families of those arrested are protesting before the Ayur police station against what they termed a wrongful arrest. Joby, father of Jyotsna, told media persons that a man named Aravindakshan Pillai had asked him whether he could provide a few people for duty during the NEET examination and he offered Rs 500 per head.

# DELHI: HEAVY RAIN AFFECTS NORMAL LIFE; TRAFFIC SNARLS AT SEVERAL PLACES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The heavy downpour in the national capital on Wednesday brought some respite from the summer heat but disrupted the normal life.

As per reports, the rain caused massive traffic jams in various parts of Delhi leaving commuters stranded in long queues of cars at major roads like ITO junction among others.

Some roads that witnessed massive traffic jams were Barapullah flyover towards DND flyover, Dwarka-Palam road towards airport, Samalkha Crossing towards Kapashera Border, Palam flyover to Sadar Bazar metro station road, Delhi Cantt, Timarpur among several others.

Apart from traffic jams, water-logging was also reported from all the low-lying areas of the city.

The Delhi Traffic Police issued several advisories for the commuters to avoid certain stretches that were submerged in the rain water.

"Traffic is affected at Kapashera Chowk due to waterlogging. Kindly avoid the stretch," the Traffic



Police said. Traffic was also affected on Najafgarh Road near Tooda Mandi due to waterlogging.

A bus broke down near Dwarka Mor Metro Station affecting the traffic in the carriageway from Dwarka Mor towards Uttam Nagar. In south Delhi also, the traffic was disrupted at

Aurobindo stretch from INA to AIIMS, Moolchand Underpass on Ring Road, Aurobindo Marg from IIT to Adhchini and MB road near Vayusenabad due to waterlogging and vehicle breakdown. In central Delhi, the traffic was affected on New Rohtak Road in the carriageway from Anand Parbat towards Zakhira. Just hours before the heavy downpour, the India Meteorological Department issued advisory over the rain impact expected and action suggested due to rain over Delhi-NCR and adjoining areas. It said that there could be water logging in low lying areas, occasional reduction in visibility, disruption of traffic in roads leading to increased travel time and also minor damage to kutchra roads.

The weather department asked the people to check for traffic congestion on their route before leaving for their destination.

"Follow any traffic advisories that are issued in this regard. Avoid going to areas that face the water logging problems often. Avoid staying in a vulnerable structure," the advisory read.

# Sharpshooters involved in killing of Moosewala shot dead

Chandigarh | Agencies

In a major police crackdown on Wednesday, two sharpshooters -- Jagroop Rupa and Manpreet Manu -- involved in the killing of famed Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala were shot dead by Punjab Police on the outskirts of Amritsar close to the India-Pakistan border.

They were holed up inside a farmhouse and were eliminated in a five hours of exchange of fire. One AK-47 rifle and one pistol were recovered from the encounter site. Moosewala

was gunned down on May 29 close to his native village near Mansa in Punjab.

The operation was carried out by the Anti-Gangster Task Force at Bhakna village close to the Attari border, where Manpreet Singh, a.k.a. Manu, and Jagroop Singh, a.k.a. Rupa, were holed up. Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav was present at the encounter spot. Anti-Gangster Task Force chief Pramod Ban confirmed the killing of Manpreet, a henchman of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, along with Rupa. They, among others, had fired at

Moosewala on May 29 which led to the singer's death on the spot. Last month, Ban told the media that jailed gangster Bishnoi, the main conspirator, had confessed that the plan to kill Moosewala was hatched in August last year to avenge the murder of Vicky Middukhera. Ban had said 13 people have been arrested in the case so far after the first arrest was made on May 30, a day after the murder of Moosewala. Canada-based gangster Goldy Brar, who is a member of the Bishnoi gang, had claimed responsibility for Moosewala's murder.

# WOMAN INSPECTOR MOWED DOWN BY CATTLE SMUGGLERS IN RANCHI

Ranchi:

Woman inspector Sandhya Topno was mowed down by a pick-up van during vehicle checking in the Tupudana police station area of Ranchi in the wee hours of Wednesday. She was taken to the hospital in a critical condition, where she died during treatment. It is reported that the police of Khunti and Gumla districts were chasing the vehicles smuggling cattle. The Ranchi police also had information that some vehicles carrying cattle were about to pass through Tupudana. A police team was deployed on the highway near Hulhundu for checking the vehicles. At around 3 a.m. a pick-up van with cattle was signalled to stop, but the driver sped away after running over the woman inspector. Sandhya was a 2018 batch officer of Jharkhand Police. Later, the police seized the vehicle that had crushed the inspector. The driver has been arrested, but the cattle smugglers in the vehicle managed to escape. Based on CCTV footage, the police are trying to trace the smugglers.



# Muslim educational institutions in K'taka to establish colleges allowing hijab

Bengaluru | Agencies

As many as 13 Muslim educational institutions have sought Karnataka government's permission to set up Pre-University Colleges in Dakshina Kannada which would enable Muslim girl students to wear hijab inside classrooms.

According to sources in the Education Department, all the applications have sought consent to open PU colleges (first and second PUC) in the coastal district of Dakshina Kannada from where the agitation for hijab began in Karnataka.

Though a majority of Muslim girl students are adhering to the High Court's verdict that no attire representing religious symbol is allowed and attending classes without hijab, a section of girl students are insisting on wearing of hijab.

They have discontinued their studies as education institutions are not allowing them with hijab into classrooms.

The government order empowers the College Development Committees to frame rules in this regard. As many as 14 applications have been submitted to open PU Colleges in Dakshina Kannada district among which 13 are submitted by Muslim academic institutions.

So far, the permission has been granted for only 1 Muslim institute to start PU College, sources confirmed. There was demand from the Muslim community to open separate classes for their girl students enabling them to wear hijab. Hundreds of girls took out a procession



last week in Mangaluru city demanding their right to wear hijab under the banner of the Campus Front of India (CFI). The matter is pending before the Supreme Court. Hijab crisis which started by six students of Udupi Pre-University Girl's College turned into a state-wide crisis and made international headlines. The crisis resulted in social unrest and threatened

the law and order situation in the state. The Karnataka High Court formed a Special Bench of three judges, which dismissed the petitions by Muslim girl students seeking permission to wear hijab. The ruling BJP in Karnataka is strictly implementing rules on hijab in academic institutions and not allowing students to wear hijab in classrooms.

# UP COPS ARRANGE WEDDING FOR YOUNG COUPLE

Pratapgarh: In a heart-warming gesture, the Pratapgarh police stepped in to arrange for the wedding of a young girl who had been abandoned by her parents and family members. The boy's family had also disowned him for some reasons. The police arranged for the wedding at the Baba Awadeshwar Nath Dham in Shahpur Beti village on the occasion of the first Monday of the month of 'Sawan'. Devotees, who arrived to offer prayers to Lord Shiva at dham, also turned into guests for the wedding and gave their blessings to the couple. Station Officer (Hathigawn) Santosh Singh said, "The marriage of Khushboo and Vijay was solemnised at the campus of Baba Awadeshwar Nath Dham.

CHANGE OF NAME	CHANGE OF NAME
I SIMA RAKESH PAWAR is legally wedded wife of No. 4579009P NK PAWAR RAKESH DEVIDAS presently residing at Vasaka (LO), PO - Lohoner Teh- Deola District-Nasik Maharashtra Pin-423102 have changed my name from JAGTAP SHIMA ABHIMAN to SIMA RAKESH PAWAR vide Affidavit No. 75AA 644562.	I SABANA PARWEEN is legally wedded spouse of No. 4582762Y NK HAZARAT ANSARI presently residing at Vill Malkoko post Padariya Thana Barhi Malkoko, Hazaribagh, Jharkhand Pin-825405 have changed my name from SABANA PRAWEEEN to SABANA PARWEEN vide Affidavit No. 75AA 644561.
I No. 15702037Y L/NK RAMESHWAR VISHWAKARMA son of Late GYANI VISHWAKARMA presently residing at Vill Nardha Post Dhanora Teh Khurai dist sagar (M.P) Pin : 470117 have changed my name from RAMESHWAR VISWAKARMA to RAMESHWAR VISHWAKARMA vide Affidavit No. 75AA 644563.	I RAMKALI BAI VISHWAKARMA is legally mother of No. 15702037Y L/NK RAMESHWAR VISHWAKARMA presently residing at Vill Nardha post Dhanora Teh Khurai dist sagar (M.P) pin : 470117 have changed my name from RAMKALI BAI VISWAKARMA to RAMKALI BAI VISHWAKARMA vide Affidavit No. 75AA 644564.



# AFTER GWALIOR, BJP LOSES MAYORAL POST IN MORENA; CONG WINS REWA AFTER 25 YRS

**▶ AFTER LOSING THE MAYORAL POST IN THE GWALIOR MUNICIPAL POLLS IN THE FIRST PHASE OF COUNTING IN THE URBAN BODY ELECTIONS IN MADHYA PRADESH, THE RULING BJP GOT ANOTHER JOLT IN THE GWALIOR-CHAMBAL DIVISION. THE BJP LOST THE MAYORAL POST IN THE MORENA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, THE HOME TURF OF PARTY STALWART AND UNION MINISTER NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR IN THE SECOND PHASE, THE RESULTS OF WHICH WERE ANNOUNCED ON WEDNESDAY.**



Pradesh, the ruling BJP got another jolt in the Gwalior-Chambal division. The BJP lost the mayoral post in the Morena Municipal Corporation, the home turf of party stalwart and Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar in the second phase, the results of which were announced on Wednesday.

The BJP also lost the mayoral post in the Rewa Municipal Corporation against its main political rival Congress after 25 years. Congress candidate Ajay Mishra (Baba) won Rewa's mayoral post defeating the BJP's Prabodh Vyas. Similarly, Congress nominee Sharda Solaki defeated the BJP's Meena Jatav for

the mayoral post in Morena. Out of the five municipal corporation results announced in the second phase of counting on Wednesday, both the BJP and the Congress 2 mayoral posts each. The BJP retained the mayoral posts in the Ratlam and Dewas municipal corporations, while an independent candidate won the Katnia mayoral post. With this, in 16 municipal corporations across Madhya Pradesh, the BJP has bagged nine (7 in the 1st phase and 2 in the 2nd phase) mayoral posts, the opposition Congress, which had lost all mayoral posts in the last elections, has managed to

win five (3 in the 1st phase and 2 in the 2nd phase), while debutant Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) got one mayoral post (Singrauli) and one (Katni) was bagged by an independent candidate.

It is the first time the Congress will have as many as five mayors since 1999 after direct election for mayoral posts was introduced in Madhya Pradesh.

The Congress' victory in Gwalior's mayoral post and now Rewa and Morena will boost the confidence of the party's cadre. The Gwalior-Chambal division is considered the home turf of two BJP stalwarts, Union Ministers Jyotiraditya Scindia and Narendra Singh Tomar. Rewa has a total of eight assembly seats and the BJP had won all 8 in 2018. The Member of Parliament from Rewa is also from the BJP.

Reacting to the party's performance in the urban body elections, former chief minister and Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee chief Kamal Nath said, "The Congress party has registered a landslide victory for the first time in Morena. Along with Morena, the people of the entire Gwalior-Chambal belt have said that they are completely with the Congress party. This victory is the victory of the people and after 15 months there is a call for great change in Madhya Pradesh."

# Conduct a study of educational level of special backward tribes: Governor

## Governor discussed departmental plans with the officials of Tribal Affairs Department

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that a study should be conducted of the educational level of the special backward tribes. He said to prioritize the efforts to bring those in target group who are deprived of education and benefits under the mainstream of development. Patel was being apprised about the implementation of departmental schemes with the officials of the Tribal Affairs Department at Raj Bhavan. Governor said to prepare a development map for the basic facilities in the tribal areas. In this, the details of basic facilities available in 89 development blocks of the state should be maintained. The needs for creating basic infrastructure should be identified. Effective implementation of Pradhan Mantri Aadi Adarsh Gram Yojana can be done through the development map. He asked to give information to students of higher secondary schools about the facilities and bene-



fits being provided by the government. He underlined the need to prepare a database of students studying in class twelfth. The Governor said that arrangements should be made to share the experiences of successful students. By discussing with them, the future generation can be inspired and the procedural arrangements, developments and implementation works can be perked up in the plans according to their experiences.

Patel inquired about the availability of budget funds in proportion to the tribal population. He said that the bud-

get formulation process starts at the beginning of the year. Therefore, it is necessary that the departments should submit the demand of funds to the government by the end of December in respect of new schemes, programmes and financial requirements for them.

Tribal Cell Chairman Deepak Khandekar, Principal Secretary Tribal Affairs Department Pallavi Jain Govil, Principal Secretary to Governor DP Ahuja, Tribal Cell Member Secretary BS Jamod and other members and departmental officers were present.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After losing the mayoral post in the Gwalior municipal polls in the first phase of counting in the urban body elections in Madhya

# Monitor implementation of schemes constantly

**▶ MOS (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR HORTICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING KUSHWAHA CONDUCTS DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW**



Processing Department in Mantralaya on Wednesday. Kushwaha told to start the construction work of Potato Tissue Culture Lab in Gwalior in the first week of August. He expressed concern over the non-construction of boundary wall of the lab. Kushwaha said that agency has been fixed for construction of boundary wall. The amount for construction has also been allotted. Despite this, non-commencement of work shows negligence at the implementation level. Senior officers should ensure that the implementation of the

schemes is done on time. For this continuous monitoring is must. Kushwaha said to prioritize work of Flori Culture Garden and Potato Tissue Culture Lab. He told to complete the work of Center of Excellence Noorabad in coming week. Kushwaha reviewed the implementation of chain fencing and upgradation of nurseries. Additional Chief Secretary Horticulture and Food Processing JN Kansotiya, MD MP Agro Rajiv Jain, Director Horticulture Nidhi Nivedita and senior officers of the department were present.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

State Minister for Horticulture, Food Processing (Independent Charge) and Narmada Valley Development Bharat Singh Kushwaha has said that senior officers should constantly monitor the implementation of schemes. Kushwaha was reviewing the implementation of the schemes of Horticulture and Food

# RMNH ORGANISING ESSAY WRITING COMPETITION

**Bhopal:** Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal (A Regional Centre of National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi) is organizing an Essay Writing Competition for the students of class 9th to 10th on 28th July, 2022 on the occasion of "World Nature Conservation Day." The theme of Competition is "Nurture Our Nature." A school can send their five students as participant. Only 100 participants will be registered/nominated for this competition on "First Come First Serve" basis. School may send the list of students and one escort teacher for registration through email [rmnhbhopal@gmail.com](mailto:rmnhbhopal@gmail.com) on or before 26th July, 2022. The students are advised to bring clip board & pen and report at 10:00 am at the reception of museum on 28th July, 2022 along with their Identity Card. First, Second, Third and three Encouragement prize will be awarded with attractive prizes. All students will receive participation certificate on same day.

# Stress on precautionary measures for prevention of dengue-malaria

## Health Minister gave instructions in the meeting of State Task Force Committee

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Public Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Prabhuram Choudhary has said that initiatives should be taken to implement the precautionary measures for the prevention of malaria, dengue, chikungunya etc. He said that by taking preventive measures before the spread of the disease, effective control of the disease can be ensured. Choudhary was addressing the meeting of the State Task Force Committee of the National Vector-borne Disease Control Programme at Mantralaya.

Choudhary said that the larvae of dengue mosquito breed in clean water. He said that during the rainy season, where clean water collects around the houses, dengue mosquitoes breed and spread dengue. Do not allow water to stagnate around the houses and in other places. In such a situation, there



will be no possibility of breeding of dengue mosquito and effective control of dengue can be achieved. Common citizens should be asked to adopt measures to prevent dengue. Do not leave vessels in which water is collected in the open. The Health Minister said that citizens should be urged to adopt the precautionary measures to be taken for the prevention of malaria, chikungunya etc. He asked the departmental officers to send necessary publicity material to the officers of the

departments concerned for public awareness, which they would be able to provide to the common citizens in the area through subordinate officers-employees. Health Minister said that the staff of the departments like Panchayat, Rural Development, Women and Child Development, Forest, Education etc. are in direct contact with the citizens. The field officers and employees of these departments play an important role in increasing public awareness for the prevention of diseases. He asked the officers of other departments including health department present in the meeting to take initiative in this direction. MD NHM Priyanka Das gave a presentation on the status of malaria, filaria, dengue/chikungunya, Japanese Encephalitis diseases. Health Commissioner Sudam Khade and members of Task Force Committee were present.

# CM PLANTS NEEM, PEEPAL AND GULMOHAR SAPLINGS



**Bhopal:** Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Neem, Peepal and Gulmohar saplings in the Smart City Garden on Wednesday. Aditya Barange, Sunil Jat, Sarvesh Parashar and Anuj Katara of Indradhanush Shikshan Sanskritik Samiti also planted saplings. The Samiti is dedicated to ensure the right of every child to quality education. The Samiti is active in Chhatarpur, Indore, Jabalpur, Gwalior, Harda, Betul, Dewas and Ujjain, besides Bhopal, through Indradhanush volunteers. Along with this, basic facilities are also made available to the needy families. Peepal planted today is a shady tree. It purifies the environment. It has religious and Ayurvedic significance. Rich in antibiotic elements, Neem is acknowledged as the supreme medicine. Gulmohar is considered one of the most beautiful trees in the world. Flowers blooming in large bunches between its leaves give it a distinct attraction. During summer, Gulmohar trees are full of flowers instead of leaves. It also abounds in medicinal properties.

# CM TO INAUGRATE STATE LEVEL COVID VACCINE PRECAUTION DOSE CAMPAIGN

**Bhopal:** Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will launch the state level Campaign of Free Precaution (booster) dose campaign at Covid Vaccine Amrit Mahotsav on 21st July at 9.50 am at Profima Malik Mahila Police Hospital, Jahangirabad. The campaign will continue till 30 September.

# CM CHOUHAN CONDOLES DEMISE OF TOMAR

**Bhopal:** Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed grief over the demise of senior journalist Govind Tomar. Chouhan said that Tomar rendered important services in various news institutions. He set a perfect example with the determination to donate the body after death. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan has prayed for the peace of the departed soul and strength to the bereaved family to bear this immense loss.

# COUNTRY'S PASHU SAKHI TRAINING PROGRAMME 'A-HELP' TO LAUNCH FROM BHOPAL

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The 'A-HELP' training programme is being jointly launched in the country from Bhopal on July 23 by the Union Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying. In the programme, members of women self-help groups registered under State Rural Livelihood Mission, who are helping in various animal husbandry activities in the form of Pashu Sakhi, will be trained as 'A-HELP' (Accredited Agent for Health and Extension of Livestock

Production). Animal Husbandry and Dairying Minister Prem Singh Patel and Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Mahendra Singh Sisodia, Secretary, Central Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Additional Secretary, Joint Secretary, Karnataka, Bihar, Jharkhand, Principal Secretaries of the states and various departments of the Government of Madhya Pradesh, Additional Chief Secretary, senior officers and participants will take part. The programme will start at 10 am on Saturday in Golden Jubilee Auditorium of

Academy of Administration. The logo will also be released in the programme.

'A-HELP' are community based women activists, who assist veterinarians in local departmental activities help livestock farmers to take loans for entrepreneurship development, fill applications, mark the ear tagging of animals and register them in INAF portal and help with insurance etc. 'A-HELP' assistance can be taken in implementing of various schemes and in providing information to the farmers at grassroots level. This will also provide a source of income to 'A-HELP'

# Police personnel can take admission in forensic and police science

**▶ ADMISSIONS ARE GOING ON IN VIKRAM UNIVERSITY FOR BA POLICE SCIENCE AND BSC AND MSC FORENSIC SCIENCE COURSES.**

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A golden opportunity is being provided by Vikram University of Ujjain to the police offi-

cers and employees of the state to study forensic and police science. In this regard, a letter has been sent by the Madhya Pradesh Police Headquarters to all the police units.

Admissions are going on in Vikram University for BA Police Science and BSc and MSc Forensic Science courses. Forensic science courses include training in areas related to top analysis of crimes such as psychology diagnosis, law, justice, criminology, quality analysis and control, data analysis, bioinformatics, teaching, labo-

ratory documentation, crime scene analysis and advanced diagnostic techniques. Besides, the course helps in catching the criminals by identifying them and in providing proper justice to the complainant through new training kits, establishing the criminal and the nature of crime committed by him through advanced equipment and their usage and various methods of evidence testing such as fingerprint and DNA analysis, toxicology tests, handwriting and crime scene analysis, analyzing the genetic linkage etc.

# Khandwa, Anuppur, Dindori, Shandol, Umaria on Orange Alert

# Heavy Showers to Continue Drenching State

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On Tuesday, heavy rainfall lashed several parts of Madhya Pradesh particularly its eastern half - causing inundation in multiple low-lying areas. Now, latest forecasts indicate that this intense rain spell over the Central Indian state could well continue for the next five days. As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Madhya Pradesh is set to experience fairly widespread to widespread rainfall of light to moderate intensity, along with thunderstorms and lightning, from Wednesday to Sunday (July 20-24).

Further, isolated heavy rains (64.5 mm-115.5 mm) are expected across the state from Wednesday to Saturday, July 20-23. Very heavy showers (115.5 mm-204 mm) will also drench isolated locations in East Madhya Pradesh on Thursday, Friday and Sunday, and West Madhya Pradesh on Sunday. In view of these predictions, the IMD has issued a yellow watch over the

As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Madhya Pradesh is set to experience fairly widespread to widespread rainfall of light to moderate intensity, along with thunderstorms and lightning, from Wednesday to Sunday (July 20-24).



entire state during this five-day forecast period. The advisory urges the residents to 'be aware' of the local weather situation. However, some districts will be more prone to bearing the brunt of the conditions, and have accordingly been placed on an orange alert (meaning 'be prepared' for rough weather). These include Khandwa for Wednesday; Anuppur, Dindori, Shandol,

Umaria for Thursday; Sidhi and Katni for Saturday; and Damoh for Sunday.

Bhopal, the state capital, will be in for light to moderate rains and thunderstorms for the rest of the week. Overall, these conditions will be caused by the combination of a cyclonic circulation over West Madhya Pradesh and neighbourhood, the monsoon trough being at its normal position but grad-

ually shifting northwards, and an east-west shear zone running across north Peninsular India. In fact, these systems are also expected to dump widespread precipitation over other central states like Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra's Vidarbha during this five-day period. Meanwhile, West Madhya Pradesh was on the receiving end of heavy rains on Tuesday as well, with the Khandwa district recording the highest precipitation across India (at 9 cm) between the morning and evening hours of the day. The subdivision also experienced some thunderstorm activity. In Ujjain, three people had a close shave when their car got swept away from a flooded bridge. Notable flooding was also reported from Seoni. The wet weather also had a cool-down effect across the state on Tuesday, with the IMD observing markedly below-normal daytime temperatures (by 5.1°C or less) at many places in West MP and appreciably below normal mercury (by 3.1°C to 5°C) at a few places in East MP.



EDITOR'S SPECS

UNICEF congratulates India on crossing 200 cr Covid vax mark

UNICEF India has congratulated the government on the remarkable achievement of crossing the milestone of administering 200 crore Covid-19 vaccination doses. The UN body lauded India's rigorous effort to vaccinate the maximum number of people in such a short period. "Completing two billion doses of vaccines in 18 months in a country as vast and diverse as India, is a phenomenal accomplishment," said Yasumasa Kimura, UNICEF India Representative. "It is testament to the grit and dedication of India's health workers who have worked tirelessly to boost vaccination coverage in all parts of the country, despite the challenges of repeated pandemic waves, inclement weather, difficult terrain and hard-to-reach areas," Kimura added. UNICEF also applauded the hard work and effort of the scientists, health practitioners, vaccine manufacturers, and policymakers for the timely availability of the vaccine for fighting the deadly disease. Almost one-and-a-half years after initiating the vaccination drive, the Indian Health Ministry recently confirmed that 98 per cent of the population above 18 years have received at least one dose of the vaccination, while 90 per cent have been fully vaccinated. In addition, about 82 per cent of adolescents aged 15 to 18 years have also been vaccinated with the first dose and 68 per cent have got both the first and second dose. Vaccination drive was first rolled out in the country on January 16, 2021. As of Wednesday morning, the Covid-19 vaccination coverage exceeded 200.61 crore, achieved via 2,64,58,875 sessions. Over 3.81 crore adolescents have been administered with a first dose of Covid-19 jab since the beginning of vaccination drive for this age bracket.

ONLINE GAMING - A CONUNDRUM FOR GST

S.K. Reddy

One of the biggest challenges facing the Governments today is the rapid evolving nature of the digital economy, with which the regulators are struggling to keep pace.

In fact, the challenge posed by technology enabled services means that even if one or few countries devise regulations, businesses can simply shift to another jurisdiction where the regulations are more convenient to them. Yet, lack of any regulation can play havoc.

The crypto meltdown and the consequent freezing of transactions by some platforms is one such telling case. The rapidly evolving but unregulated product offerings left millions exposed to a 70 per cent to 100 per cent erosion of value and wiped out of life-time savings for some.

Online gaming industry is posing quite a similar challenge to regulators. Globally, the industry caters to over two billion entertainment seeking consumers, with services being provided by a rapidly growing multi-billion dollar industry. For example, data released by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) and The NPD Group, in the US, shows the overall consumer spending on video games was US Dollars 60.4 billion in 2021, an 8 per cent increase over 2020.

This figure includes revenues from all content categories, including hardware, subscription spending across console, cloud, mobile, portable, PC and VR platforms. Microsoft announced a buy-out of the US based Activision Blizzard, for a whopping sum of US dollars 70 billion. While Activision Blizzard is highly profitable clocking annual revenue of 8.8 billion and profits of US dollars 2.7 billion, even Roblox, a cash-burning gaming company, boasts of market cap of close to US dollars 24 billion. Roblox offers 20 million games with an average of 32.6 million people a day logging in, as per a report published on Bloomberg. The company has also plunged into metaverse with Supermodel Karlie Kloss, the latest celebrity to onboard.

The All-India Gaming Federation, which claims to be the apex industry body for self-regulation for online gaming in India comprises 70 online gaming companies and claims a combined user base of 4.5 crore. As per their projections, India's industry is poised to hit 30,000 crore of revenue by 2025. Reportedly, investments in the industry are growing rapidly with Rs 17,500 crore having been invested. There are host of other small and micro IT enterprises involved in gaming.



Financial Express (29.6.22) has reported that there are over 950 online gaming companies in India. Several companies are single entrepreneurs, offering games developed by them on Google's play store and Apple's App store. Most of these games are free to download, though the consumer could be at risk of being bombarded with unsolicited advertisements, at times lewd, or even worse, near-hacked.

Paid games are available at a one-time or monthly subscription fee. There are more complex pricing models too involving purchase of in-game credits. And then there is competitive online gaming, such as, chess.com which is reported to have a subscriber base of 57 million with over 400,000 online players at any point of time. Online games include card games (bridge, rummy, poker) to roulette to boxing to war games. Readers will recall the rage created by the game PUBG developed by the Chinese mega-company - Tencents.

According to Tencent games, there were almost 175 million pubg mobile users in India and they claimed having 1.5 crore daily users. The most eye-popping story is that of Dota 2 which is played with teams from around the world. There are professional leagues and tournaments - an event format known as the Dota Pro Circuit. The International tournament is crowdfunded with prize money reaching upwards of US\$40 million, making Dota 2 the most lucrative e-sport in the world. The Government of India

has set up a Committee of Secretaries for considering regulations for the online gaming industry. This move is well timed. India will do well to position a National Gaming Commission under the Ministry of Home Affairs, as an apex and appellate body on the lines of GST Council, while the states could similarly structure State Gaming Commissions. Most developed countries have Gaming Commissions and elaborate gaming laws. These bodies are currently seized with vexing problems such as underage gambling & addiction. In a report published on Bloomberg on June 29, 2022, it was said that the UK was considering capping stakes between British Pound 2 to 5 for online casinos and a ban on free bets, while updating its 17-year-old gambling legislation. There is also a proposal to obligate online casinos to implement "affordability checks" to show how much, a user can safely spend. China has even gone a step ahead. Online games require regulatory approval before they can be launched. After a hiatus of nine months, Chinese Regulators approved new online games in April 2022. Approvals had been paused over concerns of children being addicted or conformity with Communist party values.

A Group of Ministers (GoM), chaired by Hon'ble Chief Minister Sangma, a Wharton Alumni, is looking at a taxation regime for casinos, online games and horse racing. Media

is rife with reports of 28 per cent tax being imposed on online gaming. The industry is up in arms against the reported recommendation of GoMon the ground that it would kill a nascent technology industry. It is said that business will move underground or to other jurisdictions posing implementation challenges to regulators, whether under OIDAR (GST law for overseas service providers to pay tax for services rendered to individuals in India) or for purposes of equalization levy under Income Tax.

The task before GoM is by no measure easy. Rapidly evolving technology, immense subscriber bases and huge revenues have made online gaming, a heady high stakes mix of entertainment and gambling. From intellectually stimulating games like crosswords to "parimatch" (Tagline: "Play online win real cash") from a Cyprus registered and Ukraine origin gaming company dot the landscape. The rapidly morphing gaming scenario poses a nightmare for any tax administration. How to monitor when a game creates a pot of money to collect for a winner ("actionable claim") or when a player is simply spending time and money entertaining himself in a competitive e-sport is an issue. Then there are parity considerations, such as the Casino owners citing the case of online casinos and card games for a reduction in taxes.

While the online gaming industry makes much of the concept of "skill vs chance", which emerged out of the SC Judgements in the case of Sunrise Associates (2006) and Skill Lotto (2020), the argument is quite specious in the present technological landscape.

Dividing lines have become blurred due to features contained within games which make such classification a very difficult task. Basically, the guidance post could be prize money (actionable claim) and a differentiation made between user-pays but gets nothing except entertainment versus a pot of winnings, should determine tax rates. No doubt this poses a challenging task for the tax administration but it is time for building capacity and self-regulation to manage present day complexities of the digital economy. Whichever way the Council decides, it would be tragic if administrative convenience of GST officers alone makes the case to decide the rate of taxation.

(S.K. Reddy, IRS. The author is a retired Commissioner.)

international

RAISI, PUTIN VOW TO EXPAND IRAN-RUSSIA COOPERATION, ENSURE REGIONAL SECURITY

Tehran | Agencies

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin have held talks here, agreeing to further strengthen bilateral relations and expand cooperation to ensure security in the region.

The meeting was held following Putin's arrival in Tehran on Tuesday afternoon for participation in a trilateral meeting with Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the issue of Syria later in the day, Xinhua news agency reported, citing a report by the Iranian presidency's website.

The two sides reviewed the latest developments in bilateral relations, which have improved significantly following the start of the Raisi administration, expressing satisfaction with the leap in ties, particularly, in the economic, security, infrastructure, energy, trade and industry sectors, the



report noted. The two presidents also expressed determination to continue the path of further strengthening bilateral relations. Lauding the joint achievements in the fight against terrorism, Raisi and Putin highlighted the necessity of enhancing cooperation in regional and transregional areas, noting that they are determined to help ensure security in the region's inde-

pendent states." Describing the two countries' will to expand bilateral relations as "remarkable", Raisi said that, after his meetings with Putin in Moscow in late January and Ashgabat in late June, the Iran-Russia cooperation has kept reflecting a growing trend which needs to be further reinforced.

Riyadh | Agencies

Saudi-led coalition denies airstrikes in Yemen

The Saudi-led coalition involved in a war in Yemen denied on Wednesday carrying any airstrike in Yemen.

The Houthi group's allegations of conducting airstrikes in Yemen's southern province Dhalea are baseless, the Saudi Press Agency quoted a statement of the coalition as saying.

The coalition stressed that all the airstrikes in Yemen had stopped since the beginning of the cease-fire supported by the United Nations, adding that it supports all procedures to promote the cease-fire between all Yemeni parties, Xinhua news agency reported. The Houthi-controlled Saba news agency reported on Tuesday that the coalition had conducted three airstrikes "on the citizens' houses and the sites of the army and popular committees in Ruhallah and Shamriya areas in Dhalea province," without revealing further details.

Under the UN auspices, Yemen's warring parties entered a two-month cease-fire on April 2. The related parties agreed to extend this UN-brokered truce for another two



months on June 2. So far, the truce has been largely held, but the warring parties often trade accusations of breaches.

Yemen has been mired in a civil war since late 2014 when the Houthi militia seized control of several northern provinces and forced the internationally recognized government out of the capital Sanaa.

Saudi Arabia has been leading an Arab military coalition that intervened in 2015 to support the Yemeni government.

US HOUSE PASSES BILL ON MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Washington: The US House of Representatives passed a bill on marriage equality in a 267-157 vote, with 47 Republicans joining all Democrats in supporting the measure.

The bill was passed on Tuesday. The Respect for Marriage Act, which calls for the repeal of the Defence of Marriage Act, will face an uphill battle in the evenly-divided Senate. Signed into law in 1996, the Defence of Marriage Act defines marriage for federal purposes as the union of one man and one woman and allows states to refuse to recognise same-sex marriages granted under the laws of other states. The White House said in a statement that the Respect for Marriage Act "would enshrine the right to Federal recognition of marriage for same-sex and interracial couples." Last month, the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, eliminating the constitutional protection of abortion rights for women. Conservative Justice Clarence Thomas penned a concurring opinion on the decision, signalling rulings on marriage equality and contraception should also be reconsidered.

'Missing Baloch people are being killed in Pakistan forces custody'

Islamabad | Agencies

A human rights activist has said that the missing Baloch people are being executed in the custody of the Pakistani security forces.

The Pakistani intelligence agencies and the security forces are directly involved in the "enforced disappearances" and "genocide" of the Baloch people, Baloch human rights activist Mama Qadeer Baloch said in a statement.

"We have strong evidence to substantiate our claims," he was quoted as saying by Balochistan Post.

The Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP) completed its 4720th day of protest in front of the Quetta Press Club. Social and political leaders visited the camp to express solidarity with the families of the Baloch missing persons.

Addressing the gathering, VBMP Vice-Chairman Mama Qadeer Baloch



said that "enforced disappearances" are a human rights violation. He said that the Pakistani state is brazenly involved in this inhumane practice in Balochistan.

Mama Qadeer further stated that the Pakistani intelligence agencies and security forces are involved in the abduction and subsequent killing of the Baloch youth. He claimed that the

Baloch missing persons are routinely rounded up and shot dead at point-blank range. Their dead bodies are then thrown in the wilderness, he said, Balochistan Post reported.

He said that hundreds of Baloch have been - and are being - picked up from universities, colleges, public places and their homes and extrajudicially locked up in dungeons. He said that the majority of the detainees are students and the youth, but a large number of women and the elderly are also among them.

Mama Qadeer Baloch said that the leaders of this country are fooling the world with their charade.

He said that the international human rights groups and the United Nations must take notice of the human rights catastrophe unfolding in Balochistan and hold the Pakistani state accountable for its crimes, Balochistan Post reported.

HUGE WILDFIRE BREAKS OUT NEAR TUNISIAN CAPITAL

Tunis: A huge wildfire broke out in Hammam-Lif town in the northeastern Tunisian province of Ben Arous, nearly 20 km away from the capital Tunis.

The fire spread quickly on Tuesday and ravaged a large part of the nearby mountain Boukornine, one of the most famous mountains in Tunisia, Xinhua news agency reported, citing private radio station Mosaïque FM. It took firefighters several hours to control the fire and stop its spread, said the report.

Local authorities called in the national army, and military helicopters were also deployed. Around ten civil defense vehicles were on the ground, supported by several forest guard vehicles.

There was no official word on the cause of the fire, and the firefighters are still working to extinguish it. Tunisia has been experiencing hot summer weather over the last two weeks.



# POST-SC VERDICT, MAHA READIES FOR LOCAL BODIES POLLS WITH OBC QUOTAS

▶ A BENCH HEADED BY JUSTICE A.M. KHANWILKAR SAID: "WE DIRECT THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSION AND STATE AUTHORITIES TO ENSURE THE ELECTION PROCESS IN RESPECT TO EACH OF THOSE LOCAL BODIES IS IMMEDIATELY COMMENCED AND TAKEN FORWARD ON THE BASIS OF ORDER DATED MAY 4, 2022."

▶ THE TOP COURT, IN ITS MAY 4 ORDER, SAID: "ACCORDINGLY, THE ELECTION PROGRAMME OF SUCH LOCAL BODIES MUST PROCEED AND THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSION IS OBLIGED TO NOTIFY THE ELECTION PROGRAMME WITHIN TWO WEEKS FROM TODAY IN RESPECT OF SUCH LOCAL BODIES INCLUDING TO CONTINUE WITH THE PROCESS FROM THE STAGE AS ON 10.3.2022, ON THE BASIS OF THE DELIMITATION DONE PRIOR TO COMING INTO FORCE OF THE AMENDMENT ACT(S) W.E.F. 11.03.2022".



Team Absolute | Mumbai

With the Supreme Court's nod to the J.K. Banthia Commission Report on political reservations for Other Backward Class (OBC), Maharashtra has set the ball rolling to conduct the delayed elections to various local bodies in the state.

In what promises to be a 'mini-general election', the Maharashtra State Election Commission (SEC) sources said it will go ahead with the programme for the polls in 23 Municipal Corporations, 220 Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayats, 25 Zilla Parishads and 284 Panchayat Samitis across the state. The development came after Supreme Court accepted the J.K. Banthia Commission Report recommending 27 per cent reservations overall, with the SEC likely to declare the local bodies election

schedule within two weeks, as directed by the apex court on Wednesday.

The panel headed by a former state chief secretary, was set up by the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in March 2022, to collate the empirical data of the OBC communities scattered around the state, with plans to hold a caste-based Census before the government collapsed on June 29.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar, Nationalist Congress Party leaders like Jayant Patil, Chhagan Bhujbal, Dhananjay Munde, Congress' Nana Patole, Vijay Wadettivar and Atul Londhe, Bharatiya Janata Party's Chandrakant Patil and Pankaja Munde, among many others from different parties and OBC leaders have welcomed the Supreme Court verdict.

## 'Man who can't even find 20 MLAs has to be brought back to power by courts,' Shinde group in SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Eknath Shinde's counsel on Wednesday submitted before the Supreme Court, "Are we in such a hopeless situation that a man who cannot even find 20 MLAs to support him has to be brought back to power by the courts?"



After hearing detailed arguments, the Supreme Court said many constitutional questions arise in a clutch of petitions raising issues in connection with Maharashtra political scenario and added that the matter may be referred to a larger bench for consideration. A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and comprising justices Krishan Murari and Hima Kohli asked the legislative secretary of Maharashtra to keep the records safe and the parties, involved in the Maharashtra matter, to frame issues which they likely to raise before the court and sought their replies.

The bench observed that some issues involved in the Maharashtra political crisis may need to be referred to a larger constitutional bench for consideration.

The top court fixed the matter for further hearing on August 1. The top court also asked the Maharashtra Speaker not to deal with disqualification petitions till further orders.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the Thackeray camp, submitted

that democracy is in danger, if the government in any state can be toppled despite the bar under the Tenth Schedule and added the only protection is for merger under para 4 of Tenth Schedule. He said 40 members of Shiv Sena, by their conduct, are deemed to have incurred disqualification by giving party membership as per para 2 of Tenth Schedule. Uddhav camp urged the court to summon the Legislative Assembly records. The Chief Justice said: "I strongly feel some of these issues may require a larger bench".

Senior advocate Harish Salve, representing Eknath Shinde group, said inner party democracy has been throttled by disqualification proceedings and if a large number of people in a party feels that another man should lead, what is wrong in that. Salve said: "Are we in such a hopeless situation that a man who cannot even find 20 MLAs to support him has to be brought back to power by the courts?"

During the hearing, the bench noted whether a

minority within a legislature party can disqualify the majority is one of the issues, which will require a decision. The top court has sought a response from Shinde by July 29. On July 11, the top court had granted interim relief to the Uddhav Thackeray camp MLAs by asking Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar not to proceed with the plea seeking their disqualification -- sought by the Shinde group for defying party whip during the trust vote and the election of the Speaker. Initially, the Shinde faction had moved the top court challenging the disqualification proceedings initiated by the then deputy speaker of the Assembly.

On June 27, a vacation bench of the top court extended the time for the rebel MLAs to file written responses to the deputy speaker's disqualification notice till July 12. Both sides have accused each other of defying the party whip during the Speaker's election and the trust vote on July 3 and 4, in connection with disqualification of legislators from both sides.

## I-T raids 40 locations linked to ghee firm

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Income Tax department on Wednesday conducted search operations at around 40 premises belonging to Madhusudan Ghee in Mumbai and other places in Maharashtra in connection with alleged tax evasion, sources said.

According to information, the firm recently invested in the power and dairy industries in Uttar Pradesh.

The income tax department hasn't given any official quote in this respect.

Sources said that the I-T officials were scanning the



last three-year transactions of the firm. They were also recording the testimonies of the employees of the firm.

In coming months, the I-T department may summon the Chartered Accountants of the firm, if their statements are required in the case, sources said. The sources said that a few documents and incriminating materials were also seized. Further details awaited.

## COPS NAB 4 CON MEN FOR LURING BJP MLA WITH RS 100 CR 'CABINET BERTH'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a bizarre instance, the Mumbai Police have arrested four persons for allegedly offering a Bharatiya Janata Party legislator from Pune a "cabinet berth" for Rs 100 crore, officials said here.

The Mumbai Police's Anti Extortion Cell swung into action after the BJP MLA from Daund constituency, Rahul Kul lodged a complaint last week.

According to police, on July 16, Kul's aide Balakrishna Thorat received a call from one Riyaz Shaikh of Delhi, seeking to meet the MLA with a lucrative offer.

Later, the MLA met Shaikh in a five-star hotel in south Mumbai where the latter claimed to be in contact with some top politicians.

He claimed to Kul that he could arrange a plum 'cabinet berth' in the Maharashtra government supported by BJP for Rs 100 crore and then bargained till Rs 90 crore.

The legislator pretended to accept the deal and later lodged a police complaint, with the AEC swinging into the



probe and laying a trap for the cheats who arrived at the deluxe hotel on Monday afternoon.

The police succeeded in arresting four persons - Shaikh of Kolhapur, Zafar Ahmed Usman and Sagar Sangwai, both of Mumbai and Yogesh Kulkarni of Thane - the district which Chief Minister Eknath Shinde hails from.

At the meeting, Kul, his aide and another party MLA were present to discuss the alleged 'deal' with Shaikh who was picked up from the spot. During his questioning, Shaikh revealed the involvement of Kulkarni and Sangwai, who were nabbed late on Monday, followed by Usmani's arrest on Tuesday.

The foursome has been sent to police custody and the sleuths are now probing whether the accused have cheated or 'sold' ministerial posts to any other legislators.

The development comes as CM Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis hope to expand their ministry after they were sworn-in on June 30.

As per political sources, over a 100 legislators from BJP and Shinde's group are clamouring to be accommodated in the ministry with at least 75 vying for cabinet rank posts, and the rest angling for Ministers of State.

## Aaditya Thackeray to visit Thane, Nashik, Aurangabad from today

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena MLA and former Maharashtra minister Aaditya Thackeray will visit Thane, Nashik and Aurangabad districts over next three days and address rallies at some places, a party leader said.

After a split in the Shiv Sena legislature party last month, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena on Tuesday suffered a fresh jolt with 12 of its 19 Lok Sabha members shifting allegiance to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Five out of the six Sena MLAs from Aurangabad district have joined the Shinde camp.

Aaditya Thackeray will be touring



Bhiwandi, Shahapur (in Thane), Igatpuri and Nashik on Thursday, Shiv Sena MLC and Aurangabad party unit president Ambadas Danve said in a release.

The Mumbai-based Sena legislator will address a rally at Manmad in Nashik. He will reach Aurangabad on Friday afternoon and address a rally at Sant Eknath Rang Mandir auditorium, Danve said.

On Saturday, he will go to Paithan in Aurangabad and then to Newasa in Ahmednagar district where he will hold a rally, he said.

He will also visit Shirdi in Ahmednagar the same day and then head back to Mumbai, another party official said.

## Speaker recognises Rahul Shewale as Shiv Sena leader in Lok Sabha

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

In another major setback to Uddhav Thackeray, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has recognised Rahul Shewale, who comes from Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's faction, as Shiv Sena leader in the House while Bhavna Gawli Patil has been retained as the Chief Whip.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat issued an official circular regarding the change of Shiv Sena leader in the House.

On Tuesday, 12 Lok Sabha MPs of Shinde faction met Birla, and requested him to recognise Shewale as the leader of the party in the



House. Presently the party has a total of 19 MPs in Lok Sabha, and out of these 12 MPs opted for Mumbai South Central MP Shewale as their new leader in the House. According to Lok Sabha Secretariat sources, the leader is selected on the basis

of the majority, and thus the Speaker recognised Shewale as the party leader in the House. The circular also cited an affidavit given in the Supreme Court, and a majority decision in the recent dispute between Pashupati Paras and Chirag Paswan.

## Ex-Mumbai top cop Sanjay Pandey sent to 9-day ED custody

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

A court here on Wednesday sent former Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pandey to nine days' ED custody in connection with a money laundering case pertaining to the phone tapping of the employees of National Stock Exchange (NSE) between 2009 and 2017 allegedly on the instructions of NSE's former CEO and MD Chitra Ramkrishna.

Pandey who was arrested on Tuesday was presented at the Rouse Avenue Court here.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the court has argued that Pandey received Rs 4.54 crore to tap the calls to help Ramkrishna. "Pandey incorporated iSec



Securities Pvt. Ltd. Though he was not director in the firm, he used to chair every meeting. We have evidence in this respect. He was controlling the entire firm from behind the curtain," the ED argued. Pandey in his

defence said that the entire case was nothing but a "politically motivated" one. He said that when he in service, he was "fit to maintain law and order situation while now two FIRs have been lodged against me".

"To analyse and monitor calls, we tapped phones. To tap the phone lines, all the machines were made available by NSE. I never used any machine illegally," he argued. The court after hearing the argument of both the sides sent Pandey to nine days' custody. Ramkrishna is already in the custody of ED. ED will now confront Ramkrishna with Pandey, and during the confrontation, the officials would record the statements of both the individuals. The ED's case is on the basis of the CBI's FIR.

## MUMBAI COASTAL ROAD 58% READY, RACES TO NOV 2023 DEADLINE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has announced that 58 per cent of the Rs 12,000-crore showpiece Mumbai Coastal Road (MCR) project on the south side has been completed, here on Wednesday, and it will be operational by November 2023.

The work on the pet project of the erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi government's former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray started during the lockdown period in 2020 after clearing all legal and technical hurdles.

Of the total 111 hectares land required for the project, 107 hectares -- or 97 per cent -- land has been reclaimed from the Arabian Sea, and 70 per cent of the work on the sea-wall is also done.

From the total reclaimed land, 70 hectares shall be utilised for creating public spaces and amenities, 26.50 hectares will go for building the



inter-changes on the project and 14.50 hectares for building a sea-wall to protect the coastal road from the lashing sea-waves.

Similarly, of the 175 mono-piles to be constructed under the bridges, 70 -- or 40 per cent -- have been built so far on the 10.58 km-long road.

The MCR comprises twin tunnels of 2.07 km of which one from Priyadarshini Park to Netaji Subhash Marg is ready and the work on the other tunnel is almost 40 per cent completed. On completion of the

south phase, an additional 8.50 km long and 20-metre wide sea promenade will be available to the city, along with attractions like a biodiversity park, a butterfly garden, landscaping, recreational facilities like cycle tracks, open-air theatres, seating for tourists, toilets plus underground parking lot for over 1,800 vehicles. Currently, the Marine Drive - also popular as the Queen's Necklace - is the longest promenade in the city running around 3.60 km.

The MCR will serve as the 'vital

link' for the proposed 44-km long Coastal Road extension from Versova to Virar (Palghar), which in turn would be linked with the upcoming Rs 1 lakh crore Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, which is nearly two-thirds completed.

Last fortnight, in Mumbai, Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari made the offer to build this section, and urged the state government to waive off taxes on steel and cement to be used for the projects.



# Khloe Kardashian open to dating

Los Angeles | Agencies

Reality TV star Khloe Kardashian is 'very open to dating' but won't rush into another relationship. Khloe reportedly has been on a few dates with an investor. However, things are 'not that serious,' according to a new report, reports [aceshowbiz.com](#). An insider told E! News, "She's been low-key and hasn't dated much lately." The source went on to say that "The Kardashians' star "is definitely very open to dating but isn't forcing anything." Speculation about Khloe's relationship status comes after it was revealed she is expecting her second child via surrogate with her ex and basketball player Tristan Thompson, with whom she already has four-year-old daughter True.

Khloe's spokesperson confirmed last week that the reality star is having another child with her former partner. "We can confirm True will have a sibling who was conceived in November," the representative said. "Khloe is incredibly grateful to the extraordinary surrogate for such a beautiful blessing. We'd like to ask for kindness and privacy so that Khloe can focus on her family."

The pair reportedly have barely spoken since December. A source said, "Khloe and Tristan are not back together and have not spoken since December outside of co-parenting matters." The informant continued, "The baby was conceived via surrogate before it was revealed to Khloe and the public that Tristan was having a baby with someone else in December." The baby was conceived prior to the revelation that the 31-year-old basketball player had cheated on Khloe and fathered another child with Maralee Nichols, a son named Theo, in December last year.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Make-up mogul Kylie Jenner has been accused of doing some damage control as she went shopping at Target following backlash over her private jet. The 24-year-old took her daughter Stormi Webster as well as nieces, Chicago, Kim Kardashian's daughter, and True, Khloe Kardashian's daughter, on a Target run, reports [aceshowbiz.com](#).

She took to TikTok to share a video of the "surprise" trip. The clip began with the three little girls riding in a shopping cart as Kylie asked them: "Where are we going girls?" The girls exclaimed in unison before entering the store, "Target!"

As Kylie walked past the home section, she asked: "You guys don't want any bowls?" to which all three girls promptly respond, "No!"

The girls showed more interest in some items in the toy section as Chicago and Stormi giggled at the register while waiting to go home with their new toys.

"Surprise target trip wit my girls," Kylie captioned the cute clip, which seemed to be innocent.

However, many quickly reported that Kylie might have a hidden agenda with the trip, as many ripped Kylie's attempt at "cosplaying as middle class."

One person reacted to the video,

"Did u rent out target for this real question," while another claimed that the Kylie Cosmetics

**KYLIE JENNER ACCUSED OF 'COSPLAYING AS "MIDDLE CLASS'**

founder was "playing normal life simulator". A third user similarly claimed that Kylie was "trying to appeal to us peasants", and another simply wrote, "What in the damage control?"

## Priyanka won't sing with Nick, but acting together on the cards

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who recently celebrated her birthday, doesn't want to share the mic with her husband Nick Jonas although she is a singer herself and has lent her voice to songs like 'In My City' and 'Exotic'.

Priyanka, is diversifying in other avenues as an entrepreneur, after setting up her New York City restaurant named 'Sona' and investing in home decor, the actress along with Nick has recently invested in a UK-based luxury fashion and sportswear brand specialising in ski and surf clothing, reports 'Variety'.

While talking to 'Variety', the 'Barfi' actress mentioned, "I love working with Nick so you'll see things happen as the years unfold. But I'll never sing with him."

When she was asked the reason behind her decision especially when she is a singer herself, PC responded by saying, "Not like him! No chance. He's a musical prodigy." But, the actress assured that someday they will share the screen. 'Variety' quoted her saying, "We're definitely developing a bunch of TV and film stuff together."



## THERE'S NO NEED FOR FEMALE JAMES BOND: ANA DE ARMAS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Ana de Armas, who played mysterious Paloma in Daniel Craig's final outing as 007 in 'No Time to Die', said she instead wants to see more substantial, deeper roles for women in the spy franchise. She told The Sun amid calls from some for Daniel's Bond replacement to be of the opposite sex: "There's no need for a female Bond. There shouldn't be any need to steal someone else's character, you know, to take over."

"This is a novel, and it leads into this James Bond world and this fantasy of that universe where he's at. What I would like is that the female roles in the Bond films, even though Bond will continue to be a man, are brought to life in a different way. That they're given a more substantial part and recognition. That's what I think is more interesting than flipping things. Fans have been calling for a film spin-off for de Armas's 007 character Paloma, whose parting line in 'No Time to Die' was: "Next time stay longer," reports [femalefirst.co.uk](#).

Despite dating Tinder vice president Paul Boukadakis, 38, the actress added she has distanced herself from the online world by turning her back on Twitter and Instagram.

She said: "I deleted Twitter years ago. I have barely been on Instagram for almost a year."

## Brad Pitt flaunts leg tattoos in skirt

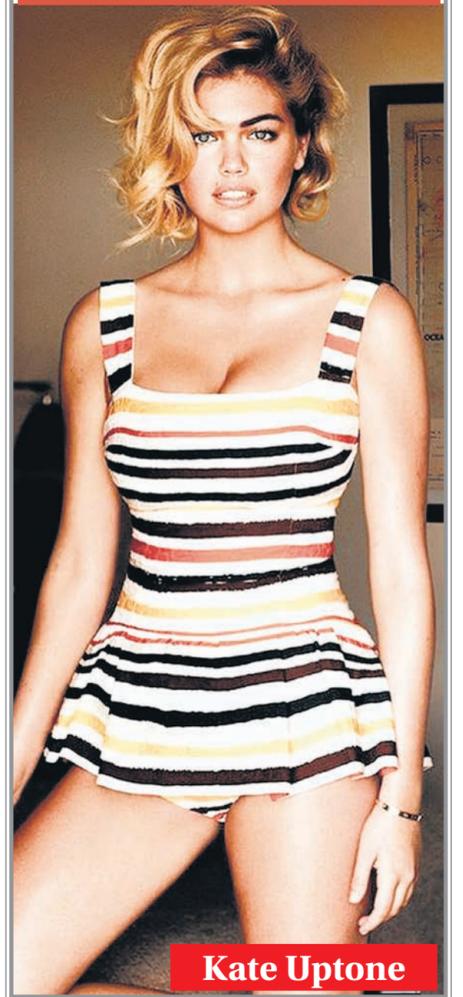
Los Angeles | Agencies



Hollywood star Brad Pitt went for a rather unusual choice of outfit during the Berlin premiere of 'Bullet Train'.

The 58-year-old opted to go casual in a flowing brown skirt when attending the event at Hotel Adlon in Germany. He paired it with a salmon-coloured button-up shirt and finished the look with combat boots as he also accessorised with a pair of tortoise-shell sunglasses and his signature long chains, reports [aceshowbiz.com](#). The skirt's knee length gave a peek at Brad's rarely seen leg tattoos. One design appears to be a rhinoceros face and the other is a human skull, though the meaning behind both inks is unclear. GQ posted a picture of Pitt's look at the premiere on its Instagram page and the actor has received a lot of praises for his style. "Brad Pitt in a skirt was exactly what I needed on this Tuesday evening," one fan commented on the photo. Another added, "A master class in how to remain on top of the game." A third said: "Just when we thought he couldn't get any better..." "Bullet Train" follows Pitt's character Ladybug, a trained killer who wants to give up the life but is pulled back in by his handler Maria Beetle in order to collect a briefcase on a bullet train heading from Tokyo to Kyoto. Onboard the train, he and other competing assassins discover their objectives are all connected. It is directed by David Leitch and is set to hit the US theatres on August 5.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kate Upton

## Willem Dafoe to star in 'Gonzo Girl' film adaptation

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actor Willem Dafoe will be soon seen in the film adaptation of "Gonzo Girl". The film marks Patricia Arquette's feature directorial debut with Rh Negative Entertainment and Catch & Release Films.

In addition, the film also stars Camila Morrone, Willem Dafoe and Arquette, reports 'Deadline'. The film is based on the acclaimed same-name novel by Cheryl Della Pietra and will be adapted by Rebecca Thomas and Jessica Caldwell.

According to 'Deadline', Tom Heller is producing through Rh Negative Entertainment as is Frank Hall Green through Catch & Release Films, Cameron O'Reilly through



Bayard Productions and Arquette. Heller and Green have been the driving force on pushing this through with production set to begin this week in Utah.

The novel, set in 1992, traces the journey of aspiring writer Alley Russo (played by Morrone). Russo has an exciting new job, as the assistant to legendary "gonzo journalist" Walker Reade (Dafoe), living in his compound/party house in Aspen.

Under orders to help the famously chaotic Walker settle down to work on his long-promised latest blur of fact and fiction, Alley soon learns the truth: a lifetime of chronic substance abuse has chipped away at Walker's writing ability, until all he can produce from his drug-drenched brain are pages of word salad



## INDIA FINISH ON TOP IN YET ANOTHER ISSF SHOOTING WORLD CUP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's good run in ISSF World Cups continued with them finishing on top of yet another stage, this time at the ISSF World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun stage in Changwon, Korea with an overall haul of 15 medals, including five gold, six silver and four bronze medals.

On the final day on Wednesday, the Indian trio of Anish Bhanwala, Vijayveer Sidhu and Sameer won silver in the Men's 25m Rapid Fire Pistol (RFP) Team event, going down to the Czech Republic 15-17 in a nerve-racking final at the Changwon International Shooting range.

The trio had made the final after coming through two rounds of qualification, finishing second with 872 points in the first and topping the second with 578 for a shot at gold. In the final, they started with a bang running away to a 10-2 lead before the experienced Czech trio of Martin Podhrasky, Tomas Tehan and



Matej Rampula plotted a sensational comeback as the young Indians lost their nerve. The tie was tied at 15-15 before the Czech closed out the final 16th series with ease. In the other event of the day, the only Indian pair of Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Mufaddal Deesawala finished ninth out of 17 teams with a score of 138/150 to finish outside the medals.

India won all five ISSF World Cup stages in 2019, one in the curtailed 2021 season and yet again this year in the first stage in Cairo, Egypt. Cairo will also be the place for the next assignment of the Rifle/Pistol squad with the much-awaited ISSF World Championship scheduled in October this year. The Shotgun squad has theirs in September in Osijek, Croatia.

## Boult replaces Bumrah as new top-ranked bowler in ODI; Pant, Pandya make huge gains

Dubai | Agencies

Although India clinched a 2-1 triumph in ODI series against England, their pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah wasn't playing in the series decider at Manchester. It paved the way for New Zealand left-arm quick Trent Boult to replace him as the new top-ranked bowler in ODIs, as per the latest ICC Men's Rankings.

Rishabh Pant and Hardik Pandya, India's architects of an impressive five-wicket win in series decider at Manchester, have made big gains in the rankings too. Pant's unbeaten 125 off 113 balls, his maiden century in ODIs, has lifted the left-handed batter by 25 places to 52nd while Pandya has progressed from 50th to 42nd after his 55-ball 71.

Pandya is also up 25 places to 70th among bowlers for his haul of 4/24 while leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal has advanced four places to reach 16th position after grabbing 3/60. South Africa batter Rassie van der Dussen has attained a career-best third position in the Men's ODI Player Rankings after smashing 134 off 117 balls in the first ODI against England on Tuesday.

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam remains on top in list for batters, with India duo of talismanic batter Virat Kohli (fourth) and captain Rohit Sharma (fifth) and South Africa opener Quinton de Kock (sixth) all dropping a spot due to van der Dussen's rise in the rankings.

Aiden Markram, who also played an important part in the 62-run win for South Africa alongside van der Dussen, has moved up 15 slots to 61st after



his knock of 77 while opener Janneman Malan is up one place to joint-35th with a score of 57. David Miller's 24 runs see him move up three places to 24th.

Proteas fast bowler Anrich Nortje has reached 61st position, his haul of 4/53 lifting him 18 slots. For England, opener Jason Roy has moved up one slot to 16th position among batters after scoring 43 against South Africa and 41 in the last match of the series against India. His team-mate David Willey has moved up two slots to 35th among bowlers.

Others to move up the ODI rankings for batters this week include Bangladesh's Tamim Iqbal (up two places to 17th) and Liton Das (up two places to 30th), West Indies' Nicholas Pooran (up four places to joint-35th), Scotland's Calum MacLeod (up three places to 48th) and Namibia's Gerhard Erasmus (up 21 places to 86th). In the ODI bowlers' rankings, New Zealand quick Matt Henry has moved up one place to seventh. West Indies fast bowler Alzarri Joseph (up three places to 18th), New Zealand spinner Mitchell Santner (up two places to 23rd), Nepal leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane (up six places to 33rd) and Scotland seamer Safyaan Sharif (up four places to 56th) are others to progress.

In the Men's T20I Player Rankings, New Zealand batter Glenn Phillips has advanced five places to reach 30th position after his Player of the Match effort of 69 not out in the first match of their series against Ireland while fast bowler Lockie Ferguson has progressed 25 slots to 40th with a haul of 4-14.

Zimbabwe's Sean Williams rose eight spots to be placed 12th overall for T20I all-rounders, while compatriot, all-rounder, Sikandar Raza jumped five places to 19th after he was named Player of the Tournament during the Qualifier B event won by his team to qualify for Men's T20 World Cup.

## World Athletics WIGHTMAN WINS SURPRISE 1,500M GOLD, KERLEY OUT IN 200M SPRINT

Eugene (US) | Agencies

The fifth day of the World Athletics Championships produced several surprises here, as Jake Wightman of Britain powered to the men's 1,500m title with a world leading time while some favourites suffered upsets.

Wightman clocked a winning time of three minutes and 29.23 seconds, outperforming several favourites of the event.

The new face on the podium even shocked the timing system to an error. Right after Wightman crossed the finish line, the screen on the live stream mistook the 28-year-old for his compatriot Josh Kerr, who won the Tokyo Olympic bronze and finished fifth in Tuesday's race.

Olympic gold medalist Jakob Ingebrigtsen of Norway led the final lap until the last 200 metres, taking the silver with three minutes and 29.47 seconds. Spain's Mohamed Katir was 0.43 seconds behind Ingebrigtsen.

Reigning world champion Timothy Cheruiyot from Kenya was left in sixth place in 3:30.69, Xinhua reports. Surprises continued into the men's 400m



hurdles, where defending champion and Tokyo Olympic gold medalist Karsten Warholm only placed seventh. 22-year-old Alison Dos Santos of Brazil took the gold with a championship record 46.29 seconds. Another shock came earlier as Fred Kerley,

the newly-crowned men's 100m champion, was wiped out after he finished sixth in his heat in the 200m semifinals.

Kerley's fellow American sprinters took three out of the eight final spots with Noah Lyles leading the semis with 19.62 seconds.

China's Xie Zhenye ended his journey in the individual event with 20.41 seconds.

The women's 200m semifinals was a different story as the Jamaicans swept the track with Sherricka Jackson, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and Elaine Thompson-Herah dashing into the final, and the Americans still have the potential to shatter the Jamaican trio as Tamara Clark and Abby Steiner were also on the final list.

In the women's high jump, the indoor worlds silver medalist Eleanor Patterson of Australia held off her rival Yaroslava Mahuchikh of Ukraine, clearing the bar at 2.02 meters at her first attempt for the gold.

Mahuchikh, the world indoor title holder, had to pocket another silver after Doha at the same height with an extra jump. Italy's Elena Vallortigara claimed the bronze with 2.00 metres. The evening witnessed another championship record in the men's discus throw, where the gold went to Slovenian Kristjan Ceh with 71.13 meters.

The women's 400m hurdles world record holder Sydney McLaughlin from the United States eased into the semifinals with 53.95 seconds. China's Mo Jiajie failed to progress.

## India should persist with Kohli, he still has ability to make impact: Ponting

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting feels India should persist with Virat Kohli at the international level, adding that the star batter still has the ability to have a meaningful impact for the team.

Kohli has not scored a century since November 2019, struggled for runs during this year's IPL and even failed to contribute much with the bat during the recently-concluded tour of England.

There have been calls to drop him from Team India but Ponting, who captained Australia to two World Cup triumphs in 2003 and 2007, believes the 33-year-old still has that fear factor for the opposition captain or an opposition player. "I think if I was an opposition captain or an opposition player, I will

be fearing playing an Indian team that has Virat Kohli in it, more than I would be one that doesn't have him in it," Ponting said in the latest episode of The ICC Review.

"I know there have been some challenges for him, it's been a difficult time. But every great player that I have seen in this game has been through it at some stage, whether that's a batsman or a bowler, they have all been through it. And somehow, the best (players) find a way to rebound and respond, and it's only a matter of time before Virat does that," he added. The Australian great believes Kohli's best performances for his country have come when he has been settled both on the field and off the field. He also feels that India's coaching hierarchy needs to try and instill that belief back in their star player as soon as possible.

## Taipei Open P Kashyap, Manjunath move into second round, Malvika crashes out

Taipei | Agencies

Indian shuttler Parupalli Kashyap beat Chi Yu Jen of Chinese Taipei to advance to the second round of the Taipei Open 2022, here on Wednesday.

Kashyap, 40th in the badminton world rankings, beat world No 122 Chi Yu Jen 24-22, 21-10 in the first round of the BWF Super 300 badminton tournament.

The 35-year old Kashyap was cruising in the first game with a 15-8 lead but had to thwart a late comeback by saving two game points. The second game,

however, was a straightforward affair.

The former Commonwealth Games champion will take on world No 97 Chia Hao Lee of Chinese Taipei in the second round on Thursday.

India's Thomas Cup team member Priyanshu Rajawat and an in-form Mithun Manjunath also won their first-round matches. World No 84 Priyanshu beat youngster Yu Sheng Po 21-16, 21-15 while Mithun Manjunath beat Denmark's Kim Bruun 21-17, 21-15 to move into the second round of the BWF Super 300 badminton

tournament.

Meanwhile, Kiran George went past Ade Resky Dwicahyo of Azerbaijan 23-21, 21-17 to make the second round of the men's singles. The men's doubles pair of MR Arjun-Dhruv Kapila and Ishan Bhatnagar-Sai Pratheek also won their matches to progress.

In the women's singles, Samiya Imad Farooqui and the doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto and Shruti Mishra moved to the second round but Malvika Bansod lost to Liang Ting Yu of Chinese Taipei 10-21, 21-15, 21-14 to make an early exit.

## Junior National Aquatic SWIMMERS APEKSHA AND HASHIKA SMASH NATIONAL RECORDS

Bhubaneswari | Agencies

A total of 26 new records were established at the 48th Junior National Aquatic Championships that concluded today at the Biju Patnaik Swimming Pool situated inside the iconic Kalinga Stadium, here. The final day of the proceedings saw recording-breaking effort from Hashika Ramachandra of Karnataka who eclipsed the national record in 400m medley for group II girls by clocking 5:10.70. The Karnataka lass bettered the previous record of 5:13.80 held by Apeksha Fernandes of Maharashtra. Sri Nithya Sagi of Telangana and Raghvi Ramanujan of Maharashtra finished second and third in this event with a time of 5:26.33 and 5:27.49 respective-



ly. Maharashtra's Apeksha Fernandes, meanwhile, continued to remain in dominant form as she created a new national record in the 200m breast stroke for girl's group II. She clocked

an impressive time of 2:40.36 secs to improve the previous record of 2:43.01 held by Saloni Dalal created in 2017. Apeksha finished well ahead of S Lakshya and Saanvi S Rao, both of

Karnataka. While Lakshya clocked 2:45.03 to take the silver, Saanvi timed 2:46.49 to settle for the bronze.

Another record of the day came in the 400m medley for girls group I. Shakthi S of Tamil Nadu smashed Sayani's Goshi's record of 5:15.04 clocked in 2016. Shakthi touched the pads on 5:11.77 seconds to create the new record and also win the gold medal. She beat Delhi's Bavya Sachdeva (5:14.87) and Karnataka's A Jedidiah (5:22.81). The Best Swimmer awards for group I boys' went to Utkarsh Patil of Karnataka as well as Devansh Parmar of Gujarat as both amassed a total of 3 gold medals and 1 silver. In group II boys, the individual award went to Navaneeth Gowda of Karnataka who bagged 5 gold medals.

## World Chess Champion Magnus Carlsen decides not to defend his title

Magnus Carlsen, the five-time World Chess Champion, on Wednesday relinquished his title as he announced that he will not defend the title he has held since 2013.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Carlsen, considered by many as the greatest player to play the game who achieved the highest rating ever in chess, has conveyed his decision to Fide, the sport's world governing body, according to a report by Chess24.com. Carlsen won his first title in 2013 by beating India's Viswanathan Anand in Chennai.

The 31-year-old Norwegian is not retiring and vows "to be the best in the world, and not care about the World Championship!"

His decision not to defend his title means that Chinese world no. 2 Ding Liren's last-



round Candidates Tournament win against Hikaru Nakamura has earned him a lucrative match against Ian Nepomniachtchi.

The World no. 1 had, soon after winning his fifth title by beating Nepomniachtchi in Dubai in 2021, had indicated that he is unlikely to defend his title if someone other than 19-year-old sensation Alireza Firouzja qualifies for the World Championship match. Firouzja did not qualify and Carlsen announced in a podcast interview, to his friend Magnus Barstad, called "The Magnus Effect", that he will not defend his title.

## Hamburg European Open Andrey Rublev advances to second round, Borna Coric reaches quarters



Hamburg (Germany) | Agencies

Continuing his love affair with the Hamburg European Open, Russia's Andrey Rublev beat lucky loser Ricardas Berankis 6-3, 6-4 to reach the second round of the tournament, here on Wednesday.

The second seed Rublev hit through the Lithuanian with his precise and powerful groundstrokes and stepped up his intensity in the key moments to shrug off a second-set Berankis comeback and advance after 73 minutes. Rublev now holds a 10-2 record at the ATP 500 clay-

court event, having advanced to the final in 2019, before he defeated Stefanos Tsitsipas to lift the trophy in his previous appearance in 2020.

With his 32nd tour-level win of the year, the 24-year-old has improved to 3-0 in his ATP Head to Head series against Berankis and will next face Bastad champion Francisco Cerundolo.



## Alia expecting twins? Ranbir ducks question

Team Absolute | New Delhi

During the promotion of his upcoming film 'Shamsher' in the national capital, Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor talked about the song 'Kesariya' from his movie 'Brahmastra' getting trolled.

He also opened up about rumours that he might be having twins with his wife Alia Bhatt. Ranbir was interacting with the media along with the cast of 'Shamsher', including Vani Kapoor, Sanjay Dutt and director Karan Malhotra. The song 'Kesariya' created a lot of controversy due to its lyrics and use of English words like 'love story'.

'Kesariya' is sung by Arijit Singh, composed by Pritam, with lyrics by Amitabh Bhattacharya. Many netizens compared the sudden use of English words in the song to

biting into an 'elaichi' while having a tasty 'biryani'. "I just love the track. We as filmmakers and artistes create something and it is up to the audience to receive it the way do. And in today's time, all this trolling and memes are part of life and as long as people enjoy Pritam's music and Arijit Singh's singing, all is fine," he said. On rumours of having twins, he replied: "Don't create a controversy. They asked me to state three things: two truths and a lie. Now I can't reveal what is the truth, and what is the lie."

During a recent interview with Film Companion, Ranbir had shared two truths and a lie: "I am having twins, I am going to be part of a very big mythological film, I am taking a long break from work."

Alia and Ranbir tied the knot earlier this year. Recently, they announced that they are expecting their first child.



## Janhvi Kapoor and Varun Dhawan re-unite for upcoming film

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Varun Dhawan and Janhvi Kapoor have proved their mettle with the kind of projects they have been taking up ever since their debut. The two actors will soon be seen sharing screen space for the first time in Nitesh Tiwari's 'Bawaal'.

Janhvi Kapoor and Varun Dhawan have been filming for their upcoming film 'Bawaal' and the duo has shot in multiple European countries including Paris and Amsterdam, and Poland. The duo had a lot of fun shooting together and were often

seen giving glimpses of their onset fun on social media. Recently, the two took to their social media handles and announced the wrap-up of Poland's schedule after which they returned to the bay. Janhvi Kapoor was papped at the airport last night.

The actress opted for a chic yet casual look. She was spotted sporting a pink top and teamed it with comfy black joggers and white sneakers.

On the work front, the diva is currently gearing up for the release of Anand L Rai's 'Good Luck Jerry' which is all set to release on OTT on 29 July.



## TANUSHREE DUTTA COMPLAINS OF HARASSMENT, THREAT TO LIFE IN LONG INSTA POST

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actress Tanushree Dutta, who raised the subject of #MeToo in India back in 2018 and started the dialogue around sexual assault and misconduct, has complained of harassment, claiming that there is a threat to her life. The actress took to her Instagram to share a picture of herself with a long note that spoke about how she has been earlier subjected to health problems and work sabotage.

She started her note with a direct revelation of the threat, "I'm being harassed & targeted very badly. Please someone do something." She spoke about a maid that was planted in her house to mess up her health, "First it was my Bollywood work being sabotaged last one year, then a maid was planted to douse my drinking water with med-

ications & steroids which caused all kinds of severe health problems, then when I escaped to Ujjain in May my vehicle brakes tampered twice & accident."

Nevertheless, the actress survived the accident and returned to Mumbai to resume work. "I barely escaped death & returned Mumbai after 40 days to resume normal life & work. Now strange disgusting stuff in my building outside my flat," she wrote in her note.

Giving an assurance that she would firmly stand her ground and won't bow down to the pressure, she wrote, "I'm not going to commit suicide for sure yeh kaan kholkar sun lo sab log!! Nor am I leaving & going anywhere. I'm here to stay & resurrect my public career to greater heights than ever before!"

Tanushree also targeted 'Bollywood mafia' and 'Maharashtra political circuit', in her post. "The Bollywood Mafia, the old political circuit of Maharashtra (which still has influence here) and nefarious anti-national criminal elements together usually operate like this to trouble people," she said.

## R Madhavan celebrates Rocketry's success

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor R Madhavan ardently worked on his recent release

Rocketry, for which he even donned many hats. Well, his hardware



was palpable and has translated well on box-office as well. Despite having a decent run, the film worked on strong word-of-mouth.

To celebrate the success of the film, the team including lead actor R Madhavan gathered at Nambi Narayanan's house and celebrated the milestone with the scientist's family members.

R Madhavan took to his social media handle and shared a glimpse of the low-key celebration. Sharing the photo, Madhavan wrote: "When the Success translates to Happiness and the whole family celebrates together. The true meaning of this photo will only be realized by those who know Nambi sir's family and what they went through. For me - Mission accomplished with gods grace."

For the unversed, Rocketry chronicles the life of Dr Nambi Narayanan, who is a former rocket scientist at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and was falsely charged with espionage and arrested, before clearing his name after a long and strenuous fight and being awarded compensation.

Ulka Gupta happy to play a strong female lead in daily soap

Team Absolute | Mumbai

From TV show 'Jhansi Ki Rani' to her Bollywood debut 'Andhra Pori', actress Ulka Gupta has a number of works to her credit. Now, the actress is being seen in 'Banni Chow Home Delivery', playing the titular role.

She opens up about portraying a strong woman character in the daily soap and says: "I believe it's always been my motto to contribute to the empowerment of women by educating them, strengthening their abilities and inner qualities, and in the process becoming one. We're not all born strong women. We toughen ourselves, and we create ourselves into a strong person."

The 25-year-old actress says she is proud of being a woman and ready to face all the challenges. "I feel so happy to be a woman, a girl, who has dealt with this world and created a place for others like me. I believe in achieving the required attributes, honing their skills, which will lead women to realize their self-worth."

"It's true that women haven't been given any chances in the past, history proves it. This is actually a perfect era to be born in, to be a girl in, where the world has changed thanks to all the amazing and strong ladies who fought for our rights. Shout out to 'Jhansi ki Rani' and many more!" She shares further about her role, saying: "Banni is someone who speaks for herself, and always stands up to injustice. She has an answer for every finger pointed at her, and always has a logic to support it."

## Is there a third person behind Ajay Devgn and Kichcha Sudeep's spat?

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Earlier in April, Bollywood actor Ajay Devgn and Kannada star Kichcha Sudeep engaged in a Twitter spat over Hindi being a national language. Ever since then, the two are under scrutiny. The controversy began after Sudeep in his tweet said that Hindi is no longer 'a national language' owing to the success of South Indian films. To which, Devgn reacted and said that Hindi is 'our mother tongue and our national language, and it will always be.'

In an interview with a leading daily, Kichcha Sudeep opened up about the incident. He said, "Ajay Devgn is a gentleman. There is nothing there. I am telling you 100%, there is a small misin-

terpretation there. He tweeted to me but he was very sweet enough to retweet back and say 'I got my answer Sudeep, thanks for clearing it up.'"

He further added that there was another person behind the controversy. "I am very sure the man I know would never tweet in Hindi. It's a third person's idea behind it. I do not want to know or conclude on that," Sudeep added.

On the work front, Kichcha Sudeep stars in Vikrant Rona, which also stars Jacqueline Fernandez. The film will release on 28 July in Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, and Telugu.

Meanwhile, Ajay Devgn too has a slew of interesting films in his kitty that include Drishyam 2, Thank God, Maidaan, and Bhola.



Sakshi Aggarwal