

absolute india

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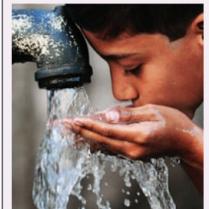
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KARGIL VIJAY DIWAS, PAYS INDIA HOMAGE TO FALLEN HEROES



New Delhi: India celebrates Kargil Vijay Diwas on July 26 every year to mark the anniversary of the Indian Army's victory against Pakistan in 1999. The armed conflict continued for more than 60 days at Kargil in Ladakh. In a tweet, the Prime Minister said, "We remember their sacrifices. We remember their valour." Earlier in the day, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and senior Indian military officers paid homage to the fallen heroes on Kargil Vijay Diwas at the National War Memorial in New Delhi.

PURI 1ST INDIAN CITY WITH 'DRINKABLE TAP WATER' 24X7



Bhubaneswar: Now, people in Odisha's temple town Puri can drink water directly from the tap and there is no need to store or filter the water as the facility is available round the clock. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said here on Monday. With this the Jagannath Dham also become the first city in India to provide "drink from tap" quality water 24X7, he said while inaugurating the "Drink from Tap -- Sujal" project in the town through video conferencing mode. "Puri now joins the league of global cities like London, Singapore and New York, which is a matter of pride for all of us. Today, a new chapter has been added in the development history of not only Puri, but the whole of Odisha. From today, all families in the Jagannath Dham Puri have got access to quality drinking water through taps," Patnaik said. This transformative initiative of the Odisha government's 'Sujal' or 'Drink From Tap' mission falls under the 5T governance mantra and is set to benefit the city's 2.5 lakh local population and 2 crore tourists who visit the holy city annually.

Top ED officer, Kejriwal's aide, PMO, NITI Aayog officials in Pegasus list

MODI SNOOPEDED!

An officer who is currently an undersecretary in the Prime Minister's Office was also selected for potential surveillance in 2017, the leaked records show. He was in charge of Prime Minister Modi's tours in 2017 when the Indian client of the NSO Group showed interest in him, The Wire said.

Rajeshwar Singh, a senior Enforcement Directorate officer who led several high-profile investigations conducted by his agency, V.K. Jain, a former IAS officer who worked as a personal assistant to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, senior employee of the NITI Aayog - the Union government's policy think-tank was selected as a probable target for surveillance by an Indian client of the Israeli spyware firm NSO Group, an investigation of leaked data by The Wire and its media partners on the Pegasus Project has revealed.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

V.K. Jain, a former Indian Administrative Service officer who worked as a personal assistant to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, also appears to have marked as a person of interest. In addition, the leaked records contain details of the numbers of at least one official each from the PMO and NITI Aayog, The Wire said. Singh, a provincial police service officer (PPS) from Uttar Pradesh, has been with the ED since 2009, during which he had served on the investigation of several sensitive cases such as the 2G spectrum scam and the Aircel-Maxis matter. He has also been involved in the Sahara group and the disproportionate assets case of



Andhra chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy. His run in the database stretches from late 2017 to mid-2019, which is around the time when the leaked data itself tapers off. The Pegasus Project list also includes the phone number used by V.K. Jain, who was appointed as chief consultant at Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's office. Jain's phone number appears in the leaked records in 2018, when, according to sources in the Delhi government, he handled the most significant files of the state government. As Kejriwal's primary

From Army and BSF to RAW, spyware threat looms

New Delhi: Two serving colonels who challenged official policy, a retired intelligence officer who took RAW to court, and two serving BSF officers also figure in the Pegasus Project database as persons of interest for an unidentified agency, The Wire reported. K.K. Sharma, who was head of the Border Security Force (BSF) in 2018, his telephone numbers were added to a list of numbers containing several hundreds from India marked as probable targets for surveillance. The leaked records include three phone numbers used by Sharma, two of which he still uses after his retirement in 2018, indicate he was very much a person of interest during the time he was in service as the BSF chief. The BSF Inspector General of Police, Jagdish Maithani, was selected as a potential target for surveillance around the same time as Sharma. A BSF commandant posted in Assam, Maithani appears to have been of considerable interest to an Indian client of NSO between 2017 and 2019. Another officer who was marked for probable surveillance was Jitendra Kumar Ojha, a retired senior official from the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's external spy agency. His number figures in the database as does his wife's, The Wire reported. The leaked database also contains the numbers of at least two Indian Army officers who took on the government on service-related matters. Colonel Mukul Dev shot to prominence in 2017 when he sent a legal notice to the secretary of defence arguing against the government order to scrap free rations for officers who are posted in peace areas. He was posted as deputy judge advocate general in the Jodhpur-based 12 Corps, The Wire reported. Colonel Amit Kumar was posted as a legal officer at the corps headquarters in Jammu and Kashmir when in August 2018, a few months prior to his appearance in the database, he filed a petition in the Supreme Court on behalf of 356 Army personnel against what they apprehended was an impending dilution of the Armed Forces (Special Forces) Act (AFSPA).



Welcome Home

Tokyo Olympics Silver medallist Saikhom Mirabai Chanu comes home

Team Absolute | New Delhi
Indian weightlifter Mirabai Chanu, who won the silver medal in women's 49kg category at Tokyo Olympics, arrived in Delhi on Monday. She was pictured at the airport. Chanu brought home India's second medal in weightlifting as she lifted a total of 202kg (87kg+115kg), finishing behind China's Hou Zhihui. Chanu ended India's 21-year wait for a weightlifting medal at the Olympics. Previously, Karnam Malleshwari had won the bronze medal at 2000 Sydney Games. Earlier on Monday, Chanu tweeted on her departure from Tokyo. "Heading back to home. Thank you #Tokyo2020 for memorable moments of my life," tweeted the 26-year-old Chanu. The tweet received a response from International Olympic Committee's Twitter handle: "Congratulations!" Both the Houses of Parliament on Monday congratulated Olympic silver medallist Saikhom Mirabai Chanu.

India among top ten countries in pharma, healthcare: Report

New Delhi: India is among the top 10 countries in pharma and healthcare sector with exponential growth recorded in the last five years, according to a report by Sagacious IP, a global IP research and consulting firm. The report stated that patents with Indian publication having Indian priority grew from 2,548 in 2015 to 7,399 in 2020. Such numbers are indicative of increased patent filing activity by Indian companies and MNCs with research centres based in India. The pharma and healthcare sector has also seen massive growth in global patent filings in the last five years, from over 24,000 in 2015 to over 1,50,000 in 2020.

I'll not suggest any names for CM post: Yediyurappa

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

B.S. Yediyurappa announced that he will not be suggesting any names for the coveted post minutes after he stepped down as the Karnataka Chief Minister on Monday. However, sources said that Yediyurappa will spare no effort to install a candidate from his camp to the position. "I will not suggest any names. It is the prerogative of the BJP party high command to choose the new chief minister," he added. After submitting his resignation to Governor, the Interim Chief Minister stated that he voluntarily took the decision to step down from the post to make way for a new CM in the state. He also maintained that he will continue in politics serving the party



organisation. He said he will not ask for any position from the party in future.

Challenge accepted, says Lingayat seer

"Despite our appeals and warnings, the party has asked Yediyurappa to step down from the CM's post. Yediyurappa was made to cry. We, the religious seers, have taken it as a challenge. The BJP will disappear in his tears in the state. There will be irreparable damage to the party to the extent that no one will be able to rebuild the party in the state. The party is going to pay for it."

Govt justifies higher taxes on petrol and diesel

Team Absolute | New Delhi

- Taxes both by the Centre and the States account for a lion's share of current retail price of petrol and diesel. The Central Government levies Excise/Cess on Petrol of Rs 32.90/litre which includes Basic Excise Duty of Rs 1.40, Road & Infrastructure Development Cess of Rs 18, Agriculture and Infrastructure Development Cess of Rs 2.50 and Special Additional Excise Duty of Rs 11.
- The current Central Excise/Cess on Diesel is Rs 31.80 per litre which includes Basic Excise Duty of Rs 1.80, Road & Infrastructure Development Cess of Rs 18, Agriculture and Infrastructure Development Cess of Rs 4 and Special Additional Excise Duty of Rs 8.
- The total excise duty/cess incidence as percentage of retail selling on petrol and diesel is 32.4 per cent and 35.4 per cent respectively, as on July 16, 2021.
- Besides, the State Governments levy VAT on the total amount of base price & Central Taxes of petrol & diesel which is Rs 29.55 in Maharashtra, Rs 31.55 in Madhya Pradesh for petrol, as on July 22, 2021.

The government has justified high level of taxation on auto fuels suggesting that revenue from petroleum sector is important for running various developmental schemes but has refused to acknowledge the role played by higher prices of petrol and diesel in fuelling inflationary pressure on the economy.



In the Lok Sabha, minister of petroleum and natural gas Hardeep Singh Puri said that revenue generated by taxation (on petroleum products) is used in various developmental schemes. He said that over the last 7 years, length of National Highways has gone up by 50 per cent from 91,287 km (as of April 2014) to 1,37,625 km (as on 20 March 2021). The minister said cess

is used for infrastructure development and also generates employment. Regarding higher prices of fuel raising inflationary pressure on the economy, the minister said that the weightage of petrol, diesel and LPG in the WPI index is 1.60 per cent, 3.10 per cent and 0.64 per cent indicating that petroleum products may not be responsible rising prices in other categories.

UP to be the next stop for farmers' agitation: Tikait



Team Absolute | Lucknow
Rakesh Tikait, national spokesperson of the Bhartiya Kisan Union has said that Uttar Pradesh will be the next major destination for the ongoing farmers' agitation. "We will turn Lucknow into Delhi and all roads to the state capital will be closed. Our agitation will continue until all three agricultural laws are repealed," he said at

a press conference here. He said, "We will go among the farmers. A massive Kisan Panchayat will be organised in Muzaffarnagar on September 5. The fourth estate is being targeted and the entire country is being held captive." Tikait said, "Uttar Pradesh is a state of agitation. In UP, the government is now being run by the police, like in Gujarat."

Delta Variant Infecting Fully-Vaccinated People, Shows Growing Evidence

A STUDY IN CHINA FOUND THAT PEOPLE INFECTED WITH THE DELTA VARIANT CARRY 1,000 TIMES MORE VIRUS IN THEIR NOSES COMPARED WITH THE ANCESTRAL WUHAN STRAIN FIRST IDENTIFIED IN THAT CHINESE CITY IN 2019.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delta variant is the fastest, fittest and most formidable version of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 the world has encountered, and it is upending assumptions about the disease even



as nations loosen restrictions and open their economies, according to virologists and epidemiologists. Vaccine protection remains very strong against severe infections and hospitalizations caused by any version of the coronavirus, and those most at risk are still the unvaccinat-

ed, according to interviews with 10 leading COVID-19 experts. The major worry about the Delta variant, first identified in India, is not that it makes people sicker, but that it spreads far more easily from person to person, increasing infections and hospitalizations among

the unvaccinated. Evidence is also mounting that it is capable of infecting fully vaccinated people at a greater rate than previous versions, and concerns have been raised that they may even spread the virus, these experts said. Until there is more data on Delta variant transmission, disease experts say that masks, social distancing and other measures set aside in countries with broad vaccination campaigns may again be needed. Public Health England said on Friday that out of a total of 3,692 people hospitalized in Britain with the Delta variant, 58.3% were unvaccinated and 22.8% were fully vaccinated.

In the United States, the Delta variant represents about 83% of new infections. So far, unvaccinated people represent nearly 97% of severe cases.

Child deaths increase in Indonesia as Covid surges

Jakarta: Covid-19 has led to the death of hundreds of children in Indonesia, many of them younger than age 5, asserting the fact that children are no longer 'hidden victims', the media reported. More than 150 children died from Covid-19 during the week of July 12 alone, with half the recent deaths involving those younger than age 5, Dr. Aman Bhakti Pulungan, head of the Indonesian Pediatric Society, said. The rise in deaths coincides with the surge of the delta variant, The NYT reported. According to Pulungan, over 800 children younger than 18 have died from the virus, majority of those deaths in the past month.



CM Mamata sets out for Delhi with an agenda



Team Absolute | Kolkata

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee left for Delhi on Monday amid speculation about her attempt to unite the opposition ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Though the chief minister didn't say a word about her busy schedule in the national capital for the next four days, sources in the CMO (Chief Minister's Office) indicated that besides meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Banerjee is likely to hold several meetings with opposition leaders. Banerjee left for Delhi at 3.35 p.m. She will meet Modi on July 28 besides also likely meet President Ram Nath Kovind during her stay. Banerjee is expected to host tea for opposition leaders at 3 p.m. on July 28, possibly at the home of her nephew, and Trinamool Congress MP and General Secretary, Abhishek Banerjee in Delhi. The chief minister had issued an appeal for unity on July 21 Martyrs' Day speech that was screened in Delhi and attended by top leaders, including the Congress' P. Chidambaram and NCP chief Sharad Pawar. The guest list is now a subject of speculation but it is expected that it would range from Congress to DMK, from TRS to RJD and

PANEL SET TO PROBE PEGASUS HACKING IN BENGAL

Kolkata: Hours before going to Delhi, chief minister Mamata Banerjee threw open a challenge to the BJP government at the centre by announcing an enquiry commission that will look into the 'widely reported' issues of illegal hacking and monitoring of mobile phones of various persons in the state. The formation of the two-member commission was approved at the special cabinet on Monday afternoon.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said, "The cabinet has approved the appointment of a commission of enquiry consisting of Hon'ble justice M.B. Lokur, retired judge of the Supreme Court of India and Justice Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya, retired chief justice, High Court, Calcutta, in exercise of the power conferred by section 3 of the commission of Enquiry Act 1952 in the matter of widely reported illegal hacking, monitoring, putting under surveillance, tracking recording etc of mobile phones of various persons in the state of West Bengal".

from Akali Dal to AAP.

On July 21 the country has already witnessed the presence of a large number of opposition leaders leaving ample scope to believe that most of them will be present in the tea-party thrown by the chief minister.

Though there is no official confirmation about the chief minister meeting with Congress chief Sonia Gandhi but sources in the party indicated that there is a possibility of Banerjee's meeting with Sonia Gandhi and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The chief minister is also likely to go to the Parliament during her stay in Delhi.

Six Assam policemen killed in Assam-Mizoram border clashes

Team Absolute | Silchar/Aizawl

At least six Assam police personnel were killed on Monday in the border troubles with Mizoram, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. Sarma, who also holds the Home Department portfolio, in a tweet said: "I am deeply pained to inform that six brave jawans of Assam Police have sacrificed their lives while defending constitutional boundary of our state at the Assam-Mizoram border. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families."

An Assam police official said that while the district and police officials were dealing with the border troubles and discussing the unauthorized constructions on the Assam side, there was unprovoked firing injuring many security personnel and killing the six policemen on the spot.

At least 100 people of the two states including southern Assam's Cachar



district Superintendent of Police (SP) Nimbalkar Vaibhav Chandrakant were injured in the firing and clashes and admitted in hospital. The injured Assam policemen and civilians were admitted to the Silchar Medical College and Hospital. Assam officials claimed that a large

number of people from Mizoram attacked them, injuring 16, six km inside the state, while Mizoram officials claimed that people from Assam damaged a vehicle in which a Mizo couple was travelling to the state. There were reports that there was some firing too but officials did not

The Assam-Mizoram border troubles flared up on Monday with at least 100 officials and civilians injured and vehicles damaged in clashes as both Chief Ministers sought Union Home Minister Amit Shah's urgent intervention. Officials of both states, including Cachar Deputy Commissioner (DC) Keerthi Jalli and Superintendent of Police (SP) Nimbalkar Vaibhav Chandrakant are camping in the trouble-torn Lallapur area in Assam's Cachar district, which borders Mizoram's Kolasib, as they try to calm the volatile situation.

confirm it. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Mizoram counterpart Zoramthanga, in a series of tweets, sought to blame each other's officials for the violence, while calling on Amit Shah to urgently intervene to control the situation.

'FOREST' NOT DEFINED IN ANY CENTRAL LAWS, SAYS GOVERNMENT



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The word "forest" is not defined in any Central forest acts, namely, the Indian Forest Act 1927, or the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the Central government has also not laid down any criterion to define a forest, the Parliament was informed on Monday.

This was revealed in the statement tabled in the Rajya Sabha by Environment, Forests & Climate Change Minister Bhupendra Yadav in reply to a question by member Rakesh Sinha, who sought to know "how the forest is defined/formed and, whether, there is any specific criteria?" Sinha had also wanted to know the total forest

area and waste land area in the country (state-wise details) and the area of land under Section 4 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, (state-wise details).

He also sought to know the area of forest land which is under dispute and being claimed by individuals or villages, and the steps taken to resolve such disputes by the government.

While the statement did provide data about forest land and waste land, the government skirted the issue of dispute, saying it has no records for the same. The recorded forest area of the country is 7,67,419 sq kms. As per the Wasteland Atlas, 2019 published by the Ministry of Rural Development, the total wasteland in the country is 5,57,665.51 sq kms, the Rajya Sabha was told.

ANOTHER JOLT TO BJP IN TELANGANA AS EX-MINISTER QUILTS

Hyderabad: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Telangana received another setback on Monday as former minister E. Peddi Reddy quit the party. Peddi Reddy was an aspirant for the party ticket for the ensuing by-election to Huzurabad Assembly seat vacated by former minister E. Rajender. However, Rajender joined the BJP and the party decided to field him as its candidate. Peddi Reddy was opposed to Rajender's entry into the BJP. A two-time MLA from Huzurabad, Peddi Reddy had quit the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) to join the BJP in 2019. He had served as minister during the tenure of TDP President N. Chandrababu Naidu as Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

There will be widespread rainfall with isolated heavy to very heavy showers likely over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana,

Widespread rainfall forecast in north India

Chandigarh and Uttar Pradesh till July 29, the India Meteorological Depart

ment (IMD) said on Monday.

Isolated extremely heavy rainfall is also likely over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand on Tuesday and Wednesday and over northwest Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday, the IMD said in a release. Fairly widespread rainfall with

isolated heavy to very heavy falls is likely to continue over East Rajasthan and West Madhya Pradesh till Tuesday and reduce thereafter. Fairly widespread to widespread rainfall with isolated heavy showers is very likely over Konkan & Goa and the Ghat areas of Central Maharashtra during the next three days and increase to isolated heavy to very heavy showers over the region from July 29. Enhanced rainfall and isolated heavy to very heavy showers are likely over Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar from Tuesday, the release added.

Bihar minister says next CM in 2025 will come from BJP

Team Absolute | Patna

The relationship between the ruling alliance partners in Bihar, the JDU and the BJP is reportedly souring day by day. One such example came on Day 1 of the Assembly's Monsoon Session on Monday when Panchayati Raj Minister Samrat Chaudhary claimed that the BJP will form the next government in the state in 2025. "The current government in Bihar is nothing but a political compulsion of both the BJP and the JDU. Nitish Kumar became chief minister of Bihar just because of the political compulsions of both the parties. In 2025, the chief minister of Bihar will come from the



BJP," Chaudhary said. Chaudhary's statement was supported by Amrendra Pratap Singh, the agriculture minister of Bihar. He said that Chaudhary has not said anything wrong. "I also believe that one of our party leaders will be the next CM of Bihar in 2025," Singh said. Following the statement of these two leaders, the JDU reacted sharply to it.

Shia Board voices concern over religious conversion law

Lucknow | Agencies

The All India Shia Personal Law Board (AISPLB) on Monday decried the attempts being made to malign the Muslim community on the issue of religious conversion. At its executive meeting, the Board said that innocent Muslims were being framed on the issue and urged the government to rethink its laws on the issue. "Muslims who are being framed on the issue are getting relief from the court which proves that they are being deliberately framed by vested interests," Board spokesperson Maulana Yasooob Abbas said. The AISPLB executive body also asked the Yogi



Adityanath government to promote education among Muslims instead of creating new laws that are against the community.

Referring to the new proposed population policy, the Board was of the view that the policy should be withdrawn and the government must do rethinking on the issue. It demanded action against former Shia Waqf Board chairman Waseem Rizvi for insulting the Holy Quran. Rizvi has come up with a 'new Quran' after deleting 26 verses, that, the Board said, was blasphemous. The Board spokesman said that a delegation would soon meet Chief Minister Adityanath and apprise him of their demands.

ONE TERRORIST KILLED IN ENCOUNTER IN KASHMIR

Srinagar | Agencies

One unidentified terrorist has been killed in an ongoing encounter between the militants and security forces in Aharbal area of south Kashmir's Kulgam district, officials said on Monday. "One unidentified terrorist has been killed in the Kulgam encounter. Operation is in progress," police said. The firefight between the terrorists and security forces took place after a joint team of the police and the army cordoned off the area and



launched a search operation on the basis of specific information about the presence of terrorists in the area. As the security forces

zeroed in on the spot where the terrorists were hiding, they came under a heavy volume of fire that triggered the encounter.

GOVT CLUELESS ON HOW TO HANDLE CHINA: RAHUL

New Delhi | Agencies

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Monday slammed the Narendra Modi government over reports of China's action in Demchok, saying the government is clueless on how to handle China and is ignoring their actions which will cause problems.



"Government of India (GOI) is clueless on how to handle China. Ignoring their actions now will cause huge problems in the future," he said in a tweet. He also attached a news report that claimed: "In Demchok, China's tents on India side; no date yet for talks". Rahul Gandhi has been critical of the Modi-led Centre over its handling of China's actions in Ladakh and other areas.

Wife finds husband's profile on gay app, files divorce plea

Bengaluru | Agencies

A 28-year-old techie woman has sought divorce from her husband after discovering his profiles on gay dating apps in Bengaluru, Karnataka. She has also lodged a complaint with Woman's helpline and the Basavanagudi police are also looking into the issue.

Though counselling sessions were held for the couple, the lady has decided to file divorce petition in the court, the sources said on Monday.

The woman, working for a software firm, got married to a 31-year-old man in June 2018. It was the second marriage for her husband. She has alleged that, her husband hid the information about his sexual orientation and cheated on her. She also explained, their marriage was never consummated, according to police.

The marriage was arranged by elders and the man worked for a reputed bank. After the couple started living together,



the man maintained distance from his wife. Whenever questioned, he said that his first wife cheated on him and he is yet to recover from the shock.

Later, he started yelling at her for not bringing enough money in dowry when he ran short of excuses. He also started throwing silly accusations at her. During the first lockdown, she observed her husband was always chatting on mobile phone. His behaviour became weirder during the lockdown.

During the second lockdown, she started checking his phone after growing more suspicious about him. She discovered that her husband has put up his profile on gay dating apps and was chatting with multiple partners.

Once the lockdown restrictions were lifted, she lodged a complaint with the woman's helpline against her husband. Though, he refused to accept his sexual orientation in the initial stages, the husband agreed that he put his profile on dating apps.



MAHARASHTRA FLOOD:

DEATH TOLL RISES TO 164; 100 STILL MISSING

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As many as 164 people were killed, 56 injured and 100 still missing in rain-related incidents in Maharashtra, the latest figures state.

The Kolhapur-Sangli highway, which had been closed to flood in Siroli village, is now open one way after water began to recede.



Water levels in western Maharashtra's flood affected districts continue to be above danger mark, even as rains have reduced.

An official said that Kolhapur has turned into an island, and has been cut off from the rest of the state as all roads approaching the city are under water.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar toured various rain-hit villages in the Sangli district on Monday and used a rescue boat to reach out to flood victims in some areas.

Ajit Pawar also interacted with the flood-affected people and assured

them of rehabilitation and all help from the state government.

A day ago, CM Thackeray had visited Chiplun, the site of severe flooding, and interacted with residents, businessmen and shopkeepers.

Uddhav Thackeray had said they will require "central assistance for long-term mitigation measures" and comprehensive data of the extent of damages will be prepared.

A statement from the state secretariat control room said that death toll in various rain-related incidents, including floods and landslides, in

Maharashtra rose to 149 on Sunday with 36 more bodies being found in Satara and Raigad districts as rescue operations gathered pace, while 64 people remain missing.

A break-up of the figures showed 28 more deaths being reported from the Satara district in western Maharashtra and eight from the Raigad district in the coastal region.

A total of 875 villages in Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara and Pune were affected by the torrential rains, it said. "Five

relief camps have been set up in flood-hit Chiplun city in Ratnagiri district. 25 teams of the NDRF, four teams of the SDRF, two teams of the Coast Guard, five teams of the Navy and three teams of the Army are conducting the relief and rescue operations," the statement said.

As the bridge over the Vashishthi river connecting Chiplun to Mumbai has collapsed, the road remains shut for the traffic. The state government has provided an emergency financial aid of Rs 2 crore each to Raigad and Ratnagiri districts.

BUS DEPOT MANAGER CAMPS ATOP BUS FOR NEARLY 7 HOURS TO KEEP LARGE SUM OF GOVT'S MONEY SAFE

The manager of Chiplun bus depot in Ratnagiri, Ranjeet Raje Shirke, got stranded in the flooded area as many vehicles and buses were submerged.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a sheer act of bravery, a bus depot manager from Maharashtra's Ratnagiri is making headlines for camping on top of a bus for nearly seven hours to guard a large amount of money of the daily transport revenue department amid massive flooding and heavy rains.



resulted in the overflowing of various rivers and several areas in Ratnagiri, Kolhapur, Sangli and some other districts of Maharashtra have been inundated.

Shirke while talking to news persons said, "The water level was increasing every minute. If the cash was kept in the office, there were chances of it getting soaked and being washed away. I would have been held responsible. It was my prime duty to protect the cash without thinking about my life."

like him. And, once the floodwater level started to dip, Shirke and the other employees reportedly called the Ratnagiri divisional office of Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation and also informed the local police stations about the situation.

Shirke added, "It was a tough time, we were the custodians of the government cash and the floodwater was rising". He also said that he never thought that a day would come where he would be forced to spend hours on the bus rooftop.

"Mumbai's Rich Should Help:" Raut After Maharashtra Floods

Sanjay Raut said there're affluent people in Mumbai who should help the government rebuild the villages that have been destroyed in Mahad, Satara, Sangli, and Kolhapur.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Following incessant rains in Maharashtra which have caused floods and landslides and claimed many lives, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Monday said that the rich people of Mumbai should come forward to help.



1,028 affected villages has reached 164, as of Monday. As per the Chief Minister's office, Thackeray, during his visit to flood-affected Chiplun yesterday, said that a financial review of the flood damage in the state will be carried out in a couple of days.

Gujarat is 'Most Favoured State' in Centre's health doles: RTI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Centres National Health Authority (NHA) -- has allocated the maximum funds to Gujarat as Grant-in-Aid for various government schemes under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, as per the latest details provided in RTI replies.

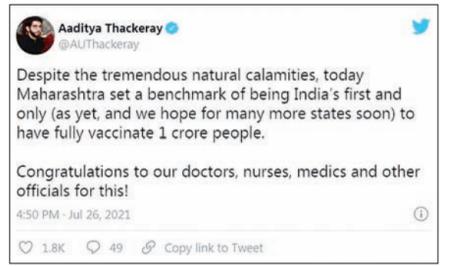
Rs 31.62 crore, Haryana Rs25.16 crore, Punjab Rs 23.07 crore, Uttarakhand Rs 21.81 crore, Jammu & Kashmir Rs 19.87 crore and Himachal Pradesh Rs 15.09 crore.

in worst-hit states like Maharashtra and Kerala, but the Centre appeared to focus only on Gujarat," said Sarda. Moreover, the activist rued that the RTI reply by NHA's Director & CPIO Pankaj Kumar Arora sheds no light on what exactly is the 'Grant-in-Aid For Implementation Purpose'.

Shah, and now the current Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, hail -- got the most number of Covid-19 vaccines, N95-masks, PPE Kits, Ventilators, medicines, injections, etc.

Maharashtra becomes first state to fully vaccinate over one crore people

Maharashtra set a benchmark of being India's first and only (as yet, and we hope for many more states soon) to have fully vaccinate 1 crore people: Aadiya Thackeray



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra on Monday July 26, became the first state in the country to fully vaccinate more than 1 crore people against COVID-19, as per state health secretary Dr. Pradeep Vyas.

hope for many more states soon) to have fully vaccinate 1 crore people. Congratulations to our doctors, nurses, medics and other officials for this!"

ty to administer doses to 15 lakh people daily but only two to three lakh people are being vaccinated because of the shortage. "Three days ago, we got seven lakh vaccine doses. The stock will be exhausted by the end of the day (July 12). We have got more than 3.60 crore vaccine doses so far and this includes about 25 lakh doses purchased directly by the state government," the Maharashtra health minister had said.

Crocodile Spotted Crossing Street In Flood-Battered Sangli

The video shows the crocodile slithering from one side of the street to the other, before disappearing into the muddy waters.



Team Absolute | Sangli

Several districts of Maharashtra have been severely battered by torrential rain for days now. Floods and landslides triggered by rain have led to deaths, loss of property and severe inundation of important roads. Visuals show people stranded on the roofs of their homes as the water level continues to rise on key roads connecting districts.





3 DEAD AFTER CONSUMING SPURIOUS LIQUOR; 2 COPS SUSPENDED

Three people have died, three are undergoing treatment and one person has been discharged after recovery, Home Minister Narottam Mishra told reporters in Bhopal. After three people died following consumption of spurious liquor in Mandsaur district of Madhya Pradesh, the state government has suspended the Excise Sub-Inspector while the house of the main accused who was selling illicit liquor has been demolished with a JCB machine.

Team Absolute | Bhopal | Mandsaur

A police station in-charge and an assistant sub-inspector were suspended after three persons died due to consumption of suspected spurious liquor in Mandsaur district, state Home Minister Narottam Mishra said on Monday.

The casualties took place in Khakhrai village under Piplia Mandi police station limits on Saturday and Sunday, while officials said the exact cause of the deaths would be known only after the post-mortem reports are received.

Three people have died, three are undergoing treatment and one person has been discharged after recovery, Narottam Mishra told reporters in Bhopal.

"The police station in-charge of the area and an assistant sub-inspector have been suspended," he said, adding that the district collector has already placed a sub-inspec-



tor of the excise department under suspension. Superintendent of Police Siddharth Choudhary in an order issued on Sunday night said Piplia Mandi police station in-charge Shiv Kumar Yadav and assistant sub-inspector Ramlal Dading were suspended for alleged dereliction of duty. These officials failed to control liquor smuggling in the area, the order said. The Superintendent of Police in his order also said the liquor was purchased from a grocery shop of one Gajendra Singh,

who was selling it illegally in Khakhrai and has been arrested.

One of the persons who consumed the liquor died on Saturday night and his family members cremated the body the same day without informing the police, while two others died the next day when they were being taken for treatment to Mandsaur, the official said in the order. Meanwhile, the Sub-Divisional Officer of Police Trilokchand Pawar said the post-mortem of the two victims would be

conducted again by a panel of doctors on Monday. He said the accused grocery shop owner was being questioned in connection with the liquor smuggling network. On the instructions of District Magistrate Manoj Pushp, the house of the accused Yogendra, who sold spurious liquor, has been demolished with the help of a JCB machine. The District Magistrate has also ordered an inquiry into the incident.

Former chief minister Kamal Nath took a jibe at the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government over the deaths due to consumption of spurious liquor and said, "After Ujjain, Morena and Bhind-Gwalior under the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government, the recent news has come of three persons allegedly dying after consuming spurious liquor in Khakhrai village of Mandsaur district while several others are reportedly critical. This is the condition in the constituency of the state Excise Minister."

MP Board Class 12 Result on July 29

The Class 12 results will be available on official websites including mpbse.mponline.gov.in, mpresults.nic.in and mpbse.nic.in.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Board of Secondary Education (MPBSE) has announced the MP board Class 10, 12 result date. The MP board will declare the Class 12th results on July 29 at 12 noon. The MP board Class 12 exams could not be held and had to be cancelled in view of Covid crisis. The MP Board 12th Result 2021 will be available on official websites including mpbse.mponline.gov.in, mpresults.nic.in and mpbse.nic.in. Some private portals will also host the MPBSE 12th results.

Apart from the official websites, MP Board Class 12 results can be accessed from the MPBSE Mobile application available on Google Play Store. The Class 12th result



can be downloaded from the "know your result section". Candidates will be required to enter the roll number to access the MP 12th result.

The Class 12th MP board exams that were originally scheduled to be held from May 1 were postponed considering the spike in COVID-19 cases in the second wave of coronavirus. While announcing the decision to cancel Class 12th MP board exams, the Chief Minister said: "The lives of the students are precious to us. We will worry about their careers later." Madhya Pradesh Board Class 12 students' results will

be declared on the basis of their performance in the best five subjects of Class 10.

"Class 12 marks will be determined on the basis of best of five marks obtained in various subjects of Class 10, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said, according to the department.

All students, who had earlier registered for their board exams, will be promoted using this method, an official statement said.

For students who want to improve their scores, will also be allowed to appear in an exam when Covid situation normalises.

Effective step of NABARD after meeting with CM

NABARD Chairman inaugurates Gramin Mart



Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Swayam Siddha Gramin Mart was inaugurated today in collaboration with NABARD at Omkareshwar in Punas block of Khandwa district. The products of about 180 self-help groups will be put up for sale in the Gramin Mart. NABARD Chairman GR Chintala launched the Gramin Mart and told that 130 crore women are associated with self-help groups all over India. The group can get good success with each other's advice. Chintala said that if all the members of the group work diligently, then each and every work done by them will be successful.

It may be noted that NABARD Chairman, Chintala had met Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on July 22, and discussed various issues. Chief Minister Chouhan had asked Chintala to cooperate by encouraging women self-help groups. The discussion included the possibilities of NABARD working with the Madhya Pradesh government in the areas of rural development, micro-irrigation, dairy development,

getting more water from Sardar Sarovar Dam, solar power projects, strengthening of district cooperative banks, etc. Along with this, discussion was also held on effectively implementing the 'ek Zila Ek Utpad Yojana' of Madhya Pradesh and strengthening the Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). On this occasion, cheques were distributed to the self-help groups of different villages for sewing, scenting, vegetable business, goat rearing, grocery shop, patta-dona business etc. to 27 groups for their own enterprises. Khaknar Krishi Vikas Producer Company Limited, Burhanpur was given a cheque of Rs 20 lakh as financial assistance.

Women members of self-help groups gave information about their work. Dr. Chintala said that if you are able to generate good income, you will be able to accumulate money and will not have to depend on others as this will make you self-dependent. A handicraft exhibition by self-help groups was also organized in the programme. Chintala also performed bhoomi-pujan of 2 thousand metric tonne godown to be built at a cost of Rs 67 lakhs under Primary Agricultural Credit Cooperative Society Limited in Bhoganwa village of Punas block.

CM presents cheque to daughter of late priest

Bhopal: Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, during his stay at Ujjain, presented a cheque of assistance amount of Rs.11 lakh to Srishti Sharma, daughter of late priest of the temple, Mahesh Sharma (Ustad), after performing Maharudrabhishek at Mahakaleswar temple. It is noteworthy that the said amount was approved by Shri Mahakaleswar Temple Management Committee.



CM HAS DARSHAN OF LORD MAHAKAL WITH FAMILY



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan reached Ujjain on the first Monday of Shravan month and performed Maharudrabhishek by worshipping Lord Mahakaleswar with his family. Maharudrabhishek was performed by the purohitis and priests of the Mahakaleswar temple. Chief Minister Chouhan's wife Sadhna Singh and sons Kartikeya Singh and Kunal Singh also participated in Maharudrabhishek Puja. The worship was completed under the patronage of the government priest Ghanshyam Sharma. State Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav, public representatives, media representatives and government officials and employees were present during the worship.

BJP all set for LS and assembly by-polls in State

A meeting convened here on Sunday at the state party headquarters to discuss the poll strategy has decided to assign responsibility to four state office-bearers in four districts coming under the Khandwa Lok Sabha constituency.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh BJP is ready to challenge its traditional rival Congress in the upcoming by-polls. The party has bestowed the responsibility of one Lok Sabha and three assembly seats to its ministers to ensure victory as it is preparing to announce the candidates for the by-polls soon.

A meeting convened here on Sunday at the state party headquarters to discuss the poll strategy has decided to assign responsibility to four state office-bearers in four districts coming under the Khandwa Lok Sabha constituency. State vice-president Alok Sharma will stay put in Burhanpur for all poll-related works while state general secretaries Kavita



Patidar will be in Khandwa, Chintaman Malviya in Dewas and Jitu Jirati in Khargone district. Senior cabinet minister and trusted loyalist of Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Tulsi Silawat, has been assigned responsibility of Napanagar assembly seat. Other ministers, including Inder Parmar will be active in Burhanpur, Kamal Patel in Khandwa and Mohan Yadav in Pandhana respectively. In Bagli assembly area, minister Usha Thakur will manage poll affairs. Finance minister Jagdish Devda has been assigned duty in Bhikangaon and Barwah. The Khandwa Lok Sabha seat has become a prestige issue for both BJP and Congress where by-poll was necessitated after the demise of BJP stalwart Nandkumar Singh Chauhan aka Nandu Bhaiyya. After an impressive victory in the Damoh by-poll, that turned out to be a setback for BJP due to internal rumblings, Congress morale is high. The saffron party is trying to overcome the humiliat-

ing defeat by winning all the four seats with a huge margin. To kick-start the campaign, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is likely to begin his tour of Khandwa, Niwari, Satna and Alirajpur districts very soon. He had visited Khandwa and Burhanpur last week to collect feedback from workers and the public on BJP's influence in the region. He had also assigned responsibility to five district in-charge ministers in the Khandwa Lok Sabha seat.

Congress is likely to field former Union minister Arun Yadav from Khandwa, who has already announced his candidature. BJP is likely to decide its candidate from three probables. Harsh Singh Chauhan, son of Nandu Bhaiyya, former minister Archana Chitnis and senior leader Krishna Murari Moghe are the contenders for the Lok Sabha seat.

BJP state chief VD Sharma had made clear that tickets will be given on the basis of winnability criteria. The meeting attended by CM Chouhan, in-charge of state affairs Muralidhar Rao, national joint-general secretary Shiv Prakash, state leaders Sudhas Bhagat and Hitanand Sharma decided to recommend the names to the central election committee of the party.

Need to still remain alert and cautious must:

Reduction in Corona infection does not mean that we become careless: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the number of Corona patients has come down significantly in the state. Today only 12 positive cases of Corona have been reported in the state and 13 patients have been discharged after recovering. The state's Corona positivity rate is 0.01 percent. Chouhan said that the cases of Corona have definitely reduced, but still there is a need to remain alert and cautious about Corona infection. A little carelessness is equal to re-inviting Corona.

Chouhan said that the state government is making all efforts to deal with the possible third wave of Corona. Medical infrastructure is being developed in the state with rapid expansion of health facilities. Oxygen plants are being



set up to ensure availability of oxygen especially with increasing number of ICU beds in hospitals. We are making all efforts on priority and making arrangements to fulfill the shortcomings which were left during the second wave of Corona. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that testing of Corona infection is still going on in the state. Today 72 thousand 360 tests were conducted in the state. Chief Minister has appealed that if

anyone has any symptoms of Corona, they must get the test immediately. He said that along with all suitable arrangements for Corona treatment in all government hospitals, the availability of oxygen has also been ensured. It is necessary to get timely investigation along with proper treatment. Chouhan said that it is equally important for the common citizens to be vaccinated and adopt Covid appropriate behaviour along with hospitals, medicines and oxygen for the treatment of Corona. The Covid-19 vaccination campaign continues in the state. I appeal to the people of the state that those who have not yet got the vaccine, should get vaccinated immediately, because the vaccine acts as a protective shield against Corona. Chouhan has appealed to the people of the state to adopt Corona appropriate behaviour to avoid Corona infection.

Order issued on the instructions of CM Government staff will get annual increments

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On the instructions of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the government servants will get the annual increments due on July 1, 2020 and January 1, 2021. The Finance Department has issued instructions to this effect for all the departments today. Finance Minister Jagdish devda said that the State Government is employee friendly; all the dues available to the government officials and employees of the state will be given as per rules.

The Finance Department has clarified that the annual increments are due in the month of July/January. Since the state government has not issued order to postpone or stop the salary increment, the

annual increments will be paid to the government employees as per the eligibility. In relation to the government servants whose annual increment will be due in January 2022, instructions have also been given for their calculation. A separate decision will be taken regarding the amount of financial benefits / arrears of salary increase for July 2020 / January 2021.

The annual increment of July 2020 and January 2021 was also not payable to the employees of all undertakings under the state government, corporations, boards, local body development authorities, commissions, university employees. Therefore, instructions in this regard will be issued separately to the concerned departments.

You invest, the government will provide all the necessary facilities

Investors of Burhanpur Powerloom Textile Cluster met the Chief Minister

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that MP has a very favourable environment for industrial development and investment. The government is providing all necessary facilities for land, electricity and industries at subsidized prices. You invest and develop the area, we will do our best to help you.

The investors of Burhanpur Powerloom Textile Cluster met Chouhan on Monday at Mantralaya.



On this occasion, Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Omprakash Sakhelecha and Archana Chitnis were

present. Chouhan on the demand of investors, 30 percent reduction in the price of Ratkhurd industrial area, direct providing Sukhpuri

undeveloped land for cluster development, assistance in cluster development up to Rs 20 crore, interest subsidy for 5 years and cluster area. Consent to be connected to the established sub-station of Rahatkhurd. It is worth mentioning that on July 17, Chief Minister had talked about development of industries and roadmap for self-reliant Burhanpur in the Investors Summit organized in Burhanpur district. The Chief Minister had invited industrialists of Burhanpur to Bhopal in this regard.

ORANGE ALERT FOR HEAVY TO VERY HEAVY RAINFALL IN 13 DISTRICTS OF STATE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday issued an 'orange' alert on the fourth consecutive day predicting heavy to very heavy rainfall in 13 districts of Madhya Pradesh. The alert is valid till Tuesday morning and comes at a time when most parts of the state have been experiencing rain for the past four days.

The orange alert is for heavy to very heavy rainfall and thunderstorms accompanied by lightning in isolated places in Gwalior, Shivpuri, Guna, Ashok Nagar, Datia, Sheopur, Morena, Bhind, Rajgarh, Agar-Malwa, Neemuch, Mandsaur and Tikamgarh, said PK Saha, senior meteorologist with IMD's Bhopal office.

"It is the fourth consecutive orange alert we have issued since Friday. Rainfall might abate on Tuesday as the low-pressure area over northwest MP has weakened. However, the associated

The alert is valid till Tuesday morning and comes at a time when most parts of the state have been experiencing rain for the past four days.



cyclonic circulation over north-west MP still persists and an east-west trough was running along 25 degrees north latitude. Therefore, rain activity might be confined to the northwest of MP, including Gwalior and Chambal divisions," he said. The official said another spell of good rainfall is expected by the end of July as a low-pressure area is likely to form over the north Bay of Bengal on July 28. "Almost all of MP received rainfall in the last 24 hours. Jaora in Ratlam district received the highest rainfall of

260 mm rainfall in west MP in a 24-hour period ending at 8:30 am. Chhatrapur city received the highest rainfall of 42.4 mm in east MP during this period," he said.

Alerts issued by the Met department are colour-coded from green to red. While 'green' stands for no warning, a 'yellow' alert advises authorities to be updated on the situation. An 'orange' alert forecasts heavy to very heavy rainfall while a 'red' alert warns of extremely heavy rainfall.



EDITOR'S SPECS

The Brahmin bandwagon

After the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), more and more political parties are taking to what is now being termed as the 'Parshuram Path' in Uttar Pradesh to woo Brahmins. The Samajwadi Party and the Congress have also hitched on to the Brahmin bandwagon, making the upper caste community a much sought after vote bank. Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav held a meeting with five senior Brahmin leaders of his. During the three-hour long meeting, it was decided that the party will hold 'Prabuddh Varg Sammelans' from next month to establish a contact with the Brahmin community. Akhilesh Yadav also formed a core committee of the five leaders to plan the Brahmin outreach, issues and strategy. SP's effort to woo Brahmins comes at a time when the BSP is also holding Prabuddh Varg Sammelans to win over Brahmins. However, SP president has specifically asked his leaders not to go overboard or play the Hindutva card which may jeopardize the party's Muslim outreach. Muslims form the core base vote of the Samajwadi Party in UP. Sources said the party will list issues faced by the Brahmin community at the district level and prepare a white paper on how the community has been at the receiving end of administrative high-handedness under BJP government. SP is also installing statues of Lord Parshuram, the sixth Avatar of Lord Vishnu and a Brahmin ideologue, in a huge event. The party will also highlight the fact that it gave tickets to 42 Brahmins in the 2012 UP assembly elections and 23 of them won. Meanwhile, former Congress MP Pramod Tiwari, for the first time, raised the issue of victimization of the Bikru minor widow Khushi Dubey who has been languishing in jail for the past one year. The Aam Aadmi Party has already been campaigning for Khushi's freedom since the past several months.

'Roof of the World' no more an enigma now!

Vishal Gulati

Over two-thirds the size of India, Tibet, also known as the 'Roof of the World' or 'Third Pole of the Earth', may no more be an enigma for the outside world now.

For, China has opened its door to the tourists after keeping the Tibet Autonomous Region in the southwest, the land rich in minerals and a variety of flora and fauna, out of bounds for ages.

President Xi Jinping last week made an unannounced visit to the politically sensitive region of Tibet, the first by a Chinese leader in more than 30 years.

Besides visiting Nyingchi, a strategically located border town close to Arunachal Pradesh, and the regional capital Lhasa, Xi inspected a number of key local infrastructure projects, including the Lhasa-Nyingchi section of the Sichuan-Tibet railway project.

As per the regional tourism development department, the traditional culture-dominated Tibet Autonomous Region is seeing a tourism boom with a record 17.58 million trips made by visitors in the first six months this year, up 110.9 per cent year-on-year growth.

It says the opening of the Lhasa-Nyingchi railway, the first electrified railway on June 25, has injected new vitality into the development of Tibetan tourism.

Tibet saw more than 35 million tourists in 2020 despite the pandemic, up from 1.8 million tourists in 2005, according to the local government.

But for the foreign journalists and government dignitaries it's still off-limits, fearing backlash for seizing control of the Tibetan monasteries and expanding Chinese education rather than the local language.

A small group of foreign journalists every year gets a rare opportunity to visit the Tibetan plateau -- barren and ringed by dense groves -- at the invitation of the Chinese government to showcase the progress Tibet has made since the Chinese takeover.

This correspondent was part of the foreign media tour of Tibet in the recent past.

The tastefully lit square with magnificent fountains facing the famed, majestic Potala Palace, once the seat of the Dalai Lama, is the most visited place, especially in the evening.

In Lhasa, which in Tibetan language means holy land, the sun sets normally in summer at around 9 p.m.

Transcending geographical barriers, Hindi movies and love songs make their presence felt in mobile ringtones and even the lips of the Chinese youth in Tibet.

When this IANS correspondent visited the Beijing Experimental School in Lhasa, a big



screen at the entrance showcased students swaying to the 'Chaiyya chaiyya' song from the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer Hindi film 'Dil Se'. Government officials say that Indian films, dubbed in Mandarin, get released simultaneously in Lhasa with the mainland. The upscale Lhasa has four cinemas.

The 1,300-year-old Potala Palace, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994, with seven golden peaks on the main building, is a model of ancient architecture and home to over 100,000 pieces of cultural relics such as murals, stupas, statues, ethangkas' and rare sutras.

The authorities restrict visitors to the Potala Palace to less than 4,000 a day and it stays open from 9 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

In 2002, the Chinese government invested a total 179.3 million yuan in the renovation of the palace. Every year renovation is being carried out by painting the interior and exterior walls of the Potala Palace.

The Potala Palace, which symbolises Tibetan Buddhism and its central role in the traditional administration of Tibet, was first built by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo in the 7th century and it was rebuilt in the mid 17th century by the fifth Dalai Lama.

According to UNESCO, the Potala Palace, noteworthy for its unique architecture globally, reached its present size and form in the years that followed as a result of repeated renovation and expansion.

The Potala Palace, together with the Norbulingka and the Sakya Monastery, are the three main Tibetan cultural heritage sites in Lhasa.

The current Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, lives in exile in Dharamsala in the northern Indian hill state of Himachal Pradesh. He escaped to India from the Potala

Palace in 1959 along with his followers after China crushed an uprising in Tibet.

India has a literary connection with Tibet and one of its most widely travelled writers, Rahul Sankrityayan, is still close to the heart of the Chinese people, even after eight decades. His memory is preserved in a memorial to renowned Tibetan scholar, poet and thinker Gedun Chopel, who was Sankrityayan's fellow traveller, in the capital Lhasa. Located on the popular Barkhor Street in the vicinity of the Jokhang Temple, the important cultural relics in the heart of old Lhasa, the Gedun Chopel Memorial was opened in his last residence to the public after renovation on November 11, 2013.

Rahul Sankrityayan (or Rahula as mentioned in memorial archives) came to Tibet in 1934 to trace the lost Sanskrit texts, says the memorial. Spread over more than 1.2 million sq km, the Tibet region constitutes about one eighth of China's territory.

The plateau is seeing an infrastructure boom too with roads connecting 95 per cent of the township-level administrations and 75 per cent of the incorporated villages.

Tibet now has five airports that link with 60 cities across China. It will have three more airports to further improve the region's comprehensive transport system, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

The entire Tibet has been undergoing a construction boom with expressways, housing complexes, markets, posh neighbourhoods, special economic zones and education centres coming up in rapid succession.

China has reached up to villages with modern amenities and optimum tapping of hydro, geothermal and wind energy.

Lhasa has an average 3,000

hours of sunshine per year. With funding from the central government hundreds of micro hydropower plants have been set up in Tibet that have been meeting the electricity requirements of the locals.

Tibet has a mini Switzerland too. Located in eastern Tibet, the picturesque small township of Nyingchi, which is connected by railway with Lhasa, is acclaimed for alpine beauty comparable to that of Switzerland.

It's known for virgin forest with rich flora and fauna.

Rural homestays have provided additional employment to locals, mainly Buddhists, and generated economic activity too, say officials.

Located some 500 km from Lhasa on the Lhasa-Chengdu national highway through the majestic Mila Pass (5,013 metres), the picturesque Nyingchi located at an altitude of 3,100 metres houses a small population of less than 400. Each household in Nyingchi and nearby areas has a homestay unit. The government is encouraging the locals, who are mostly herdsmen and farmers, to opt for homestays to get additional income by extending subsidies to rebuild their houses and to make homestay units.

The Nyingchi Peach Flower Festival in spring is a famous annual event when the hills bloom with flowers and abound with butterflies, including the dragon butterfly.

The yellowish caterpillar fungus, which is about two inches long and weighs less than one gram, is the costliest medical ingredient in the local markets of Nyingchi.

Not only is Nyingchi Prefecture the third largest forest area in China, but it also has one of the most intact virgin forests in China.

The forests in Nyingchi Prefecture function as the source of the climate and ecology for Tibet and even the entire country and Southeast Asia. The area of glacier and ice in Nyingchi Prefecture amounts to 6,783 sq km, ranking second across the country.

The entire Tibet region is populated mainly by tribals. The climatic conditions are harsh as much of the land is a cold desert where the mercury drops to below minus 20 degrees Celsius in winter. The important festivals of Tibet include Shoton, also known as the Yoghurt festival, in Lhasa, the Yarlung and Qomolangma (Mt. Everest) festivals in Shigatse, the Grand Canyon festival in Nyingchi and the Khampa art festival in Qamdo. The staple food is barley, wheat, peas, rice, rapeseed and salted tea mixed with yak butter.

international

US INTENSIFIES AIRSTRIKES AS TALIBAN OFFENSIVE NEARS KANDAHAR

The fall of Kandahar would deal a heavy blow to the US-backed government in Kabul, which is trying to impart calm to its citizens as the Taliban has seized swaths of the countryside, but so far failed to take a major city, the report said.



The airstrikes, about a dozen in recent days, point to a continuing role for the US military in Afghanistan, despite confidence expressed by President Biden and the Pentagon that the Afghan armed forces are well-equipped and ready to fight the Taliban on their own.

The US forces are due to leave Afghanistan by the end of August. Kandahar, population 6,00,000, was home to deceased Taliban leader Mullah Omar, and host to key military

bases once maintained by the US. It is also a major economic prize. About a dozen strikes are aimed at slowing a Taliban surge, aiding a beleaguered Afghan military.

The Taliban have advanced dozens of miles towards Kandahar city in recent weeks, squeezing it from three directions, capturing swaths of territory in the Panjwai and Arghandab valleys, places where foreign troops fought for decades to keep the Taliban at bay.

NZ accepts Turkish authorities' request for managed return of citizens

Wellington: The New Zealand government has agreed to the managed return of a New citizen and her two young children from Turkey, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Monday. The three have been in immigration detention in Turkey since crossing the border from Syria earlier this year, reports Xinhua news agency. The Turkish government identified the New Zealand citizen Suhayra Aden as a terrorist belonging to the Islamic State (IS), and has requested that New Zealand repatriate the family. "The safety and wellbeing of New Zealanders is paramount for the government," Ardern said in a statement, adding New Zealand has not taken this step lightly. "We have taken into account our international responsibilities as well as the details of this particular case, including the fact that children are involved," she said, adding the woman was a dual New Zealand-Australian citizen until Canberra revoked her citizenship. "Unfortunately, Australia would not reverse the cancellation of citizenship," Ardern said.



Pham Minh Chinh re-elected as Vietnamese Prime Minister

Hanoi | Agencies
The 15th National Assembly (NA) of Vietnam on Monday re-elected Pham Minh Chinh as the Vietnamese Prime Minister for the 2021-2026 tenure, according to voting results. Chinh, also a member of the Politburo of the 13th Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee (CPVCC), was re-elected with a 95.99 per cent approval rate among deputies at the ongoing first session of the 15th NA, according to a statement on the NA's website. Taking an oath of office, Chinh vowed to be absolutely loyal to the nation, the people and the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and to make every effort to fulfill the duty assigned by the CPV, the state and the people. Given the complicated development of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country, the utmost goal of the government now is to protect people's health and safety, Chinh said, adding that his cabinet will focus resources and apply flexible and creative measures, especially in terms of the vac-



nation strategy to combat the pandemic, the Xinhua news agency reported. He also said the government will strive to advance the country's sustainable socio-economic development and work on mechanisms to support people and businesses amid current difficulties brought by Covid-19. On April 5, Chinh was elected Vietnamese prime minister by the 14th NA at its last session. The 15th NA of Vietnam was expected to make decisions on 50 high-ranking positions of the state apparatus during the session, which kicked off on July 20 and will conclude on Wednesday, three days earlier than previously planned due to rising Covid-19 concerns as announced at the session on

Thousands of female troops in UK military face harassment: Report

About 64 per cent of British female veterans and 58 per cent of currently-serving females in the UK military have reported experiencing bullying, harassment and discrimination during their careers, a parliamentary report revealed.

the women who responded to a major survey by the committee said they did not believe the military did enough to address the problems, as six in 10 women did not report the bullying, harassment and discrimination they experienced. "Of those who did complain, one third rated the experience 'extremely poor,'" the report added. "Unfortunately, the stories we heard paint a difficult picture for women in the military. Accounts of bullying, harassment, discrimination, 'laddish' behaviour, and sometimes serious sexual assault and rape. The complaints system, as it stands, is woefully inadequate and leaves most feeling unable to come forward," said military veteran Sarah Atherton, who chairs the sub-committee. She said the committee heard accusations of senior officers sweeping complaints under the rug to protect their own reputations and careers.

Published on Sunday by the House of Commons (lower house of the British Parliament) Defense Sub-Committee on Women in the Armed Forces, the report said there is "truly shocking" evidence of bullying, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape experienced by service-women, reports Xinhua news agency. At the same time, most of

ISRAELI MILITARY STRIKES HAMAS BASE IN GAZA

An Israeli military spokesperson said in a statement late Sunday night that fighter jets attacked the Hamas base which contained "infrastructure and means used for terror activity", reports Xinhua news agency.

Gaza | Agencies
The Israeli military has that Sunday it struck a military base of the Islamic Hamas Movement in the Gaza Strip, hours after arson balloons were launched into southern Israel.

An Israeli military spokesperson said in a statement late Sunday night that fighter jets attacked the Hamas base which contained "infrastructure and means used for terror activity", reports Xinhua news agency.

The base was located near civilian sites, including a school, the spokesperson said. "The strikes were made in response to the arson balloons fired toward Israeli territory," the statement added.

Israel's Fire Department said that the balloons, which were attached with incendiary materials, sparked three fires in southern Israel, causing no injuries.

The Israeli military warned it will "continue to respond firmly against terror attempts from the Gaza Strip". Also on Sunday, Israel reduced the



allowed Gaza offshore fishing zone from 12 nautical miles to six.

The decision was made in the wake of launching incendiary balloons from Gaza toward the Israeli territory, which constitutes a "violation" of Israeli sovereignty, Chief of the Israeli Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories Ghasan Alian said. He added that "it will remain in effect

until further notice". The latest violence came amid the Egyptian-brokered efforts to establish a long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. The conflict from May 10-21 claimed the lives of 256 Palestinians in Gaza and 13 in Israel. The Gaza Strip has been under a crippling Israeli blockade since 2007, when the Hamas took over control of the coastal enclave.

3 people dead in Seattle shootings

At 1.48 am on Sunday, a bar employee reported a physical fight in their establishment, after which officers found an adult male with gunshot wounds and later declared him deceased, reports Xinhua news agency.

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At 2.32 am, multiple callers near Occidental Square reported another shooting.

Arriving officers located multiple shooting scenes and two gunshot wound victims. One man was taken to the hospital in critical condition and the second man died at the scene. Three other victims from the location were transported in personal vehicles to nearby hospitals before police arrived. One of them later died from his injuries, according to a statement by the city police department. At 3.29 a.m., an adult female victim with a non-life-threatening gunshot wound to the stomach arrived at a Bellevue hospital. Police later learned the related shooting occurred around 1.40 a.m.

Seattle | Agencies
In a series of unrelated shooting incidents in the US city of Seattle, three people were killed and five others injured, according to the police.

At 1.48 am on Sunday, a bar employee reported a physical fight in their establishment,

Married!

GINNY & GEORGIA'S BRIANNE HOWEY AND MATT ZIERING TIE THE KNOT



Los Angeles | Agencies

Ginny & Georgia actress Brianne Howey and Matt Ziering got married Saturday at a Palos Verdes, California home in front of 100 family and friends. Howey, 31, told People, 'The night was more magical than I could have ever imagined,' adding that 'it was the most beautiful feeling to be surrounded by so many people we love.' She told the publication, 'I wish all my nights could end with a Son of a Gun fried chicken sandwich and a Spice Girls dance party.'

The California-born beauty donned a Lohogown at the event, according to the outlet, and made her walk down the aisle to the tune of Bill Withers' 'Lovely Day'. She had her blonde locks parted and down on the romantic day, while Ziering looked dapper in a navy blue tux with a bow tie. The wedding was snapped by photographer Tec Petaja, according to the outlet, and catered by Jon & Vinny's. Howey, who plays Georgia Miller on the Netflix series, told Los Angeles Magazine in January that she and Ziering, a 36-year-old lawyer, first crossed paths 'each other three nights in a row at a couple bars in' Los Angeles in 2016.

'I ALWAYS THOUGHT MY THOUGHTS ARE VERY EXTREME': ANNE-MARIE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Anne-Marie has credited having therapy for helping her to normalise her 'extreme' thoughts and feelings. The 2002 hit-maker recently revealed that she sought therapy during lockdown, after realising she was unhappy and struggling with self-esteem issues, and stresses of being in the spotlight. During an appearance on ITV's Lorraine on Monday morning, Anne-Marie, 30, explained that she always struggled with how extreme she thought her thoughts were, before speaking to a therapist and learning that how she was feeling was 'normal'. Her sessions inspired her to pen her new album, aptly named Therapy, and Anne-Marie revealed that by seeking help she was able to make sense of the inner voice in her head. She told host Ranvir Singh: 'I've always thought that my thoughts are very extreme and before they come

out of my mouth, it's like the worst thing that I could possibly say.' Admitting she struggled to voice how she was feeling, Anne-Marie credited her therapy sessions for helping her to realise her thoughts aren't as bad as she first thought. 'Then as soon as I speak to my therapist... it's like it's actually normal how I feel,' the singer said.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Madonna enjoys 'family BBQ' with beau Ahlamalik Williams

Madonna is seen celebrating her new release as she enjoyed a family BBQ with boyfriend Ahlamalik Williams and her kids. Madonna, 62, was seen rocking a cowboy hat, tiny denim shorts and fishnet tights as she playfully posed on a giant flamingo inflatable while chowing down on hot-dogs and sipping on drinks, surrounded by her nearest and dearest. Documenting her fun-filled night for fans, Madonna shared a series of snaps from the family party that saw the pop icon spend the night hanging out in a custom airstream trailer. The 'Like A Prayer' hit maker dressed up for the occasion and was seen rocking a nude pink body top and embellished denim shorts that made for a very leggy display. She was also seen cuddling up to her toyboy boyfriend as they sat down to eat, with Ahlamalik, 27, who was wearing a black and white patterned tracksuit, sitting with his arm around his famous girlfriend. Madonna, meanwhile, affectionately placed a hand on his leg. She and Ahlamalik have been dating since 2019.

Jason Momoa: Oscar Isaac is my new man-crush

Los Angeles | Agencies

"Aquaman" star Jason Momoa has tagged actor Oscar Isaac as his new man crush. The 41-year-old actor also shared that he had a great time working on the upcoming film "Dune" because it had such a great cast, including the "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" star and his "dream" co-star Javier Bardem, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Momoa said: "To work with Javier on this epic film and also with Josh Brolin-I love Brolin! And Rebecca Ferguson killed it, and Oscar Isaac is my new man-crush. I'm just so pumped for the world to see it."

Momoa, who plays Duncan Idaho in the upcoming movie, was particularly thrilled to have so much screen time with actor Timothee Chalamet. "The coolest thing about my character is that he's the Han Solo-the swashbuckling rebel who stirs the pot. And he's really close to Timmy's character," he told Men's Journal magazine.

Momoa is happy to be involved in the futuristic saga. The actor

hasn't seen the 1984 adaptation of the classic novel made by David Lynch based on the 1965 Frank Herbert novel of the same name. He chose not to watch it as part of his preparations. "I grew up with a single mother who raised me on 'Gone With the Wind. She never let me watch movies with people getting their heads lopped off. My preparation was more about spending time with Denny and spending time in my imagination to find those places in myself where I could play Idaho's character," he said.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Dwayne Johnson: Emily's and my daughters are very excited for 'Jungle Cruise'

Hollywood star Dwayne Johnson has revealed that actress Emily Blunt and his daughters are very excited about the release of their upcoming film "Jungle Cruise". Blunt also shared as to why she is hedging her bet on "Jungle Cruise", she

said: "I have all my chips bet on this movie that it will up my cool factor with my daughters finally. They are very excited." Taking some credit for Blunt's daughters being excited, Dwayne added: "They love me to begin with. They love Moana, they love Maui.

But yes, all of our daughters are very excited for this movie!"

The film is inspired by the famous Disneyland theme park ride. Paying a tribute to where it all started in 1955 as one of Walt's original Disneyland attractions, the premiere of the film took place at Disneyland. Asked about their favourite Disneyland memory, Johnson said that Blunt rode the Jungle Cruise ride for the first time at the premiere.

Blunt said: "Yes, I rode the Jungle Cruise ride for the first time! I loved it, it was so whimsical, silly and fun. It was beautiful. I had a good time."

"Jungle Cruise" is an adventure-filled ride down the Amazon with wisecracking skipper Frank Wolff and intrepid researcher Dr. Lily Houghton. Jaime Collet-Serra directs the film, which also stars Edgar Ramirez, Jack Whitehall, Jesse Plemons, and Paul Giamatti.

Vin Diesel on casting John Cena as Jakob in 'F9: The Fast Saga'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actor and producer Vin Diesel has opened up on casting former wrestler and actor John Cena in the ninth instalment of the 'Fast & Furious' franchise. In the movie, Diesel's Dominic Toretto and Michelle Rodriguez's character Letty are content with a quiet family life. But Dom's past comes back, resurfacing old wounds. Cena plays Jakob, Dom's brother.

Why was Cena chosen for the role of Dom's brother? Diesel said: "I'm multicultural, so you could have picked anyone to be my brother. As we were developing the story, it was great fun to be able to revisit a past that pre-dates the first film. Once we started getting into casting, that's when the anxiety set in, that's when it was, like, 'it could go any of a million different directions!'"

The 54-year-old star said there was "actual anxiety". He added: "There are so many great, talented actors, but who would be right to

play that type of archetype, that type of character that has to do so much in this film, because it's a very intense role, all the while representing what our collective idea of a Toretto to be?" The actor also added how at one point he thought Pablo, played by late actor Paul Walker, had sent Cena to play Jakob.

Diesel said: "I had already been a fan of who he is and his work ethic and maybe a week earlier I was watching Ferdinand with my kids...We love John Cena! He walked into my Dom shrine and I was kind of in this Dom state of mind, so it wasn't too hee-hee ha-ha. He was walking into a sacred place." "And we talked about why this franchise is so sacred and what goes into it. And how, if you come into this franchise, you have to be willing to put everything on the line." Diesel added: "That day, I posted on Instagram, without talking to anyone, a video of him and me and I said, 'thank you Pablo'. Because at that moment, I thought, my brother Pablo (Paul Walker) had sent him to play Jakob." 'F9: The Fast Saga' hits theatres in August.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Molly-Mae Hague



OLYMPICS: PARLIAMENT HAILS OLYMPIC SILVER MEDALLIST MIRABAI CHANU

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Both the Houses of Parliament on Monday congratulated Olympic silver medalist Saikhom Mirabai Chanu. Parliament hailed the performance of the athlete. Indian weightlifter Mirabai Chanu bagged a historic silver medal in the women's 49kg weightlifting at the Tokyo. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said: "I am extremely happy to inform you that Mirabai Chanu won a silver medal in the Olympics. I congratulate her on behalf of the House and myself. I hope that other athletes will also

perform well in their respective games and bring laurels for the country." Mirabai, ranked third in the world, had a total lift of 202 kg with 87kg in snatch and 115 kg in clean and jerk. This is India's second medal in the sport after Karnam Malleswari's bronze in the 69kg category at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Hou Zhihui of China won the gold medal, setting a new Olympic record of 210kg. She set the record too in snatch with 94 kg and 116 kg in clean and jerk. Indonesia's Windy Cantika Aisah took home the silver medal with a total lift of 194 kg.



TT: TACTICALLY OUTWITTED MANIKA GOES DOWN IN STRAIGHT GAMES, KAMAL REACHES THIRD ROUND

Tokyo | Agencies

India's Manika Batra lost to Austria's Sofia Polcanova in straight games as her campaign in the Tokyo Olympics came to an end after a historic run to the third round. Manika, who became the first Indian to win a round in the Olympics since 1992, went down 8-11, 2-11, 5-11, 7-11 in 28 minutes.

The 26-year-old Manika was outfoxed by an opponent who mixed her game very well, attacked the Indian on the forehand, and defended superbly. The Indian also made some unforced errors that the Austrian capitalised on. Sofia took a handy 8-4 lead in the first game but Manika fought back, using her serve to cut down the gap to 8-9. But Sofia won the game when Manika sent a backhand cross-table shot wide. The second was totally one-sided in favour of Sofia, who had a knee surgery in February this year but showed remarkable recovery to not only get fit for the Olympics but play at a high standard.

The third game was also one-sided as Sofia maintained her grip and did not allow the Indian to stage a comeback. Manika, who was hampered by the absence of a coach in her corner as she has allegedly refused to take help of national coach Soumyadeep Roy because her personal coach Sanmay

Paranjpe was not given accreditation to sit court-side, put up some fight in the fourth game but Sofia opened up an early 3-6 lead and maintained her stronghold on the game.

Manika, who uses the deceptive or trick-rubber style using the long pimple rubber that she switched to at the age of eight, failed to produce her best game against an opponent who was tactically well prepared to deal with her style and did not allow the Indian to impose her game.

This brings to an end Manika's campaign at the Tokyo Olympics as she had lost in the mixed doubles, partnering Achanta Sharath Kamal, in the first round.

In Men's single Sharath Kamal reached the third round of fighting back from a game down to beat Tiago Apolonio of Portugal 4-2 in 49 minutes at the Tokyo Olympics on Monday.

The 39-year-old Kamal, who had a bye in the first round, started off slowly as the Portuguese player raced away with the first game. Sharath got into his rhythm in the second game and went on to win 2-11, 11-8, 11-5, 9-11, 11-6, 11-9 in a well-fought encounter. The Indian, playing in his fourth Olympics, runs into reigning Olympic and world champion Ma Long of China, the top seed, in the third round on Tuesday.

OLYMPICS: NAGAL GOES DOWN TO MEDVEDEV IN STRAIGHT SETS

Tokyo | Agencies

India's campaign in the Tokyo Olympics tennis competition came to an end when Sumit Nagal lost to



world No. 2 Daniil Medvedev of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) in straight sets on Monday.

Nagal, who had beaten Uzbekistan's Denis Istomin in the opening round, went down 6-2, 6-1 to the second seed in just over an hour.

Nagal was the lone hope for India after the women's doubles pair of Sania Mirza and Ankita Raina lost to the Kichenok twins of Ukraine -- Lyudmyla and Nadiia -- 0-6,

7-6(0) 10-8.

Nagal's challenge was snuffed out on Monday by a player who is far superior in ranking and standard of play. The 23-year-old Nagal is ranked 154th in the world according to the latest ATP rankings.

Medvedev, who had reached the Australian Open final early this year, was too strong for the Indian who had taken a set off Roger Federer in the 2019 US Open.

But there were no such heroics for Nagal as Medvedev broke his service twice in the first set and wrapped it up in 30 minutes. Nagal, who struck four well-executed forehand winners, committed 12 unforced errors to four by Medvedev and also forced the Indian to commit 13 mistakes.

The second set was more one-sided as Medvedev broke serve early though Nagal managed to a few good shots, even catching Medvedev off guard on a couple of occasions.

But the gap between the two players was too big for Nagal to breach on this occasion and he went down rather tamely.

Archery: India lose to Korea in straight sets, crash out in quarters

Tokyo | Agencies



Tokyo | Agencies

South Korea thrashed India 6-0 in the quarterfinals of the men's archery event here at the Olympic Games. The defending champions won the first three sets to seal the match 6-0 at the Yumenoshima Park Archery Field. The Koreans won the first set 59-54 with five perfect 10s as against two perfect 10s by India. The team of Atanu Das, Pravin Jadhav and Tarundeep Rai got two 8s and two 9s.

The Korean team, comprising Je Deok Kim, Woojin Kim, Jinhyek Oh kept up the pressure in the second set as they fired five perfect 10s and a nine to get 59.

The Indian trio responded with 57 with four 10s, one 9 and an 8.

The defending champs tapered off a bit in the last set, managing 56 with three 10s, two 9s and one 8. In response, India could get only one perfect shot and managed four scores of 9 and one score of 8.

Earlier, India had beaten Kazakhstan 6-2 to reach the last-eight stage. The Indians, seeded ninth, won the first two sets 55-54 and 52-51 respectively. Trailing 0-4, Kazakhstan fought back in the third set to win it 57-56. The Indians, however, won the fourth set 55-54.

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Olympics: Rankireddy-Shetty lose to Indonesian pair in men's doubles



Tokyo | Agencies

India's Satwinderaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty went down after putting up a fight against world No.1 Marcus Fernaldi Gideon and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo of Indonesia in their second Group A match in the men's doubles badminton competition at the Tokyo Olympics on Monday.

Rankireddy/Shetty, who had won their

first match in the group against world No. 3 pair of Yang Lee and Chi-Lin Wang of Chinese Taipei, went down 21-13, 21-12 against the Indonesian pair, in just 31 minutes. Gideon and Sukamuljo, the best men's doubles pair on the circuit for the last couple of years, were too strong for the Indians and did not allow them any chance. The Indonesians are the favourite for the title and are expected to top their Group. They kept a steady scor-

ing rate. Rankireddy/ Shetty now have one more match against British pair Ben Lane and Sean Vandy and if they win, they will qualify for the knockout stages. Two out of the four teams from the four-team group will qualify for the next stage.

Currently, the Indian pair is second in the group with three points from two matches, the same as Lee and Wang from Chinese Taipei. The British pair has lost both its matches.

Tennis: Naomi, Barbora breeze into third round at Olympics

Tokyo | Agencies

Home favourite Naomi Osaka and Czech Republic's Barbora Krejčíková were among the top seeds who won in straight sets on Monday as normalcy returned to the Olympic Games following the shock defeat of top seed Ashleigh Barty of Australia on Sunday.

No.2 Naomi Osaka, who became the favourite after Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo sent Ashleigh home, looked solid in her 6-3, 6-2 victory over Viktorija Golubic of Switzerland.

Naomi will meet the winner of the match between Czech Republic's Marketa Vondrousova and Romania's Mihaela Buznescu in the third round.

After missing nearly two months without a match, there was a question mark over Naomi's ability to manage the pressure of winning gold in her home country. But, so far, she has looked invincible, not dropping a single set.

"Honestly, it's a bit interesting," she said of playing for the host nation. "The [Japanese] flag is always next to my name, but the scale here is much bigger. It's something I've been waiting for since Rio."

Naomi played a superb first set, winning 24 of her 26 service points and converting her first set point with a backhand winner. She won 37 of 45 service points and faced only one break point.

Spain's No.7 Garbine Muguruza was an easy 6-3, 6-0 winner against Wang Qiang in 61 minutes. This was Garbine's 29th match-win of the season, and if the seeds hold, she'll have a third-round match against No.10 Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic.

No. 8 Barbora Krejčíková, the French Open singles and doubles champion this year, was nearly as dominant. She's now won 22 of her past 23 matches after defeating 18-year-old Canadian Leylah Fernandez 6-2, 6-4.

Barbora needed 75 minutes to complete the match and next plays the winner of the match between No.9 Belinda Bencic of Switzerland and Japan's Misaki Doi.

No.13 Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of ROC defeated Anna-Lena Friedsam of Germany 6-1, 6-1 and will meet the winner of the match between Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo and Fiona Ferro of France in the third round.



"Consider dropping Virat": Swimmer Khade shuts up troll

Mumbai | Agencies

Indian swimmer Virdhawal Khade shut up a troll who said that Indian swimmers should not be sent to compete at the Olympics. Khade had a reply to a few people who were criticising the performances of young backstroke swimmers Srihari Nataraj and Maana Patel at the Tokyo Olympics. The 2010 Asian Games bronze medalist in 50m butterfly had a befitting response to a person who tweeted, "Stop sending players, if they don't ready... It's Olympics, not a low grade tournament... They even don't reach their PB... Such a same... Learn something from Tunisia."

"So your solution is not to send players, so they never get ready? It's quite easy to sit at home and comment. I'm pretty sure even players like Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli don't score a 100 in

every match. Maybe BCCI should consider dropping Virat (thinking emoji)," read Khade's reply to the troll.

The troll wasn't satisfied with Khade's response. "Cricket is a team sport not an individual... See other Athletes from different countries in Olympics, they improved timing from PB, and us... We even reach PB, before participating in mega sports events like Olympics, train and improve properly. A small country Tunisia (flag) won Gold."

Khade's reply was measured. "Our swimmers dropped over a second in a year to qualify for the Olympics. That in itself needs adulation. We are better than what we were 10 years ago. We will be even better in 10 years."

This reply wasn't convincing for the troll. He tweeted, "What a

opinion... In qualification they dropped timing and in main event, time is increased... Wahh (two claps emoji) Try to win medals in Commonwealth Games, Asian games... Then target Olympics, just go and participate and crashed out in Heats is like a joke."

Khade had enough of the lack of logic from the troll. He closed the conversation by tweeting, "(laughter emoji) at this point, all I can do is laugh at your ignorance. It's unfortunate that people have so little knowledge about swimming (folded hands emoji)."

Nataraj, qualifying through 'A' cut in Rome in June, finished fifth in his heat in 100m backstroke with a time of 54.31s. Maana, who qualified through FINA's universality quota, finished second in her heat with a timing of 1:03.77. Both didn't reach the semifinals.

'You don't have to bite the medals... but we know you still will'

Tokyo | Agencies

The Tokyo 2020 organisers made an interesting observation about their medals -- which have been made by extracting precious metals from discarded mobile phones and laptops -- and within minutes the tweet had gone viral. The organisers posted a picture of an athlete smiling and biting her gold medal, and wrote, "We just want to officially confirm that the #Tokyo2020 medals are not edible! Our medals are made from material recycled from electronic devices donated by the Japanese public. "So, you don't have to bite them... but we know you still will (Face with tongue) #UnitedByEmotion," read the tweet.

The tweet created quite a buzz on social media with fans praising the organisers for coming up with the catchy lines. "It is very sweet to bite, because it is very hard to get. Also a long memories in the

life," tweeted a fan, while another wrote, "The Best Tweet I have ever read since opening day. I am sure you know today is the third day, and everyone is stressed out. Your Tweet made me laugh. Thank you."

Another fan wrote, "After struggling harder and harder, finally they bite this biscuit which they need during struggle." The Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games conducted the "Tokyo 2020 Medal Project" to collect small electronic devices such as used mobile phones from all over Japan to produce the Olympic and Paralympic medals. In the two years between April 2017 and March 2019, 100 per cent of the metals required to manufacture the approximately 5,000 gold, silver and bronze medals were extracted from small electronic devices contributed by people from all over Japan. Every medal being awarded to athletes during the Games is made from recycled metals.



Olympics: Bhavani Devi's campaign ends with loss in second round

Tokyo | Agencies

CA Bhavani Devi, the first Indian fencer to win a round at the Olympics, went out with her head held high as she fought well against France's Manon Brunet 7-15 in a Round of 32 match of the women's individual sabre competition at the Tokyo Olympics on Monday.

Bhavani Devi, from Chennai who had outplayed Nadia Ben Azizi of Tunisia 15-3 to advance, put up a good fight as Manon, the World No. 3 from France who narrowly missed a bronze medal at the Rio Olympics five years ago, was too strong.

Manon established an early lead as she went on the attack, pushing Bhavani back and making the touch to win points. She had a big lead before Bhavani scored her first point. The first round ended 9-2 in Manon's favour. Bhavani was more aggressive in the second round as she narrowed the gap after Manon had scored two more points. Bhavani scored four points in quick succession and narrowed the lead to 11-6 but the French opponent was too strong and too experienced and emerged 15-7 winner.

Earlier in the first-round match, the 27-year-old Bhavani, who had narrowly missed qualifying for the Rio Olympics in 2016, got an early advantage in the first period as she raced to an 8-0 lead, defending well,

and counter-attacking to score points against Nadia Ben Azizi of Tunisia. She used the 'right of way' rule to her advantage as she used her quick reflexes to parry attacks by Nadia and score points.

In foil and sabre fencing, the 'right of way' rule kicks in when both fencers touch each other at the same time. As a point could be awarded to only one, it goes to the



fencer who had the priority. The priority can be gained by either initiating the attack or defending well or by establishing a 'point-in-line' which means that the fencer's arm is extended with the weapon pointing at the target area of the opponent. In the second period, having established a good lead, the world number 42, went on the attack and scored points easily to cruise to victory. Bhavani Devi, who took up fencing at school to avoid classes, came to the limelight when she bagged a bronze medal in the 2009 Commonwealth Fencing Championship. She is the first Indian to win a silver medal in the Asian Championships and gold at the Commonwealth Championships in 2019. She has also won a gold medal in the World Cup event in Paris.



'SHERSHAAH' TRAILER LAUNCHES AT KARGIL VIJAY DIWAS

Team Absolute | Dras (Ladakh)

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat made a remarkable observation at the "Shershaah" trailer launch here on the eve of Kargil Vijay Diwas, observed every year on July 26. Param Vir Chakra recipient and Kargil war hero Captain Vikram Batra, whose life story "Shershaah" narrates on the Bollywood screen, was 22 when he joined the forces, and this year marks 22 years of the Kargil war, noted General Rawat on Sunday night. "We are happy that a film has been made on Captain Vikram Batra's life at this point of time. We hope many more such films will be made on the bravehearts of India," added General Rawat, who was chief guest at the event. The star cast, Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani, talked of being fortunate to get a chance to work in a film that narrated such an honourable life story. Director Vishnuvardhan was present, too, along with producers Karan Johar, Apoorva Mehta and Shabbir Boxwala, and Vijay Subramaniam of Amazon Prime, the OTT channel that will stream the film on August 12. Each of them thanked the Army and the Batra family for making this film possible. The 527 brave soldiers who laid down their lives in the Kargil War were saluted, and families of the brave bereaved felicitated. The trailer launch was the highlight of the evening, preceded by a short "Kargil Tribute" featurette, remembering the valour of Captain Batra, and also acknowledging General Joshi and the Indian Army.

Sidharth, who essays Captain Vikram Batra, spoke of how the experience of working on the project was more than shooting a film. "This is a story of a true hero, like all of you," said Sidharth, addressing the army personnel gathered among the select audience. "I consider myself lucky to be able to bring alive the story of a real-life hero like all of you on screen. This is my first picture based on a true story and the experience has been more than a film to me," added the actor, speaking in Hindi.



Malaika, Milind, Anusha to judge 'Supermodel Of The Year 2'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood personalities Malaika Arora, Milind Soman and Anusha Dandekar will be seen as judges in the second season of the reality show 'Supermodel Of The Year'. Malaika said: "I've always been in awe of the grit and passion the women of today possess, and MTV Supermodel of the Year sets the foundation for these talented ladies to showcase their individuality in the most impressive form. With the first season being an absolute rollercoaster for us, the second one is sure to be a notch higher." The actress says the second season will be a treat for the eyes for all the fashion fanatics.

With #UnapologeticallyYou as the theme, the show has conversations around stereotypes and questions preconceived notions around an individual and their choices.

Milind shared: "Being a supermodel is all about putting your best out there and embracing all that is unabashedly you. We saw that come alive in the first season of the show and were stunned by the confidence, poise, and grace in each one of the contestants. With the dynamic world of fashion bringing in new trends and styles, it will be interesting to see how the young women of today stand out of the crowd and lead by example."

Milind added that the stakes will be higher this season. Anusha says she has always believed that fashion and beauty is more than just stylish outfits and a perfect face.

She shared: "It can be a powerful way to feel inspired and present the most authentic version of yourself. The best thing about fashion and beauty is that you can express yourself through your style and personality regardless of where you come from, and we strive to follow the same mantra with 'Supermodel of the Year'. 'Supermodel of the Year Season 2' is slated to premiere in August on MTV.



GURU RANDHAWA TO MAKE ACTING DEBUT WITH HINDI MUSICAL DRAMA FILM

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer-composer Guru Randhawa is all set to make his debut as an actor. The 29-year-old, who till now has featured in music videos, will be seen in a Hindi musical drama feature film for the first time. The film's story revolves around the tumultuous journey of a young musician from the depths of anonymity to fortune and status. Talking about his acting debut, Guru Randhawa shared: "I'm quite excited to explore new horizons and expand my capabilities, as an artist I've always strived to discover myself in new and creative ways. Working on this film was quite an instinctive decision and I'm blessed to have this opportunity to showcase my journey and talent." "Trying something new always comes with a set of challenges and I'm super thrilled to put in all my hard work into it this dream project."

I can't wait to take my fans on this exciting journey with me and I'm sure it will surprise them beyond bounds," the "Nain Bengali" singer added. The yet untitled film will be backed by Endemol Shine India. "We are pleased to collaborate with and launch the musical powerhouse that is Guru Randhawa! The joy as producers and creators is to be able to create content that has wide appeal and is unique, relatable yet entertaining for a wide demographic. Guru has a dedicated fan base who I'm sure will be very excited to see him make his acting debut," shared Abhishek Rege, CEO Endemol Shine India. While the rest of the cast is still being decided, the makers claim that the film will be a rollercoaster ride peppered with lyrical and foot tapping music.

Eijaz Khan shares key to successful, happy relationship

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Eijaz Khan, who found his ladylove Pavitra Punia in the 14th season of the controversial reality show "Bigg Boss", has shared the key to a successful relationship and it is hilarious.

Eijaz suggested moving beyond "logic" for a successful relationship.

The actor said with a laugh: "Say sorry as soon as possible. Even if you are right or wrong. Forget logic. Sometimes it is not about logic. Just say it's okay I am sorry and baby let's move forward."

The 45-year-old actor and Pavitra keep sharing love-filled images for their fans on social media. The couple was

seen attending singer Rahul Vaidya's wedding together.

Speaking about his work, Eijaz currently awaits the release of the second season of the web-series "City Of Dreams", a political drama. "City of Dreams" Season 2 also features Sachin Pilgaonkar, Atul Kulkarni, Priya Bapat, Sandeep Kulkarni and Uday Tikekar among other Marathi and Hindi actors. The second season focuses towards a stand-off between the father-daughter duo played by actors Atul Kulkarni and Priya Bapat, as the two characters are not ready to budge as the family feuds for power and position. "City of Dreams" season 2 will be released on July 30 on Disney+Hotstar.



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Actress Diljot Chhabra, who will soon be seen in upcoming show, "Ziddi Dil", says that she has tried her best to keep her character as natural and realistic as she can.

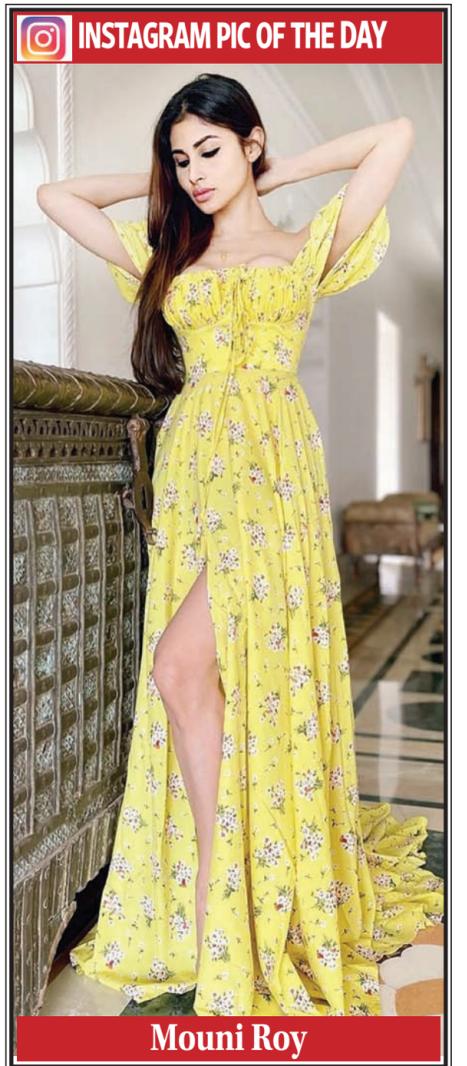
In the show Diljot plays the role of a special training officer who hails from Bundelkhand called Sanjana a.k.a. Sanju. Talking about her character, Diljot said: "I am the only lady officer amongst all the prominent characters in the group full of confidence and determination. She is tough

Diljot Chhabra opens up on her role in upcoming show 'Ziddi Dil'



and always ready to get into action at any time." Diljot finds the character relatable with her own personality as she says: "In my personal life there have been circumstances that made me more driven, responsible and thick skinned over time." Since the show covers various sentiments, Diljot feels that the versatility of all the characters will be highlighted in the show. Diljot finds her role challenging as she explains: "It is very demanding physically as I am playing the role of a lady officer. You know performing all those action sequences, drills and staying true to the character at the same time is a little challenging."

Moreover language is also an issue for her as 'Sanjana' comes from Bundelkhand so getting the accent is a bit tricky and tough. "Ziddi Dil" is going to start in August on Sony SAB.



Mouni Roy