

# absolute india

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Moderna gets nod as 4th Covid vax, Pfizer next to fight pandemic in India

## SECURITY ENHANCED

- Moderna thus became the fourth vaccine which has been approved by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) after AstraZeneca's Covishield, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin and Sputnik V developed by Russia's Gamaleya Institute.
- The entry of Moderna vaccine is a significant move amid India's accelerated vaccination drive to inoculate as many people as soon as possible.
- Mumbai-based pharmaceutical company Cipla Ltd on Tuesday received approval from the DCGI to import the Covid-19 vaccine developed by Moderna Inc for restricted emergency use. Cipla had filed an application with the DCGI on Monday to import the vaccine.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday granted approval to the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine to enter the Indian market as the fourth vaccine in its arsenal to fight the deadly pandemic, adding that the next in line is the Pfizer vaccine. Member of NITI Aayog, V.K. Paul, made the announcement at a press conference, saying that "new drug permission has been granted to Moderna, the first internationally developed Covid vaccine".

Paul, however, made it clear that the new drug permission is for restricted use and that Moderna will be administered in two doses. While making the announcement regarding opening of the Indian market for Moderna and mentioning that Covaxin, Covishield, Sputnik V and Moderna will now be available in the fight against Covid, Paul said "India will soon close the deal on Pfizer as well". The new drug would undoubtedly help better the supply constraints, besides allaying the fears of a possible third wave of the pandemic. So far, India has administered more than 31.90 crore (32,90,29,510) vac-

far, India has administered more than 31.90 crore (32,90,29,510) vac-

"I realise that a lot of Indians who have taken COVISHIELD are facing issues with travel to the E.U., I assure everyone, I have taken this up at the highest levels and hope to resolve this matter soon, both with regulators and at a diplomatic level with countries." Adar Poonawalla, CEO, Serum Institute of India

## One-Nation, One Ration Card by July 31

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan in Supreme Court passed a slew of directions to the Centre and state governments for the benefit of the migrant workers. The top court directed all state governments to implement one-nation, one ration card scheme, which allows migrant workers to avail ration benefits from any part of the country, by July 31.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said all state governments must implement one-nation, one ration card scheme by July 31.

The top court directed the Centre to develop a national portal in consultation with NIC to register unorganised and migrant workers by July 31. The top court directed the state governments to frame schemes for distribution of food grains to those who don't have ration cards and asked the Centre to allocate food grains as per the demands of the state governments. The top court directed the distribution of dry ration and community kitchen, providing succour to the needy, to continue amid the coronavirus pandemic. During the hearing, the top court said, its main concern is that benefits which are meant for migrant workers must reach them and stressed the process of their registration is woefully slow.



The top court said the Centre and state governments must expedite registration of

migrant workers and also those working in the unorganised sectors.

### SC FAVOURS CA EXAM IN JULY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it favours in-person Chartered Accountant (CA) exams and refrained from passing any direction to postpone the schedule commencing on July 5. A bench said students with Covid should get opt-out option. The bench directed Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) to present a note incorporating the court's suggestions, other deliberations and also ICAI's stand on them. The bench said it will pass orders on the petitions connected with the CA exams after perusing the note and adjourned the matter for Wednesday.

### Delay on portal for migrant workers' registration is Unpardonable

The Supreme Court on Tuesday slammed the Centre for having a lackadaisical approach in developing a portal for registration of the unorganised or migrant workers, to avail benefits from various government schemes. "When the unorganised workers are waiting for registration and are waiting to reap the benefit of various welfare schemes of the States and Centre, the apathy and lackadaisical attitude by the Ministry of Labour and Employment is unpardonable. Unless the registration is complete, tall claims by all the States and Union that they have implemented various welfare schemes for the migrant workers and unorganised workers remain only on paper without giving any benefit to unorganised workers," noted the bench.

### No definitive agreement on commercial supplies: Cipla

Cipla Limited is supporting Moderna, Inc. with the regulatory approval and importation of vaccines to be donated to India. At this stage, there is no definitive agreement on commercial supplies.

### Face mask to detects Covid

New York: A team of US researchers has developed face masks with biosensors that can be customised to detect pathogens such as the SARS-CoV-2, virus causing Covid-19, and toxins and alert the user. The button-activated mask, developed by the researchers from the Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, gives results within 90 minutes at levels of accuracy comparable to standard nucleic acid-based diagnostic tests like polymerase chain reactions (PCR). The finding is reported in the journal Nature Biotechnology. The wFDCF face mask is the first SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test that achieves high accuracy rates comparable to current gold standard RT-PCR tests while operating fully at room temperature, eliminating the need for heating or cooling instruments and allowing the rapid screening of patient samples outside of labs.



## NIA registers case to probe Jammu AFS drone attack

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Hours after the Ministry of Home Affairs handed over the probe into the drone attack at an Air Force Station (AFS) in Jammu to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the NIA on Tuesday registered a case to probe the matter.

An NIA spokesperson said that the anti-terror probe agency, in pursuance of the MHA order, has re-registered the case under several sections of the Explosive Substances Act, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Indian Penal Code.

The official said that while the NIA has been working with the other agencies since immediately after the incident, pursuant to the re-registration of the case, requisite actions as per the law have been initiated.

An NIA team had visited



the blast scene on Sunday to collect samples from the spot. In a first of its kind terrorist attack in the country, two drones were used to drop explosives at the vital military installation on the intervening night of June 26-27. Two

consecutive explosions took place within a gap of five minutes at the high-security Jammu Air Force Station, injuring two personnel on duty in the technical area. The drones later flew away.

### 60 DRONE SIGHTINGS REPORTED IN 20 MONTHS: PUNJAB DGP

Chandigarh: Stressing on the need to carry out evidence-based and pro-active policing, Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) Dinkar Gupta on Tuesday assured total support to the Border Security Force (BSF) to counter the drone operations along international borders. He said more than 60 drone sightings have been reported by the BSF, Punjab Police and the people of the state in the last 20 months.

### 65-YR-OLD MAN GOT TWO VAX DOSES WITHIN MINUTES

Thiruvananthapuram:

In a serious lapse on the part of health officials a 65-year-old man who came to the state run Karuvatta primary health centre in Alappuzha district to receive his second dose of Covishield vaccine got two jabs in a matter of a few minutes.

After receiving the second dose on Tuesday, the man felt uneasy and was quickly moved to the Haripad Taluk hospital.

The man said he was under the impression that the first shot he received was to lower his blood pressure and the second shot was the vaccine dose. The health authorities have not come out with an explanation for the goof up.

## 5 pharma firms collaborate for Molnupiravir clinical trials

Hyderabad | New Delhi

Five major pharma companies announced on Tuesday that they will collaborate for the clinical trials of the investigational oral antiviral drug Molnupiravir for the treatment of mild Covid-19 in an outpatient setting in India.

Cipla Limited, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Emcure Pharmaceuticals, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries and Torrent Pharmaceuticals Ltd have announced the collaboration.

Between March and April this year, these five pharma companies individually entered into a non-exclusive voluntary licensing agreement with Merck Sharpe Dohme (MSD) to manufacture and supply Molnupiravir to India and over 100 low and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The five pharma companies have entered into a collaboration agreement, wherein the parties will jointly sponsor, supervise and monitor the clinical trials in India.

As per the directive of the Subject



Expert Committee (SEC) of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization, Dr. Reddy's will conduct the clinical trial using its product, and the other four pharma companies will be required to demonstrate equivalence of their product to the product used by Dr. Reddy's in its clinical trial. Following the clinical trial protocol

approval given by the Drugs Controller General of India, the clinical trial will be conducted for the treatment of mild Covid-19 in an outpatient setting.

It is expected to take place between June and September this year across India with the recruitment of 1,200 patients.

## NHRC team probing post-poll violence attacked in Kolkata

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The fact-finding team of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) constituted by the Calcutta High Court to probe the allegations of post-poll violence in Bengal was allegedly attacked by some people when it went to the Jadavpur area here to look into the complaints.

"We had received some complaints from the people that their houses were destroyed and so we went to Jadavpur to find out the details. Though we were accompanied by central

forces, some people attacked us. If this happens with us, it is easily understandable what is happening to the common people," said Atif Rasheed, one of the members of the NHRC fact-finding team.

A video posted by Rasheed on Twitter showed an angry mob of men and women threatening him. Rasheed, as seen in the video, kept telling the mob that they could not behave in that manner and had to take a step back. The CISF personnel could be seen trying to control the irate mob.

### SUCCESSFUL CARDIAC SURGERY ON 24-DAY-OLD 700-GM BABY

Gandhinagar: In an extremely challenging feat, a premature baby weighing only 700 grams was successfully operated on for a heart defect at CIMS hospital in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The 24-day-old premature girl was born in Kheralu tehsil in Mehsana district, with a heart defect called Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA). Because of this condition, the ductus arteriosus, which normally closes at birth, remains open. Resultantly, the blood, instead of getting circulated into the body, goes back to the lungs. The infant, suffering from apnea and who suddenly stopped breathing, was evaluated by the hospital doctors and referred for a surgery.

## Focus on five-fold strategy of Covid management: Centre to states

The Centre asked the states on Tuesday to focus on the five-fold strategy -- test, track, treat, vaccination and adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour -- for effective Covid-19 management.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a communication to Chief Secretaries of the states, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla wrote that adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour is crucial to guard against any surge in infection. "To reiterate, Covid appropriate behaviour includes mandatory use of masks, hand hygiene, following physical and social distancing and proper ventilation of closed places. While easing restrictions, it must be ensured that there is no let up in

adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour," he wrote. He also advised that states and UTs should closely monitor case positivity and bed occupancy on a regular basis, taking the district as an administrative unit. "On witnessing any early sign of increase in case positivity

and higher bed occupancy, necessary action should be taken for containment and upgradation of health infrastructure. For districts identified with high positivity and higher bed occupancy, states and UTs may consider imposing restrictions," he wrote.

"States and UTs shall regularly monitor districts with higher number of active cases per million population, as it is an important indicator to predict need for upgrading health infrastructure and logistics, so that early and prompt action can be taken in this regard. There should be a continuous focus on the five-fold strategy for effective management of Covid-19."

## NOT A PACKAGE, ANOTHER HOAX: RAHUL GANDHI ON RELIEF MEASURES

New Delhi: A day after union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced eight relief measures worth Rs 6,28,993 crore, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday took a swipe at the government saying it is not a package but another hoax. "No family can spend Finance Minister's economic package on living, food, medical bills, school fees. Not a package, just another hoax," Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet. His remarks came a day after Sitharaman announced eight relief measures worth Rs 6,28,993 crore.

These measures entail enhancement of existing relief schemes such as ECGLS and support for state governments. Besides, a total of four new measures were announced to provide loans to micro credit borrowers as well as tourism industry. Further, Sitharaman announced Rs 50,000 crore guaranteed loan for creation of medical infrastructure.





# EYEING PUNJAB POLLS, ARVIND KEJRIWAL PROMISES 300 UNITS OF FREE POWER TO ALL

The statement quoting Kejriwal said all existing beneficiary categories which were getting 200 free units per month like the Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes, BPL families, freedom fighters, etc., will now get 300 free units per month, to be charged only for over and above 300 units per month.

In this way, if any of these beneficiaries consume 350 units in a month, then they will be charged for only 50 overstepped units, it said.

The first 300 units will be totally free for the consumers. All other non-beneficiaries who do not receive any electricity benefits currently will get 300 free units per month. If this category consumes more than 300 units per month, then they will have to pay for the whole consumption.

Team Absolute | Chandigarh

Eyeing Punjab Assembly elections, slated for March next year, AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday announced to provide 300 units of free power to every household in the state.

Announcing a slew of pre-poll sops, he said here that his party will provide uninterrupted round-the-clock power supply and waiver of pending electricity bills, if his Aam Aadmi Party forms the next government in the state. "It will take three-four years for us to upgrade the infrastructure, and then we will be able to provide uninterrupted power supply," he said.

The Chief Minister said, with the provision of 300 units free electricity to every household, 77-80 per cent households will



get zero bill. Taking a jibe at Congress leader and Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, he said it was surprising that Punjab "makes its own electricity, still is most expensive in the country". "Punjab can have the lowest rates for electricity if the alleged nexus between the politicians and electric companies is broken," Kejriwal said.

Stating that he had ensured a 24-hour uninterrupted power supply in Delhi within 2.5 years of being elected as Chief Minister by repairing the transformers and wires in every street, he said he would ensure the same in Punjab too.

He said in Delhi his government provided 200 units of free electricity to every family.

"The women are very happy. Women in Punjab are also very unhappy with inflation. The AAP government will also provide free electricity in Punjab," he added. Later, AAP in a statement clarified that all existing electricity schemes will remain to continue in Punjab and the Punjab will get 300 units per month free.

## GOA GOVT PROMISES ACTION AGAINST THOSE HARASSING CLUB TITO'S PROMOTERS

Team Absolute | Panaji

Goa's Ports Minister Michael Lobo on Tuesday urged Ricardo D'Souza, the co-owner of popular nightclub Club Tito's, to disclose the names of the persons from the government departments who had harassed him, a day after the nightclub owner announced sale of all businesses in the coastal state citing harassment by politicians, bureaucrats and others. "If anybody has harassed him, he should tell me the names. We will take action if anybody from our departments has harassed him," Lobo told reporters.

Lobo is also an MLA elected from the Calangute Assembly constituency, where the nightclub is located. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has denied to comment on the issue.

On Monday, D'Souza had announced in a Facebook post the sale of Club Tito's and all other businesses in Goa, much to the shock of the patrons of the club which was first started in 1971. In his Facebook post, the club owner had said that he was harassed by "the police, PDA



(Planning and Development Authority), CRZ (Coastal Regulation Zone), NGOs, panchayats and sarpanchas, Block Development Officers (BDO), and Deputy Collectors".

Lobo on Tuesday said that he had spoken to D'Souza and said that the latter had confirmed that he had received an advance payment for the sale of his club and other businesses, but a formal sale deed has not been executed yet. "He is my dear friend. When I spoke to him, he said an advance has been received, but a sale deed has not been executed yet. He had told me that he was (thinking of) selling the premises for the last two years. I am the only person who told him not to sell it. I had told him to sell a small percentage, say 30 to 40 per cent, and keep the larger stake with him," Lobo added.

## Sikh leaders meet Reddy over conversion of Sikh girls in Kashmir

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A delegation of Sikh leaders on Tuesday met Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy over the recent incident of forcible religious conversion of two Sikh girls in the Kashmir valley and submitted a memorandum in this regard.

The delegation led by BJP national spokesperson, Sardar R.P. Singh demanded action over forced conversion of Sikh girls to which the minister has assured necessary action.

"The delegation submitted a memorandum about the alleged forced conversion and wedding of Sikh girls in Kashmir. I will discuss the matter with the Union Home Minister about the action that is required to be taken," Reddy said after meeting



with the delegation.

Singh said that the delegation demanded a law in Jammu & Kashmir to protect girls of Sikh community from forceful conversion.

"Kashmir is not Pakistan where Sikhs can be forced to convert, we won't allow this to happen. Jathedar Akal Takht Sahib has written a letter to Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir to bring a law against 'Love Jihad'. He should write a similar letter to the Punjab Chief Minister against religious conversion in the state," Singh said.

Secretary, Delhi BJP, Impreet Singh Bakshi, who was also part of the delegation, said, "We requested the Minister of State for Home Affairs to bring an ordinance against conversion and he assured proper action."

## INDIA'S FIRST JUST ENERGY TRANSITION CENTRE LAUNCHED

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In the run-up to UN climate summit named COP 26, New Delhi-based International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (IFOREST) on Tuesday launched its India Just Transition Centre (IJTC).

Its inaugural virtual session was attended, among others, by MPs Jairam Ramesh and Jayant Sinha and Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Coal, Vinod Kumar Tewari.

At the event a new report titled 'Five Rs: A cross-sectoral landscape of Just Transition in India' was also released.

Speaking at the event, Ramesh emphasised on the need to create capacity in India on just transition.

"There is need to create independent research capacity which will be the base for advocacy and eventually a larger policy change. The IJTC will have an important role in creating this capacity and bringing the expertise together," he said. The 2015 Paris Agreement has made just transition an important part of the climate change agenda. Just transition has been gaining momentum worldwide.

Developed countries are building capacity and knowledge on how to implement a just energy transition roadmap to meet net-zero targets. Sinha, who is from the Hazaribagh constituency, which is a key coal district of Jharkhand, emphasised the need to start planning for a just transition in coal mining areas. "Phasing out coal over the next two to three decades is essential to meet climate goals. The planning for this must start now. The IJTC will play an important role in bridging the gap between state and national policy and the ground realities," said Sinha.

## BJP will form govt in West Bengal in next five years: Nadda

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Baratiya Janata Party chief J.P. Nadda on Tuesday expressed confidence that the saffron party will form the government in West Bengal in the 2026 assembly elections.

Virtually addressing the West Bengal BJP executive meet, Nadda said, "The BJP has covered a long distance in Bengal in a very short span of time. We had won just two seats in 2014 Lok Sabha polls and had got 18 per cent votes. In 2016 Assembly polls, we had won just three seats and 10.16 per cent vote share. In 2019, we got 40.25 per cent votes and won 18 seats out of 42 in the Lok Sabha elections."

He stated: "In the recently concluded assembly polls, our vote share was 38.1 per cent and we got 2.27 crore votes, and won 77 seats. In the next five years, the BJP will take another big leap and will form the govern-



ment in the state. We will achieve it and there will be a BJP government in the state."

Referring to the post poll violence in West Bengal, Nadda claimed that no post poll violence was reported from Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry as the TMC was not there.

## Three more involved in conversion racket in UP held



**Lucknow:** Three more persons have been arrested in connection with the alleged religious conversion of more than a thousand people across the country.

The accused, arrested on Monday, have been identified as Mannu Yadav a.k.a. Abdul Mannan, Irfan Sheikh and Rahul Bhola.

According to UP ADG Law and Order, Prashant Kumar, during the investigation it was found that funding for the alleged religious conversion was coming from abroad.

He said nearly Rs 1.70 crore transferred in the accounts has been trailed.

"This money has come between 2010 and June 2021. Money has been transferred in the accounts through cash and cheque. Rs 50 lakh has been deposited in accounts from Dubai, Qatar, Jeddah and Abu Dhabi," the ADG said.

"The role of three religious leaders was found suspicious in the conversion case. The Anti-Terror Squad is interrogating them," he said.

"During investigation, it was found that one of these leaders had also been in contact with Mohammad Umar Gautam, who was arrested earlier and is lodged in jail. Mohammad Umar had taken this religious leader several times with him to Halim Muslim College, where deaf students were brainwashed," he said.

The three leaders are also accused of collecting funds for organising protests against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizen (NRC).

## Parl panel seeks explanation from Twitter for locking Prasad, Tharoor accounts

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology on Tuesday asked for an explanation from microblogging site Twitter over denying access to the accounts of Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and committee head Shashi Tharoor.

Sources said that the parliamentary committee has written to Twitter and asked to explain the provision under which accounts of Prasad and Tharoor were locked. The Committee has asked Twitter to file its reply within two days.

Last week, Prasad and Tharoor were denied access to their Twitter accounts for some time which was later restored.

"Friends! Something highly peculiar happened today. Twitter denied access to my account for almost an hour on the alleged ground that there was a violation of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of the USA and subse-



quently they allowed me to access the account," Prasad has tweeted after restoration of account.

Prasad had also said, "No matter what any platform does they will have to abide by the new IT rules fully and there shall be no compromise on that."

## Top Lashkar commander, militant killed in Kashmir



Srinagar | Agencies

Two Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists including a top commander were killed during an encounter at Parimpora in Srinagar on Monday, police said on Tuesday. Police said that there was a specific input about terrorists carrying an attack on highway. "Keeping in view the seriousness of the input few joint nakas of JKP and CRPF were placed along the highway," police said. Police said that on Parimpora Naka a vehicle was stopped and their identity was asked. The person sitting at the back seat tried to open his bag and took out a grenade. The Naka party swiftly swung into action and grabbed the person sitting at the back seat. Both the driver and the person sitting at the back seat were taken to police station where after taking off his mask it was identified that he was terrorist Abar, a top Lashkar Commander. He was put to joint interrogation by JKP, CRPF and Army. One Pistol and hand grenades were recovered from his possession.

## UP: Minor gang raped, given abortion pills by Asha worker

Mahoba | Agencies

A 13-year-old girl, who was allegedly gang raped four months ago, was later given abortion pills by an Accredited Social Health Activist (Asha), who was hand in glove with the accused, police said. Three of the four men who had allegedly raped the girl in a village and the health worker were arrested on Monday. The incident came to light on Friday when the condition of the girl, who became pregnant, deteriorated after she was given abortion pills by the Asha worker named Sushila, the police said. In her statement to the police, the victim alleged that B.P. Singh, Ram Babu Singh, Raghu Raikwar and Shatrughan Singh had raped her while Sushila was



part of a conspiracy to cover up the crime. Sanjay Sharma, the SHO of Srinagar police station, said that after a case was registered on Sunday, the four accused including the Asha worker were arrested on Monday while the hunt is on for the fifth culprit.

The victim's statement will be recorded in the court soon, he added.

## Monsoon Session of Parliament likely from July 19

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Monsoon session of Parliament is likely to commence on its usual timing this year with signals coming from the government to hold the session in the third week of July, sources said.

It is expected that the session might be held from July 19 to August 13 with all Covid-related protocols.

The nearly month-long session is likely to have around 20 sittings, sources said.

The Monsoon session of Parliament usually commences in the third week of July and concludes ahead of Independence day.

However, the final date will



be officially declared after the Cabinet Committees on Parliamentary Affairs (CCPA) meeting which will be chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The CCPA meeting is slated to be held after Rajnath Singh returns from his three-day Ladakh visit. Modalities of holding this year's Monsoon session are still being discussed.

Earlier, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi had said the government may hold the Monsoon session as per its normal schedule in July.



# 'THE SLIGHTEST SOUND OF THE THIRD WAVE SHOULD BE HEARD'

## Madhya Pradesh ranks 32nd in Corona infection, Vaccination in MP ranked fourth in the country, CM Chouhan reviews Corona status and vaccination work in the state

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that we have to be so alert towards Corona that we should be able to hear even the slightest sound of third wave in the state. For this, it is necessary to get maximum number of Corona tests conducted and contacts traced, so that each patient can be immediately identified, isolated and treated. There should be no laxity in this work.

Chouhan said that Madhya Pradesh is ranked 32nd among all the states and union territories of the country in terms of Corona infection. The infection is at the lowest level, but we cannot be careless. We must adopt Covid appropriate behaviour and strictly adhere to Corona protocol.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that vaccination is going on at a fast pace in Madhya Pradesh under the Vaccination Mahaabhiyan. Madhya Pradesh ranks fourth in the country in terms of vaccination. As much as 33 pc of the 18+ population in the state have been vaccinated, while 40 pc in this category have been vaccinated in Gujarat and Rajasthan and 38 pc of eligible persons in Karnataka. Chief Minister was reviewing the status of Corona and vaccination work in the state through video conferencing in Mantralaya.

### 38 new cases of Corona

As many as 38 new cases of Corona have been reported in the state. The weekly rate and today's positivity rate of



the state is 0.1 percent. The Corona recovery rate has increased to 98.8 percent. The number of active cases has come down to 630.

### Zero cases in 37 districts, 6 districts completely Corona free

No new case of Corona has been reported in 37 out of 52 districts in the state. At the same time, there are 6 districts which are completely Corona free. There is neither any new case in these districts nor are there any active cases here. These districts are Ashoknagar, Burhanpur, Dewas, Khandwa, Mandla and Sidhi.

### New cases of Corona only in 15 districts

Now new cases of Corona have been reported only in 15 districts of the state which includes Bhopal, Indore, Betul, Jabalpur, Rajgarh, Ratlam, Raisen, Niwari, Barwani, Damoh, Guna, Gwalior, Harda, Narsinghpur and Neemuch districts. Seven new cases have been reported in Bhopal and 6 in Indore. In the remaining districts, less than 5 new cases of Corona have been reported.

### Record vaccinations in Vaccination Mahaabhiyan

Under the ongoing vaccination campaign in the state, 17 lakh 42 thousand people have been vaccinated in the state on 21 June, 11 lakh 6 thousand on 23 June and 10 lakh 10 thousand persons on 26 June. On June 24, 7 lakh 06 thousand people were vaccinated in the state and on June 28, 4 lakh 65 thousand persons were vaccinated.

### Testing must not be reduced

Chief Minister instructed that Corona tests should not be reduced in any district of the state. Instructions were issued to increase testing in Alirajpur, Vidisha, Gwalior, Dewas, Sehore, Raisen, Dhar, Tikamgarh, Rajgarh and Barwani districts. Pay special attention to the treatment of black fungus patients. Chouhan said that 712 patients of black fungus are still undergoing treatment in the state. Special attention should be paid to their treatment. Ensure availability of 'Amphotericin-B' injections and other medicines for treatment.

## Go and die: MP minister's remark to parents sparks controversy

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh school education minister Inder Singh Parmar has created a huge controversy after he allegedly told some parents, "go and die, do whatever you want to do".

The parents had gone to him to urge him to reduce the school fees as it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to pay due to reduced income impacted by the pandemic.

Parents Federation president Kamal Vishwakarma said that the parents went to the school education minister's residence on Tuesday morning with the complaint that schools are overcharging fees, but the minister did not listen to the parents and lost his cool.

The minister, enraged at the demand, told the visiting parents, "Go and die, do



whatever you want to." Minister Parmar's statement has now gone viral on the social media. The parents union has demanded an apology from the minister. They have also decided to file a defamation case against Parmar. Attacking the minister, Congress leader and media coordinator of former chief minister Kamal Nath, Narendra Saluja, said, "The minister is a shameless person. The parents union went to meet him for relief, but he showed an irresponsible atti-

tude. He told the parents if you want to die, then die, we don't care."

The BJP has defended the minister. BJP spokesperson Rajpal Singh Sisodia said that the parents union had met the school education minister regarding school fees. "The minister asked them to wait and told them that he will get back after studying the issue. Then parents started saying, should we die. Then he said why die, I will solve the problem after studying the issue."

### 3 ENGINEERS SUSPENDED ON THE INSTRUCTIONS OF ENERGY MINISTER

Bhopal: On the instructions of Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar, West Zone Electricity Distribution Company has suspended three engineers posted in Indore district with immediate effect. Action is also being taken to get an FIR done against the outsourced agency on the instructions of the Energy Minister. Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar was passing through Indore Bypass while coming from Indore to Bhopal on Monday night. During the inspection there, negligence in maintenance was found. He himself removed tree branches and bushes from near the electrical property at some places. On this occasion, he instructed to take the maintenance work seriously and pay more attention to consumer services. After this, the Energy Minister inspected the Grid, Mangalia Rural Electricity Distribution Centre office and Mahalaxmi Nagar Zone office at Mangalia.

## MP govt to take legal action against Twitter over distorted India map

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has decided to initiate legal action against Twitter for putting up a distorted map of India and other such activities, state Home Minister Narottam Mishra said on Tuesday.

The map, which showed the Union Territories of Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir outside India, was noticed on Monday, leading to an uproar by netizens. Twitter had removed that map on Monday evening. "Something or other has been going on continuously against the country for a long time. Sometimes unrestrained words are spoken against Bharat Mata and sometimes a wrong map of the



country is displayed on Twitter. These issues cannot be taken lightly. The

governments at the Centre and the state have taken it seriously," Mishra said in a

statement posted on Twitter. In another tweet, Mishra said he has directed the state's Director General of Police (DGP) Vivek Johri to investigate the matter and take legal action in this direction. Mishra said such incidents of speaking against or doing something against 'Bharat Mata' (Mother India) are on the rise. The map's glaring distortion, which appeared on the career section of the Twitter website under the header 'Tweep Life', had triggered a heavy backlash from netizens on Monday as they demanded strict action against the microblogging platform that has flouted various rules on multiple occasions in the past. Earlier, Twitter had shown Leh as part of China.

## Post facto approval of proposal to encourage oxygen producing units

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A meeting of the Cabinet was held in Mantralaya today under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. In view of the Covid-19 crisis, post facto approval was given by Chief Minister Shri Chouhan on May 13, 2021 in coordination and the order issued by the department on May 1, 2021 regarding provision of special facilities to encourage oxygen producing units to increase the currently available oxygen production capacity.

### Amendment in Mukhya Mantri Solar Pump Yojana

The period of Mukhyamantri Solar Pump Yojana was extended till March 2024 to promote agriculture in the state. The use of solar pumps will boost the

agriculture sector in the state. All the farmers of the state are eligible under this scheme. This scheme will be implemented on priority even in those remote areas of the state where electricity infrastructure development has yet to be done by the distribution companies. Under this scheme 5 HPDC pumps will be used and both AC and D.C. pumps with more capacity will be used. According to the original plan of the Government of India, the proposal of limiting the grant amount to 30 percent was approved by the state government for the purpose of giving the benefit of the scheme to more and more farmers. Diesel pumps can be replaced by the use of solar pumps, which will also save the environment in the long run.

### Operation of Dial-100 Service

The Council of Ministers has approved the pre-approved approval given in coordination to extend the contract period of tenderer B.V.G. India Limited by 3 months after expiry on 31 March 2021 to continue the centralized Police Call Centre and Control Room Machine (Dial-100) Service. Pre-approved tenderer B.V.G. India Limited will be given a period of 6 months from July 1, 2021 or till the date of commencement of operation of Dial-100 service by the newly selected tenderer in case of acceptance of new tender, whichever is less, on the terms of the pre-approved contract due to increase in the rates of wages etc., approval was given to operate at an increased rate of 15 percent in the contracted rates.

### MARKET PRICE GUIDELINE EXTENDED TILL JULY 15

Bhopal: The state government has extended the effective market price guideline for the year 2020-21 from 30 June to 15 July 2021. The Commercial Tax Department has issued orders in this regard.

Under the powers conferred by the Government in Rule-12 of Madhya Pradesh Market Price Guiding Principles Revision Rules, 2018, the time period of the effective market price guideline for 2020-21 has been extended till July 15, 2021.

## Target to increase irrigation area to 6 lakh hectares in MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Efforts are on to increase the area of irrigation in Madhya Pradesh. A target has been set to increase the irrigation area by about six lakh hectares in the next four years. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan held one-to-one discussions with Water Resources Minister Tulsi Silavat and Tourism and Culture Minister Usha Thakur. During this, he got information about departmental plans and works and gave necessary instructions.

During discussion with Chief Minister Chouhan, Water Resources Minister Tulsi Silavat told that in the next four years, MP Irrigation area will be increased from 35 lakh hectare to 41 lakh hectare. Work is being done at full speed on the resolve of the state government to make agriculture a profitable busi-



ness. Silavat thanked Chief Minister Chouhan for the Ken-Betwa link project. This project will change the picture of Bundelkhand region. During discussion with Chief Minister Chouhan, Tourism and Culture Minister Usha Thakur said that in view of the immense potential of tourism in the state, all efforts are being made to increase tourism.

## Meaning of Digvijay Singh's increased political activity

Sandeep Puranic | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, the political activity of Rajya Sabha member and former Chief Minister Digvijay Singh is increasing rapidly. The meaning of his activism is also being discovered. Political speculation is even being that Digvijay Singh is trying to strengthen his hold again in the politics of Madhya Pradesh. The Congress was able to return to power in the state in the elections held in the year 2018 after struggling for almost one and a half decades, but it could only remain in power for 15 months. The reason for the loss of power from the hands of the Congress was considered to be lack of mutual harmony and there were also big attacks on Digvijay Singh for this. Digvijay Singh is also considered to be the major reason for Jyotiraditya Scindia leaving the Congress.

If we look at the Congress politics of the state in the last few days, it is known that first former Chief Minister Kamal Nath's health deteriorated, treatment held in Delhi and after that his activism in national politics has also increased. He has been entrusted with the undisclosed responsibility of coordination between party leaders in Punjab and Rajasthan. Kamal Nath has



been counted in close proximity to the Gandhi family. After the death of Ahmed Patel, Kamal Nath's closeness with Sonia Gandhi has increased, as well as the usefulness of Kamal Nath has increased due to the voices of many big leaders against the Gandhi family. Political experts believe that if Kamal Nath

becomes active in national politics, the Congress may have a big face crisis in the state. There are some leaders like former Union Minister Arun Yadav, Suresh Pachauri, Ajay Singh who are recognized in large part of the state, but their hold in Delhi is weak at present. Sensing this situation, Digvijay Singh has increased his activism. The first step of the same activism is to file a complaint regarding tampering of clubhouse chat with the cyber cell of Bhopal. Congress state spokesperson Abbas Hafeez says, "Digvijay Singh is a leader who has always fought for the people. This is the reason why BJP fears him and Digvijay Singh remains on his target too. Nothing should be searched for their capabilities.

After the Congress was out of power in the state, Digvijay Singh's activism steadily decreased, he was rarely seen openly during the Corona period. Now that their activism has increased, the round of speculation is also gaining momentum. Anyway, internal conflict is going on in the Congress about who will get this post if Kamal Nath leaves the post of state president and leader of opposition in the assembly. It is also being speculated that Digvijay Singh will leave no stone unturned to get the post that Kamal Nath will leave, to his close ones.

## Indore gets Asia's longest high speed track for automobiles

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that Indore has got the gift of Asia's longest High Speed Track (HST). Chief Minister Chouhan said that this project will contribute in realizing the dream of making the country an auto hub under self-reliant India. Along with this, it will also provide employment opportunities in the state. Chief Minister Chouhan said that NATRAX has been developed in an area of 1000 acres of land. Where high speed testing of all major categories of vehicles ranging from 2 wheelers to heavy tractor trailers will be conducted, which will be a major center for all types of high speed testing for vehicles. On the e-inauguration of the world class 11.3 km long



high speed track, the Union Minister Javadekar said that India is set to become a manufacturing hub of automobiles and spare parts. The Minister said, we are rapidly moving towards 'Self-reliant India' and all-round efforts are being made in this direction. He said, his ministry is committed to fulfill the prime minister's dream under which India will become a hub of auto manufacturing. He said, the expansion of automobile and manufacturing industries will also help in creating new jobs. The Minister said that many projects in the rail-ways, highways and waterways sector were pending for years, which are being completed today due to strong political will. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises Arjun Ram Meghwal said that the government is promoting manufacturing and automobile industry as it will help in empowering the country in a big way.

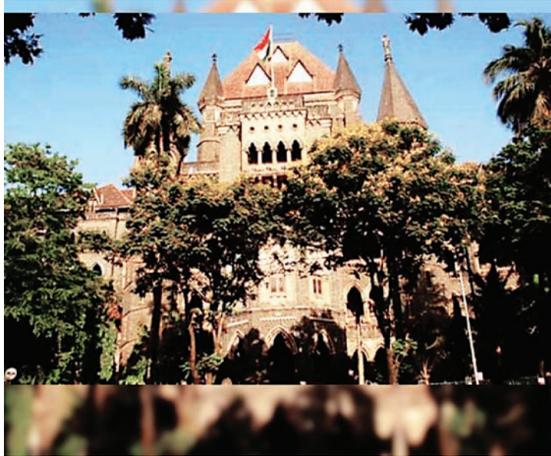


## WHY CENTRE'S APPROVAL NEEDED FOR DOOR-TO-DOOR VACCINATION?: HC TO MAHA GOVT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday asked the Maharashtra government why it needs an approval from the Centre to start door-to-door vaccination programme against Covid-19 for senior citizens, specially-abled and bedridden persons in the state. The state government on Tuesday filed an affidavit in the HC, saying home vaccination on an experimental basis can be started, but only for those who are completely immobile and bedridden.

The bench was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by two advocates - Dhruvi Kapadia and Kunal Tiwari - seeking a direction to the Union government to start door-to-door vaccination for senior citizens above the age of 75, specially-abled persons and those who are bedridden. Earlier, the Union government had said door-to-door vaccination cannot be introduced currently due to various reasons, including vaccine wastage and the risk of adverse reaction to the vaccine. The court had then asked the Maharashtra government if it was willing to start door-to-door vac-



nation in the state. In its affidavit, the State Family Welfare Board said the Maharashtra government has been following guidelines laid down by the Union government for vaccination and till date, it (state) has not made any request for door-to-door vaccination.

As per the affidavit, door-to-door vaccination can be introduced on an

experimental basis for bedridden persons. It said even for these people, a certificate has to be issued by the person's doctor, saying the person is not likely to have any adverse reaction to the vaccine, and if there is any such reaction, then the doctor concerned shall be entirely responsible to manage and administer appropriate medical treatment to

**"Why do you (Maharashtra government) need approval? Health is a state subject too. Is the state government doing everything after taking approval from the Centre? Have states like Kerala, Bihar and Jharkhand taken approval from the Union government?"**

the person.

The affidavit also said family members of the person concerned shall have to provide a written consent before the vaccine is administered to the person at home. In order to avoid vaccine wastage, at least 10 beneficiaries concerned shall be made mandatorily available in the closed proximity as one vial contains 10 doses of vaccine, it further said.

## Ganeshotsav: For 2nd year, no giant idols or mega celebrations

Team Absolute | Mumbai

For the second consecutive year, the Maharashtra government has decided to ban mega public celebrations and gigantic idols of Lord Ganesha for the upcoming 10-day Ganeshotsav festival starting September 10.

In view of the anticipated Covid-19 'third wave', the state government on Tuesday issued a detailed notification restricting the height of the idols to up to 4 feet at public marquees and 2 feet for home worship. The government has also stipulated simple, unostentatious celebrations, without crowds and strictly following all Covid-19 protocols during the 10 days which mark the state's biggest public festival in which people from all communities participate.

Instead of the usual cultural or entertainment programmes, the government has recommended giving priority to health camps or blood donation drives or health awareness campaigns for coronavirus, malaria, dengue etc., with highest levels of cleanliness maintained by all the public



mandals and organisers of the mega Ganeshotsav groups.

The state government has further suggested that the public 'mandals' switch over to online 'darshan' or relaying the celebrations in the marquees through the local cable television networks, websites or social media platforms, said the notification issued by Sanjay D. Khedekar, Deputy Secretary, Home Department. For the 'Visarjan', children and senior citizens must avoid stepping out and as far as possible, the immersion ceremonies should be performed at artificial ponds which will be created by various public and private bodies, as in 2020, at the height of the first wave of Covid-19.

## UDDHAV THACKERAY VISITS RELIANCE HOSPITAL FOR CHECKUP

Mumbai: Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray drove down to Sir H.N. Reliance Foundation Hospital (HNRFH) in south Mumbai for a medical checkup, here on Tuesday morning.

Officials and Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) sources, while describing the hospital visit as of a 'routine' nature, declined to share details on the usually fit and sprightly Thackeray -- who took over as the state CM in November 2019.

An official said that normally, the CM goes to the Lilavati Hospital for his checkups, but since he has now shifted to the 'Varsha' official residence at Malabar Hill, he opted for the HNRFH nearby.

It may be recalled that Thackeray -- who will celebrate his 61st birthday on July 27 -- had undergone an angioplasty in July 2012 for successfully removing some blockages in his heart at the Lilavati Hospital in Bandra. Last year, his wife Rashmi, who was infected with Covid-19, had taken treatment at the HNRFH.

## Power reforms: Pvt genco dues head to 4-year low of less than 100 days

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Dues of private coal-based independent power producers (IPPs, or gencos) are expected to wind down to a four-year low of less than 100 days by end of this fiscal, and well below the pre-pandemic levels, CRISIL's analysis of India's 76 GW of operational IPP capacities indicated on Tuesday.

Liquidation of receivables from state power distribution companies (discoms) following the central government's Atmanirbhar stimulus, and better payment cycles on regular billings will drive the improvement, the ratings agency said in its fresh assessment of financial position of discoms.

As per its efforts to strengthen discoms and make them cut losses and modernise operations, the Centre on Monday also came up with a new reform oriented scheme with a total allocation of Rs 3.03 lakh crore.

According to Crisil, the improved financials of discoms, in turn, would support credit profiles.

In the first half of last fiscal, discom liquidity was severely impacted by lower collections because of pandemic-induced lockdowns. Consequently, dues to IPPs ballooned more than 50 per cent by



September, from the Rs 48,000 crore seen at the end of the last fiscal. This had started affecting the debt servicing ability of gencos.

The Rs 1.35 lakh crore Atmanirbhar stimulus announced in May 2020 to clear off the dues till June 2020, came in as a much needed support.

Under the stimulus, disbursements cumulating to Rs 1.05 lakh crore are expected to be provided by the end of this fiscal, of which nearly 40-45 per cent will be to clear dues of thermal IPPs. About Rs 30,000 crore has already been disbursed in previous fiscal which arrested the rise in receivables to an estimated 125 days as of March 2021 (compared with 117 days as of March 2020).

This factor in incremental delays of 10 days by discoms, which may arise due to the second pandemic wave.

That said, sustenance of payment cycles would largely be contingent on discoms being able to pay their dues regularly, which in turn, will depend on their own financial health. To ensure that, implementation of structural reforms such as timely release of subsidies and operational improvements through installation of smart meters is a requisite, the agency said.

## EX HM ANIL DESHMUKH SKIPS ED SUMMONS ONCE AGAIN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Maharashtra home minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Anil Deshmukh on Tuesday once again skipped the summons of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) citing Covid pandemic, in connection with its probe into the allegations of the alleged bribery. He said that he was ready to join the probe through any "video or audio" medium.

Deshmukh had skipped the ED summons last week also following searches at his residence in Nagpur. He had sought more time to appear before the financial probe agency.

In his three page letter to the ED, Deshmukh said, "I am a septuagenarian, about 72 years of age, suffering from various co-morbidities including hypertension and cardiac problems, etc. I have already exposed my person to some extent on June 25 in my long interaction with you span-



ning over several hours during the course of the search and recording my statement. Thus, it may not be prudent or desirable to appear in person today and I am sending my

authorised representative." The NCP leader also said that he would furnish all information and documents sought by the ED after the agency provided him a copy of the

Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) filed by it in the case. He further mentioned that the ED summons "do not clarify" the purpose of his personal appearance before it.

On June 26, the ED arrested Deshmukh's personal secretary Sanjeev Palande and personal assistant Kundan Shinde in connection with an alleged 'hafta' case. In its remand copy of the two officials of Deshmukh, the ED said that over Rs 4 crore was collected from bar owners between December 2020 and February 2021 was routed to Deshmukh's charitable trust in Nagpur, through four shell companies in Delhi.

Deshmukh (72), is facing an ED investigation on the basis of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) case as the fallout of the allegations made in a letter penned by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, who is now the

## Cops to fine people moving out without reason after 5 pm in Pune

PUNE | Agencies

After the Maharashtra government sounded an alert over the Delta Plus strain of the virus and urged all districts not to relax lockdown norms further, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) on Saturday decided to re-impose curfew in the city from 5 pm and issued directions to stall all permitted activities by 4 pm from Monday. Accordingly, the shops and offices in the city were closed around 4 pm. Police teams were deployed at various checkpoints on the city roads. Joint Commissioner of Police Ravindra Shisave said, "According to the new orders, there will be a curfew in the city from 5 pm to 5 am. After closing the shops, offices around 4 am, we expect the citizens to return by 5 pm. We appeal to citizens to follow the lockdown norms strictly after 5 pm. Anybody found moving around in public places without any valid reason will be fined. Nakabandi will be done at several spots to ensure proper implementation of the Covid-19 restrictions."



Earlier, the civic body had relaxed lockdown norms by allowing most activities till 7 pm and restaurants to be open till 10 pm for the dine-in facility. From Monday, essential category stores will be open on all days till 4 pm, while non-essential shops will be allowed to operate till 4 pm only on weekdays and will be closed on weekends.

Restaurants, bars, food courts can have dine-in facility only on weekdays till 4 pm with 50 per cent sitting capacity. Home delivery and parcel services are allowed till 11 pm on all days of the week. E-commerce services for all products will continue as usual.

## Lightning strikes claim 2,000 lives annually in India: Experts

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Thunderstorm, accompanied by lightning strikes, is the single-biggest natural killer in the country causing more than 2,000 deaths each year, according to the top experts from the IMD and the NDMA.

India has witnessed an increasing death toll and damages due to lightning bolts over the past few years, said Rajendra Singh, Member, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), while addressing a national-level workshop on the issue organised by the Indian Meteorological Society, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting.

"Despite improved understanding, monitoring and prediction capabilities brought about by scientific and technological progress, lightning and thunderstorms still cause widespread loss of life and property every year in the country," said Singh.

Terming lightning hits as "a serious threat", Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, the Director-General of India Meteorological Department (IMD), said this happens primarily due to increased exposure of people,



especially farmers, fishermen and labourers who remain outdoors for reasons of livelihood. "Among the reasons identified by the experts is a communication gap which does not result in last mile connectivity," said Mohapatra. Addressing disaster experts and managers from Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal, Kerala, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and other states, Singh said that loss of human

lives and property due to lightning strikes is significantly higher, and it is more than the number of people killed in tornadoes or hurricanes globally. With the joint initiative of scientists from the IMD, IITM and NCMR-WF, a Lightning Warning System was developed in 2018, having a location-specific forecast of up to 48 hours about the occurrence of thunderstorms, lightning strikes, squalls,

gusty winds or hailstorms. Besides, the IMD has around 30 radars around the country which provide weather updates every 10 minutes along with the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) satellites relaying information about convective clouds every 15 minutes from INSAT-3DR, said Mohapatra. The country is now capable of having 'real-time' information about lightning updated every 5 minutes to alert the people about the potential threats.

The models developed by the Ministry of Earth Sciences are very definite and utilised by forecasters around the country to provide detailed information for each district in the country every three hours.

Mohapatra said that the Damini App provides location specific data which remains valid for half-an-hour through 1,085 weather stations around the country, which shall be enhanced to reach out and cover every block and sub-blocks right up to the village panchayat level. He said that economic losses occur with cultivated fields and buildings, infrastructure like communication networks, power plants and so on, which are often destroyed by lightning strikes, and occasionally even igniting potentially devastating wildfires.

## Maha's longest, widest road tunnel sees light of day on Mumbai-Nagpur expressway

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a significant achievement, Maharashtra's longest and widest road tunnel saw the light of day on the upcoming "Hindu Hridayasmarat Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samruddhi Mahamarg", or the Greenfield project of Mumbai-Nagpur Super Communication Expressway, officials said here on Tuesday.

A huge roar of jubilation rent the air after the final blast on the tunnel, marking the culmination of hard labour under the ever-looming threat of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, by a team of engineers and workers of Afcons Infrastructure Ltd, Shapoorji Pallonji Group.

"The tunnel is 7.78 kms long, in two tubes with a total width of 35 metres (17.50 metres in each tube) located between Igatpuri



(Nashik) and Vashala (Thane), in a thickly forested hilly region," AIL Project Manager and Leader Sekhar Das told reporter. The road tunnel is part of the 13.10 kms long Package 14 handled by AIL for the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) and was completed three months ahead of schedule.

The 701 km-long east-west expressway linking the state capital Mumbai with its second capital Nagpur, is expected to be partially operational by September 2021 and fully completed by May 2022, slashing the travel time between the two cities by half from the existing 16 hours.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Cocktail Vaccination

Taking the first dose of Pfizer Covid vaccine and then AstraZeneca for the second can provide good protection against the pandemic virus, a study has found. The Com-Cov trial, led by researchers from the University of Oxford, looked at the efficacy of either two doses of Pfizer, two of AstraZeneca, or one of them followed by the other. The results showed that all combinations worked well, priming the immune system, the BBC reported. The study included 850 volunteers aged 50 and above, who were given the doses four weeks apart. The team found that people who took AstraZeneca shot followed by Pfizer showed higher antibodies and T cell responses than those who took Pfizer followed by AstraZeneca. Both of these mixes induced higher antibodies than two doses of AstraZeneca, while the highest antibody response was seen after two doses of Pfizer, and the highest T cell response from AstraZeneca followed by Pfizer. But, they do offer such flexibility for vaccine rollout in the future. Two doses are important to give the fullest protection and teach the body to make antibodies and T cells to block and kill Covid. Meanwhile, a pre-print study suggests that a third dose of AstraZeneca vaccine, given more than six months after the second, boosts the immune system, the BBC reported. But, there is currently no data to support that a Covid-19 vaccine booster shot is needed for the general population, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. An extra dose may be needed for more-vulnerable groups, such as older adults or organ transplant patients.

THE COMING ANARCHY IN SRI LANKA

Asanga Abeyagoonasekera

In stateless societies, the rule of law is usually suppressed. In such societies, people turn into unfree pawns as a result of worsening political conditions. The arrival of anarchy to the island nation of Sri Lanka is due to a series of factors. It is mainly driven by the worsening domestic political environment, curtailment of democracy, weaponising and the exertion of undue influence on courts and judiciary. The recent political victimisation of neutral agencies is an attempt to rewrite rules by its politicians. In this backdrop the growing human rights conditions and arbitrary pardoning of criminals will weaken the rule of law. Such a dangerous tilt, away from democratic forms of governance will drag the nation towards an autocratic footing. Democracies can be dissolved in spectacular fashion like from a coup d'etat or a less dramatic but equally destructive manner, argues Steven Levitz and Daniel Ziblatt in their book 'How Democracies Die'. The slow and equally destructive death of democracy has arrived in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankans were confined to their homes during the lockdown following the government's 'disciplinary project', while the government was engaged in releasing a convict using a prison side door. 'The pardoning of Duminda Silva, whose conviction the Supreme Court had upheld in 2018, undermines rule of law,' explains US Ambassador to Sri Lanka Alaina B Teplitz, referring to the Presidential pardon given to the former Member of Parliament and ally of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The former Justice Minister Thalatha Athukorala questions, 'Today, those found guilty of the most serious crimes in our law enjoy presidential protection while the judges and police officers who brought them to justice have targets on their backs.' The Presidential pardon comes when the Sri Lankan government faces multiple challenges, especially weeks before the European Union (EU) has pinpointed the abuses of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and growing human rights concerns in the country. A warning to withdraw its GSP+ concession is already on the table. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) condemning the decision expressed concern that 'Presidential pardon of Duminda Silva, a former MP convicted of the murder of a fellow politician, is another example of selective, arbitrary granting of pardons that weakens rule of law and undermines accountability.' Sri Lanka's Bar association (BASL) questioned President Rajapaksa on the decision of the selection method and raised severe concerns on the administration's position towards rule of law. The decision from the government was not an ad hoc decision. The release was carried out along with the release of several other PTA detainees. Why was such a decision taken especially at a time of significant external pressure? Human Rights Concerns In a lengthy televised address on June 25, days after the release of the former MP, Rajapaksa stated his progress in his development plan and continuous commitment to rule of law, not referring to the PTA nor the pardoning act. The new European Union Parliament adopting a resolution to withdraw the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+) is a



clear warning to the Sri Lankan regime. European Parliament adopted a resolution on June 10 calling for the repeal of Sri Lanka's draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Further, the resolution highlights Sri Lanka's 'alarming path towards the recurrence of grave human rights violations...accelerating militarisation of civilian governmental functions, the reversal of important constitutional safeguards, political obstruction of accountability, exclusionary rhetoric, intimidation of civil society, and the use of anti-terrorism laws'. The regime has failed to address the human rights concerns adequately highlighted multiple times, and procrastination in its process is the reason for this action by EU Parliament. Earlier in March, the government rejected the UNHRC resolution, giving a clear signal of the government's position of 'no external interference' towards the reconciliation process. Ironically the real concern of many in the country is the absence of a reconciliation process. The departure from the internationally accepted process and continuous denial by the state on minority concerns is evident. The government has already lost its direction from a progressive path towards a more autocratic posture. Jehan Perera correctly observes this ground reality, explaining that 'The reality on the ground is that wounds of the country's 30 year war have not healed. The attempts to promote healing have lacked commitment. Thousands of acres of land in the North and East still continue to be under military control. This is land that was once lived on and cultivated by Tamil people. Today it is being used by the military, some of it being cultivated, some it used for recreation purposes including hotels, and some of it for security purposes. Thousands of families still await news of the whereabouts of their loved ones despite an Office on Missing Persons which has yet to give a ruling on even a single missing person although four years have elapsed since it was set up. There are also still a few hundred persons in detention for a large number of years, some exceeding a decade in prison without trial.' The government's denial and non-commitment will worsen the relationship with the EU and other western democracies. GSP Benefits Nearly 60 per cent of Sri Lankan exports benefit from preferential terms of trade from the EU's GSP+ and US GSP schemes. The EU is Sri Lanka's largest export market with 30 per cent of the total, while the US is the largest single export market at 27% of the total merchandise exports.

Sri Lanka's exports, including apparel, fisheries, ceramic, and rubber that uses the GSP concession, will be directly impacted. Sri Lanka has duty free access to 7,200 products with the EU GSP+ Concession. It is estimated that the withdrawal of this concession would wipe out a significant chunk of foreign exchange earned through exports. 'We are concerned with the EU Parliament's resolution,' says the Sri Lanka's Export Development Board Chairman. The present state of the economy with the pandemic has been a challenge to Sri Lankan exports 'especially to the apparel industry' admitted even by President Gotabaya in his recent address, and GSP withdrawal will add significant pressure to the Sri Lankan economy. The government's senior Ministers have ignored the GSP+ withdrawal warning saying that they are ready to move forward without the concession. However, K.D. Vimanga, a policy analyst at Advocata, an economic think-tank, explains that the government needs to understand the merits of GSP+, and it is vital to retain the concession, when at present the country is facing a severe economic crisis, especially with serious issues in debt repayments, lack of foreign exchange and a balance of payment crisis. 'Understand the merits of it,' warns the analyst. Democratic Stability President Gotabaya's regime has developed a norm towards weaponizing unfavourable outcomes towards their favour catering to the majoritarian Sinhalese Buddhist voter base. The outcome at the UNHRC resolution in Geneva in March, the EU GSP+ saying we can do without it or releasing a convicted parliamentary member for murder in the name of justice, is a move in the same direction. The political strategy of this administration is to cater to the majoritarian voter base by making claims of protecting the nation's sovereignty from foreign interference. This narrow minded political strategy does not fit all cases when certain decisions have no relevance. The very act of convicting one regime and arbitrary pardoning from another regime is a sign of weakness, not a strength in the process. According to a senior political scientist in Sri Lanka, 'in the coming months, Sri Lanka's judicial sector will undergo significant reforms along with continuous interference despite a promise to amend the constitution'. When assessing Yale Professor Juan Linz's work on 'The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes' and 'How regimes paint a rather bleak picture of their ability to survive', the Sri Lankan case provides ample evidence of the regimes democratic political behaviour to survive. The public's loss of trust in its democratic institutions is a visible characteristic that can have a long-term impact on the country's stability. An essential ingredient according to Linz is 'the belief in the legitimacy of democratic institutions as a factor increasing the likelihood of stability in a democracy'. The coming anarchy to the entire nation is in the breakdown of its democracy. This for sure will worsen economic conditions. (Asanga Abeyagoonasekera is a geopolitical analyst and author of 'Conundrum of an Island [2021]'. The views expressed are personal)

international

NO DECISION MADE ON EXTENSION OF DEAL WITH IAEA: IRAN

Tehran | Agencies

Iran has yet to decide on the extension of an earlier agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Saeed Khatibzadeh, the spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran said. 'The agreement with the IAEA was to address some of the agency's concerns within the framework of a parliament's bill. We agreed not to collect the cameras, but not to provide the agency with information and what is being recorded,' Khatibzadeh said while addressing a briefing on Monday. Asked if there is an expiration date for clearing the IAEA's camera data installed in some Iranian nuclear facilities, he said that Iran has not made any decision about the cameras and agreement with the agency, Xinhua reported. Iran's Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions was passed by Parliament in December 2020, requiring among other measures the government to stop implementing the Additional Protocol to the



Non-Proliferation Treaty by February 23, in case the US sanctions were not lifted. The IAEA and Iranian officials reached a temporary understanding in February to keep the the agency's moni-

toring cameras under Iran's supervision for a period of three months up to May 24, and deliver the records to the agency only after sanctions on the country are lifted.

EX-S.AFRICAN PREZ SENTENCED TO JAIL



Johannesburg: The South African Constitutional Court on Tuesday found former President Jacob Zuma guilty of contempt of court and sentenced him to a 15-month jail term. A BBC report says that Zuma has been five days to hand himself at a police station. The country's State Capture Inquiry accused Zuma of accepting bribes, gratification and unauthorised payments from other parties in relation to the procurement of the arms worth billions in 1999.

Israeli FM lands in UAE for 1st official visit

Abu Dhabi | Agencies

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid landed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Tuesday, becoming the first senior official from the Jewish state to visit to the Gulf nation. Lapid's office said he has been accompanied by a delegation of senior Israeli officials, including Foreign Ministry Director-General Alon Ushpiz, reports Xinhua news agency. Upon his arrival, he said in a tweet: 'Making history: Proud to represent the state of Israel on its first official visit to the United Arab Emirates. Thanks for the warm welcome.' During his two-day trip, he will inaugurate the Israeli embassy in the UAE's capital



Abu Dhabi and the consulate in Dubai, according to the office. Lapid, the centrist leader of the Yesh Atid party, was the driving force behind the forming of Israel's new cross-partisan coalition government which was approved by Parliament on June 14. Israel and the UAE signed a US-brokered normalisation agreement in September 2020. The UAE thus became the third Arab country after Egypt and Jordan to agree to formally normalise its ties with Israel.

2 HURT IN HUGE BLAZE NEAR TRAIN STATION IN LONDON

London: At least two people were injured and several buildings evacuated after a fire broke out near London's Elephant and Castle train station.



Smoke could be seen pouring into the sky from beneath the railway arches at the south London station and up toward large residential tower blocks, as horrified commuters watched on Monday, Xinhua news agency reported citing the BBC as saying. Police said the incident was not terror related. A police officer and a member of the public both needed treatment for smoke inhalation, said the BBC. The London Fire Brigade said 10 fire engines and 70 firefighters were tackling the blaze which raced through three commercial units, causing trains to be diverted. 'Road closures are in place and people are advised to avoid the area and keep windows and doors closed,' the fire brigade said. The incident was first reported to the London Fire Brigade at 1.43 p.m., and the service said the fire was under control just before 4 p.m. Underneath the railway arches three commercial units, four cars and a telephone box had caught fire in the incident, according to the London Fire Brigade.

Thailand readies to reopen Phuket on Thursday

Bangkok | Agencies

Thailand is readying to kick off the 'Phuket Sandbox' campaign on Thursday to reopen the country's largest resort island to vaccinated international tourists, a top official said here.



In a statement on Monday, Yuthasak Supasorn, governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) said that hotels and other tourism-related venues throughout the island province have been prepared for the reopening campaign whereas up to 80 per cent of Phuket's residents will complete their vaccination against Covid-19 by Wednesday, Xinhua news agency reported. An estimated 400 to 500 foreign tourists are scheduled to arrive in Phuket on Thursday and many more are expected to follow at later dates, he said. The 'Phuket Sandbox' program was approved on June 4 at a meeting of the Centre for the Economic Situation Administration chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha. Under the program, foreign tourists

will be allowed to enter and move freely on the island, provided they are fully vaccinated against the virus and tested negative. They can travel to the rest parts of Thailand after staying on the island for 14 nights. The country has also planned to welcome back vaccinated foreign visitors in nine other provinces, including the capital Bangkok and popular tourist destinations Pattaya and Chiang Mai, in the third or fourth quarter of the year. But the development comes as Thailand is struggling to contain a months-long surge in infections. On Monday, the country reported 5,406 Covid-19 cases, the third highest daily tally since the pandemic began, raising the total infection tally to 249,853, with 1,934 deaths.

GLOBAL COVID-19 CASELOAD TOPS 181.3MN

Washington: The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 181.3 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 3.93 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Tuesday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 181,374,710 and 3,928,409, respectively. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 33,639,971 and 604,114, respectively, according to the CSSE. In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 30,279,331 cases. The other worst countries with over 3 million cases are Brazil (18,448,402), France (5,832,490), Turkey (5,414,310), Russia (5,408,744), the UK (4,771,289), Argentina (4,423,636), Italy (4,258,456), Colombia (4,187,194), Spain (3,792,642), Germany (3,734,830) and Iran (3,180,092), the CSSE figures showed. In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 514,092 fatalities. Nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are India (396,730), Mexico (232,564), Peru (191,899), Russia (131,671), the UK (128,367), Italy (127,500), France (111,174) and Colombia (105,326).

1 person dead, 10 injured in Chicago shooting

Chicago | Agencies

One person was killed and 10 others were injured during a shooting incident at a neighbourhood in Chicago, police said. In a statement on Monday, the city police said the shooting took place at around 10.55 p.m., on Sunday night when three men emerged from an alley and fired shots into a crowd of people standing outside, reports Xinhua news agency. A woman suffered at least one gunshot wound to the chest, was taken to hospital and was pronounced dead, the police added. No motive for the shooting had been released. No arrests had been made and no description of the gunman had been provided, local media reported. The shooting was the



second of two mass shooting attacks that took place on Sunday. At 8.45 p.m., six people were shot in South Shore on South Side of Chicago. Between the two mass shootings, there had been at least 17 people shot, two fatally, one from each scene. A police spokeswoman would not say whether there was any connection between the two shootings or if they were unrelated. According to Chicago Tribune statistics, by June 12, 294 people had been killed in the city this year, 21 more than in 2020

## Dua Lipa eyes move into acting as she shoots for new song

Los Angeles | Agencies

**W**ith 11 top ten hits under her belt, multiple awards and almost ten billion streams on Spotify, Dua Lipa is dominating the music business. And now the Levitating singer is considering a move into acting after she started honing her skills on the set of the video for her new song Love Again. Dua is seen working her magic dressed up as a cowgirl, and getting into character has given the pop star a taste of what it might be like on the big screen. Asked about trying out for a film role, Dua said: "I would really like to. It is something I'm definitely up for exploring and figuring it out, maybe with a small role first. I've become a bit more confident in myself. I've done a little bit here and there, so I feel I've discovered the side of acting within music videos. I am quite intrigued and excited about the prospect of doing something else at some point." Fans may see Dua on the big screen sooner than in the flesh, after she was forced to put her Future Nostalgia European tour on ice. Dua announced today she wasn't able to go ahead with the dates in the diary for this autumn.

## UB40 lead singer Duncan Campbell announces retirement

Los Angeles | Agencies

**U**B40 lead singer Duncan Campbell, 63, has announced he is retiring from music. Campbell, who suffered a stroke last August, made the announcement following a seizure earlier this month. Campbell was gearing up for the reggae group's upcoming UK tour later this year, but health concerns made forced change of plans. "Unfortunately, due to continued ill health, I have reluctantly decided to retire from the band so as to focus on my recovery. I am very grateful, and would like to express my sincere thanks, to the fans for all their support during this time and indeed throughout my time with UB40. The band have my full support going forward and, of course, my very best wishes for the future with their new singer," he said in a statement. The band was formed in Birmingham in the late 1970s and released a statement on Monday saying they would announce a new lead singer soon. Duncan had replaced younger brother Ali Campbell as lead singer of UB40 in 2008, and



had gone on to achieve four Top 30 albums with the band. UB40 recently launched their 21st studio album "Bigga Baggariiddim" that featured Zorawar Shukla or General Zoos of the band Reggae Rajahs.

## LIAM PAYNE SPOTTED WITH EX CHERYL FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THREE YEARS

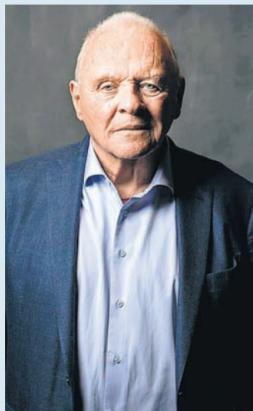
Los Angeles | Agencies

**L**iam Payne has been seen with his ex Cheryl for the first time in three years. The former couple - who share son Bear - were pictured attending a family party together in Wolverhampton last week. Liam, 27, and Cheryl, 37, split in 2018 after two years of dating and just over a year after their son was born but have remained on great terms. Earlier this year Liam, who has recently split from his fiancée Maya Henry, admitted they were "closer than they had ever been". Speaking to Glamour, Liam said, "Cheryl is literally the best person to co-parent with. No stress involved. It's very, very relaxed, and we spend a lot of time on FaceTime. Cheryl, who moved out of ex Liam's Surrey mansion when they split, now lives with Bear in Buckinghamshire.

## Anthony Hopkins: Good memory is essential to survival

Los Angeles | Agencies

**V**eteran Hollywood star Anthony Hopkins, who played a dementia patient in "The Father", says his memory is the single most important tool in his life. Hopkins said: "Once you lose your memory, it must be a living hell to have no anchors left. It's the most powerful and important tool, essential to survival." He shared that his role in the Florian Zeller-directed drama made him look more closely at his own life, reports femalefirst.co.uk. "I think as you get older, you do go around examining life more. This did make me think about my past and my parents and about all the sweet sadness of it all," Hopkins told Sorted magazine. The octogenarian feels age has made it easier for him to find happiness in different things. He said: "I enjoy it all more. I have a laugh now; I like watching old guys on TV, like Sinatra. And they've all gone too, and there's a great victory in recognising death and mortality while I'm here."



## Jesy Nelson reconnects with ex-boyfriend Harry James

Los Angeles | Agencies

**N**elson has sent her fans into overdrive after she reconnected with her ex Harry James. The former couple split three years but now have set tongues wagging that they are back in touch.

It came after eagle-eyed Little Mix fans spotted they had started following each other again on Instagram.

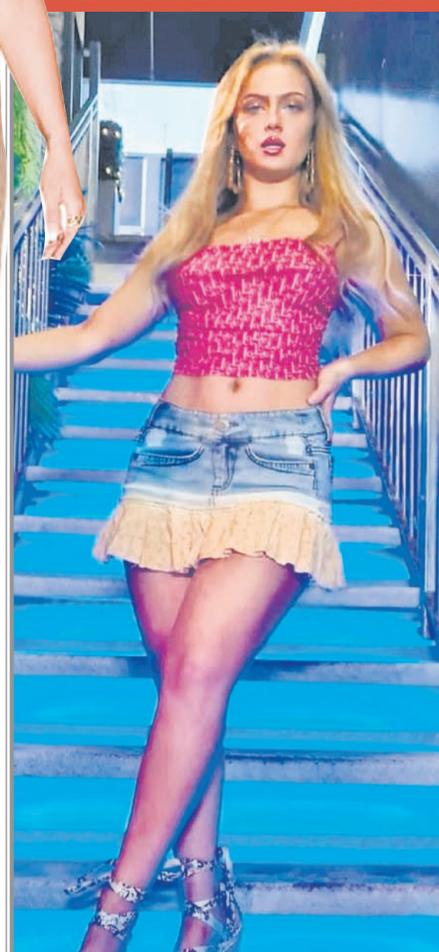
"Wait hold up are jesy and harry are back together?!" one fan tweeted.

Jesy, 30, previously split from musician Harry in 2018.

They dated for 16 months and were seen looking loved-up at the Brit Awards before calling time on their romance.



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Maisie Smith

## Britney Spears' sister Jamie Lynn insists she 'loves & supports' the singer

Los Angeles | Agencies

**B**ritney Spears' sister Jamie Lynn broke her silence on Monday, after almost a week of staying silent about the singer's conservatorship hearing. The 30-year-old admitted she didn't feel it was her "place" to talk about it until Britney had said everything she'd wanted to say.

Jamie Lynn had been under fire for her alleged role in keeping Britney, 39, under the "abusive" court order and for remaining silent when fans have asked her to speak up.

She decided to break her silence and speak out on the matter in a series of Instagram Story videos on Monday.

The Sweet Magnolias actress told fans that she didn't think it was her "place" to say anything until Britney had had her chance to speak.

She shared in the video, "But now that she's very clearly spoken and said what she needed to say, I feel like I can follow her lead and say what I need to say."

Jamie Lynn continued: "I think it's extremely clear that since the day I was born I've only loved and adored and supported my sister."





## INDIAN WOMEN LOOK TO AVOID SERIES LOSS VS ENGLAND IN 2ND ODI

Taunton | Agencies

Indian women's cricket team will look to avoid a series loss against England when they take the field for the second of the three ODIs here on Wednesday. The Indians were hammered by eight wickets in the first match after they failed to put up a competitive total.

India's dashing opening batters Smriti Mandhana and youngster Shafali Verma failed to provide India the cracking start that was expected of them. It left the others with a bit too much to do. Even as skipper Mithali Raj tried to salvage some pride, scoring 72 a day after she completed 22 years in international cricket, India lacked the hard-hitters who could increase the run rate and take the team to a strong



total.

The 201-run total was too little for the English who coasted to an eight-wicket victory with ease.

The visitors may also have to rethink their bowling strategy. While the new-ball

bowlers couldn't provide early breakthroughs, the spin trio proved to be expensive and looked ineffective. Left-arm spinner Ekta Bisht, off-spinner Deepti Sharma and all-rounder Harmanpreet Kaur, who too

bowls off-break, conceded runs at above six an over. They leaked 122 runs in 19.5 overs.

England, on the other hand, look a pretty balanced side. They have a good seam attack led by pacers

Katherine Brunt and Anya Shrubsole. Their left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone too looks very effective and has continued her good work from the Test matches.

The Indian bowlers have to worry about England's batting too. Both Tammy Beaumont (unbeaten 87) and Natalie Sciver (unbeaten 74) shared a century partnership and could not be removed.

Indian Women Squad: Mithali Raj (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur, Punam Raut, Priya Punia, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia, Indrani Roy, Jhulan Goswami, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav.

## Gymnast Pranati wins quota for Olympic Games

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Pranati Nayak, the Asian Championships bronze-medallist in vault, earned a quota to compete at next month's Tokyo Olympics, the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) officially announced on Monday.

Pranati got a quota place through reallocation since the Asian Championships, scheduled to be held in Tokyo in May, was cancelled due to Covid-19 pandemic. "We have got official confirmation from the International governing body in gymnastics on Monday evening that Pranati has been reallocated continental quota place to compete at the Olympics," Pranati's coach Lakshman Sharma told IANS from Kolkata. On May 1, it was reported that Pranati



will be reallocated continental quota by the FIG to compete in Olympics on the basis of her performance in the 2019 Asian Championships as several Olympic qualification competitions were cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic. The 26-year-old gymnast from Kolkata had won bronze in vault at the

2019 Asian Championships held in Mongolia. "Pranati was reallocated continental quota place as she had won bronze in the 2019 Asian Championships. Competitions in 2020 were disrupted by the pandemic," added Sharma.

Since the quota is by name (nominative), it can't be changed.

## EURO CUP

## STERLING, KANE SEAL QUARTER-FINALS SPOT WITH LATE GOALS AGAINST GERMANY

London | Agencies

England beat Germany 2-0 in their Round of 16 match at Wembley to qualify for the quarter-finals here on Tuesday. Raheem Sterling and Harry Kane late goals in the match ended decades of hurt at the hands of their bitter rivals.

Sterling struck with 15 minutes left in a tense last 16 tie at Wembley before Kane clinched England's first knockout stage victory over Germany since 1966.

It was England's first knockout round victory inside 90-minutes at the Euros and came after midfielder Jack Grealish was introduced in the 69th minute.

Six minutes later, after a swift passing move, left wing-back Luke Shaw slipped the ball across the face of the goal for Sterling to slide in. Grealish was the direct provider for England's second, crossing from the left for Kane to beat goalkeeper Manuel Neuer with a stooping header.

Earlier, England keeper Jordan Pickford did well to keep out Timo Werner before tipping over a stinging volley from Kai Havertz.



At the other end, Mats Hummels denied Kane with a last-ditch clearance just before halftime.

England needed a tone-setting moment to ease their visible anxiety early on and Sterling provided it as he drove forward for a 25-yard blast that forced a fine save from Manuel Neuer.

With Harry Maguire winning a series of thunderous headers and tackles and Bukayo Saka probing intelligently on the right flank, England gradually took control.

## ICC confirms T20 World Cup to be held in UAE from Oct 17 to Nov 14

Dubai | Agencies

A day after the Indian cricket board said that it will not be able to host the T20 World Cup, the International Cricket Council (ICC) issued a statement confirming that the multi-nation tournament will be held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman from October 17 to November 14.

"The BCCI will remain the hosts of the event, which will now be held in Dubai International Stadium, the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the Sharjah Stadium, and the Oman Cricket Academy Ground, from 17 October to 14 November 2021," said a statement from ICC.

The initial stage of the tournament will likely be held in Oman and a

venue in UAE soon after the remainder of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2021 ends in the country.

"Our priority is to deliver the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 safely, in full and in its current window. Whilst we are incredibly disappointed not to be hosting the event in India, the decision gives us the certainty we need to stage the event in a country that is a proven international host of multi-team events in a bio-secure environment. We will work closely with the BCCI, the Emirates Cricket Board and Oman Cricket to ensure fans can enjoy a wonderful celebration of cricket," said Geoff Allardice, the acting ICC CEO, in a statement.

The president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Sourav Ganguly, said that the Board would have been happier hosting the tournament in India.



## Zverev powers into Wimbledon 2nd round with easy win

London | Agencies

Fourth seed Alexander Zverev of Germany began his quest for a maiden Grand Slam title with an easy 6-3, 6-4, 6-1 win over Dutch qualifier Tallon Griekspoor at the Wimbledon on Tuesday. The 24-year-old slammed 20 aces and won 77 per cent of his first-service points to progress into the second round in 94 minutes. In the French Open semi-finals this month, Zverev had lost to Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas, who lost his first-round match to American Frances Tiafoe on Monday. Zverev will next face the winner of the match between Slovakia's Norbert Gombos and American Tennyson Sandgren. The German's best performance at Wimbledon has been a fourth-round finish in 2017. After Zverev faced an early scare against the Dutchman, fending off two break points in the opening game, the German played explosive tennis from the baseline to power into a 5-1 lead. Though his Dutch opponent made it 3-5, Zverev closed out on serve, hitting 12 winners in the first set. Griekspoor found it hard to control his ground-strokes once the roof was closed, frequently firing his forehand long and committing 10 unforced errors in the second set. The 24-year-old Griekspoor, ranked 124th in the world, was making his Wimbledon debut after coming through the qualifiers.



## Rohit Kumar becomes Bengaluru FC's first signing this season



Bengaluru: Indian Super League (ISL) side Bengaluru FC on Tuesday signed midfielder Rohit Kumar on a deal that will keep him with the club till the end of the 2022-23 season.

The 24-year-old Rohit, who played 11 matches for Kerala Blasters FC during the 2020-21 season, has become the club's first signing this summer, and will join the squad ahead of their AFC Cup playoff clash against Eagles FC of Maldives. Delhi-born Rohit joined the DSK Shivajians academy in 2016, and earned promotion to the club's first team in 2016 for the Durand Cup. Having made his I-League debut the same year, the midfielder moved to ISL side FC Pune City at the end of the season. "I'm looking forward to experiencing all the good things I've heard about BFC, and I'm eager to play my part in achieving success with this team and for the fans," said Rohit after completing the formalities. After two years with FC Pune City and a season with Hyderabad FC, making 30 appearances in the league during the period, Rohit joined Kerala Blasters FC. A defensive midfielder, Rohit has represented the India U-19 in the 2015 SAFF U-19 Championship in Nepal.

## INDIAN DOMESTIC BADMINTON SEASON TO BEGIN SOON

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Badminton Association of India (BAI) has decided to commence the remainder of the 2021-22 domestic season at the earliest and has sounded out the state associations to get their players and officials vaccinated as soon as possible.



Announcing fresh Covid-19 guidelines on Tuesday, BAI said that "players above the age of 18, coaches, technical officials, organising team, and staff will have to complete both doses of vaccines and will be required to carry a vaccination certificate with a valid barcode". "However, for shuttlers below 18 years, it's mandatory to carry a negative RT-PCR report with barcode 96 hours

prior to the departure station," a BAI statement said.

The season will commence with 'senior-ranking tournaments' followed by age-group events. Domestic badminton action was scheduled to resume in April this year with a revamped structure and revised prize money of Rs 2.2 crore. But, with the second Covid-19 wave, the tournaments had to be postponed. "Domestic season has been off for more than a year now. We have been trying to start it but the situation did not permit us to proceed. But now we want to ensure that when the tourna-

ments begin, we start with full participation... at the same time all safety protocols are in place and hence it is important to encourage vaccination." "The purpose of this intimation is to apprise everyone, all the state association players and stakeholders to get vaccinations done immediately," BAI general secretary, Ajay Singhania, said in the statement.

## Wimbledon: Ashleigh, Karolina enter second round

London | Agencies

World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty and world No. 13 Karolina Pliskova were stretched in their first round matches before advancing at the Wimbledon Championships here on Tuesday. While Ashleigh defeated Carla Suarez Navarro 6-1, 6-7(1), 6-1, eighth seed Karolina beat French Open semi-finalist

Tamara Zidansek of Slovenia 7-5, 6-4. Ashleigh, who will lead a strong Australian tennis contingent at the Tokyo Olympics, romped to win the first set but then lost the second in the tie-break as her Spanish opponent won the tie-breaker 7-1. The Aussie, however, crushed Carla in the final set. The difference in power game between the two players was stark. While Ashleigh ham-



mered 13 aces, Carla failed to produce a single ace. Ashleigh won all five of the break-points she got and won 88 per cent on the first serve. She hit 37 winners against 12 by Carla. Karolina, who on Monday slipped out of the top 10 in women's rankings for the first time in five years, took an hour and 17 minutes to get past Tamara. Karolina slammed 10 aces to three by Tamara

and won 82 per cent of points on first serve. She converted all the three break-points she got as against one out of four from Tamara. Ons Jabeur of Tunisia, the 21st seed who became the first Arab woman to win a WTA tour title when she won the Birmingham Classic this month, thrashed Rebecca Peterson of Sweden, 6-2, 6-1, in just over an hour.



## MBAPPE 'IMMENSELY SAD' AFTER FAILED PENALTY AGAINST SWITZERLAND

Bucharest | Agencies

Shattered French striker Kylian Mbappe said on Tuesday after his failed penalty against Switzerland cost the world champions a place in the Euro 2020 quarter-finals that it would be "very difficult to turn the page" and that his "sadness is immense". Switzerland knocked France out in a 5-4 penalty shoot-out win following a thrilling 3-3 draw after extra time, reaching the quarter-finals of Euro 2020 here.

Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer denied Mbappe's spot kick by diving to his right and getting a strong hand to the striker's effort, swatting it away to send his team through. Mbappe, who plays for French giants Paris Saint-Germain, posted a picture of his with the Swiss team celebrating in the background, and wrote a heartfelt message to his

French fans. "Very difficult to turn the page. The sadness is immense after this elimination; we could not reach our goal. I'm sorry for this penalty. I wanted to help the team but I failed. Finding sleep will be difficult but unfortunately it is the ups and downs of this sport that I love so much," wrote 22-year-old Mbappe.

"I know you fans have been disappointed, but I would still like to thank you for your support and for always believing in us. The most important thing will be to get up even stronger for the next upcoming deadlines. Congratulations and good luck to Switzerland. "An ecstatic opposing team captain, Granit Xhaka, spoke about his team's unbreakable passion. "We have shown character. This team is incredible," said the Arsenal midfielder in a statement. "We made many of our critics silent. No one really believed we could do it."



## Big B shares picture posing with his 'co-star'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amitabh Bachchan has shared a picture posing with his "co-star" on his latest post on social media. In the image, the actor is seen playing with a dog, holding its ears! "My costar Baatkuchbhihoinkekaankhadehojatehai (say anything and his ears will stand up)," Big B captioned the image. The Bollywood veteran did not share details about what he was shooting for. Speaking about his work, the actor currently has "Brahmastra", "Chehre", "Jhund", "MayDay", "Goodbye" and a remake of the Hollywood film "The Intern" coming up, besides an untitled film with Prabhas and Deepika Padukone.



## ARJUN KANUNGO'S 'AAYANATU' CROSSES 100 MILLION VIEWS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Arjun Kanungo's song "Aayanatu" has crossed 100 million views on YouTube, and the singer is naturally elated. "I am nothing but thrilled to have received so much love from audiences across the globe for 'Aayanatu'. As an artiste, there is no better feeling than being appreciated for your work," Arjun told IANS about the number, which was released in 2018. The song currently has 100,041,432 views on YouTube. "It is one of those songs that is really close to my heart, and I am glad that people are still enjoying it! I hope to continue entertaining my fans with more such songs," said the singer, known for belting out songs such as "Baakibaateinpeenebaad", "La lala" and "Gallantipsiyan". Arjun's most recent track is "Famous". He was also seen acting in the Salman Khan-starrer "Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai" earlier this year.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Karishma Tanna took to social media on Tuesday to share pictures of her on a bicycle. A self-confessed fitness freak, in the picture Karishma is seen posing on a white bicycle. In a no-makeup look, she is casually dressed in a white T-shirt, white shorts, and slippers. "Morning mood #love #pod," she captioned it on Instagram. On her social media, Karishma often shares her love for fitness and a healthy lifestyle, and keeps giving a glimpse of her fitness routine. Recently, she entered the digital space with web series as "Karrle Tu Bhi Mohabbat" and "Bullets". In Bollywood, she has been a part of successful films as "Sanju" and "Grand Masti". On TV, she has been a contestant on reality shows such as "Big Boss", "Khatronke Khiladi", "Jhalak Dikhlai Jaa", "Comedy Circus", "Nach Baliye" among others.

## KARISHMA STRIKES A POSE WITH HER BIKE



## Shlokka Pandit takes to yoga, art of living

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hello Charlie actress Shlokka Pandit says she practices the art of living and yoga to maintain good mental conditioning. "I do yoga and meditation. It has helped me a lot. The characters become a part of us while we are essaying them and it's important to detach ourselves from them as we move on. Yoga has helped me during these difficult times," Shlokka said. Meditation helped her find perspective during the pandemic. She added: "The pandemic has hit us hard and there were more difficult days than good. Meditation and the art of living really helped me find perspective during these times. I had to really kick in the deep reserves of positive energy during these times. So I could help myself and everyone around me."



## TWINKLE KHANNA: FOREWORD MAKES THE BOOK EVEN MORE INTERESTING

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor-turned-author Twinkle Khanna keeps giving a glimpse of her reading habits on her social media. On Tuesday, she took to Instagram and posted a picture of the book she is reading these days.

The book in the frame is the Gabriel Garcia Marquez classic "Of Love And Other Demons" and Twinkle highlighted a reason that adds to the interest factor of the book.

"The foreword makes the book even more interesting. The journey of how a real life incident, a detail, an excavation, can churn within an author's mind and turn into a wonderful novel. Of Love And Other Demons is a true masterpiece #bookstoread #marquez #SpiceCandle #thefarawaytreeindia," she wrote in the caption.

The aesthetically captured picture shows the cover of Marquez's book along with a spiced candle with cinnamon, cardamom and clove, with a blue ceramic mug full of plums on the side.

Twinkle's first book "Mrs Funnybones" was declared a bestseller, and her second book, "The Legend Of Lakshmi Prasad", a collection of short stories, was later made into the film "Pad Man" starring her husband Akshay Kumar.



## ZAREEN KHAN WANTS TO DO MUCH MORE THAN LOOK 'HOT' IN FILMS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Zareen Khan gave content-driven performance a serious shot in her latest release "Hum Bhi Akele Tum Bhi Akele". She now hopes to get meaningful roles rather than just put make-up on and look glamorous. "I have been offered a couple of different types of roles, I am keeping my fingers crossed," she says. She hopes that people now see her in a different light after "Hum Bhi Akele Tum Bhi Akele", an offbeat, OTT-released film about a gay man and a lesbian woman, and their self-discovery on a road trip. "I hope people see me in a different light and they do offer me roles that I really want to do -- meaningful roles rather than just putting on make-up and looking hot. I want to do much more than that," she said.



## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sunny Leone