

absolute india

VOL. 8, ISSUE 254, MUMBAI | WEDNESDAY, JULY 28, 2021 | 5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM MUMBAI, BHOPAL AND NEW DELHI

NATION > 02

Schemes for Covid orphans shouldn't remain only on...



HOLLYWOOD > 06

Issa Rae says 'I do' to Louis Diame ...



SPORTS > 07

Naomi bows out as Garbine, Paula & Belinda advance...



With Name, Fame and wealth, Film Industry also have negative aspects

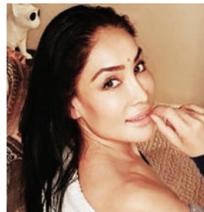
THE DARK SIDE OF GLAMOUR WORLD

RAJ KUNDRA -- THE PRIME ACCUSED IN A SENSATIONAL PORN FILMS RACKET CASE -- HAS BEEN REMANDED TO JUDICIAL CUSTODY FOR TWO WEEKS TILL AUG 10

Raj Kundra sent to judicial custody



Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Tuesday declined to grant any interim relief to businessman Raj Kundra, challenging his "illegal" arrest by Mumbai Police in connection with the sensational porn case on July 19. A bench of Justice A.S. Gadhari refused to pass any order without hearing the prosecution, and after Public Prosecutor Arun Pai assured the court that the police will file its reply on Wednesday, posted the matter for further hearing on Thursday. Soon after his arrest, Kundra, through his lawyer Abad Ponda, moved the Bombay HC challenging his arrest and seeking to quash the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's July 20 order and all subsequent orders remanding him to police custody. Earlier on Tuesday, the lower court sent him to 14 days judicial custody till August 10.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

On a day when businessman Raj Kundra, who stands accused in a pornography case, was sent to 14-day judicial custody by a Mumbai court, former "Big Boss" contestant Sofia Hayat said on Tuesday that it is not uncommon for Bollywood aspirants to be tricked into shooting for pornographic films by unscrupulous businessmen. "A casting agent once said to me that there was an intimate scene and I have to show the director how well I can act for it," recalled Hayat, who had entered "Big Boss 7" as a wild card entry. "I knew this was a trick because professionals would never ask any artiste to perform such a scene. I have done two love

The Mumbai Police arrested Kundra on July 19 in the sensational case of producing and distributing pornographic content through mobile applications. Allegedly, Kundra or his company use to trap young talents, especially girls, aspiring to be figured out on the silver screen. This can be an eye opener for the dreamers of small towners, who rush towards glamour world blindly and get trapped in dark gorge of porn.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

scenes in my career, and although I am not inhibited about such scenes, it was a closed set and nobody had asked me to perform the scenes before the shoot," she said. Bollywood aspirants, Hayat said, should beware of such propositions. She added that pornography desensitised people from love and spoke in favour of it being treated by the courts on a par with rape. Another actress Zoya Rathore, in her interview to a TV channel (Shared in twitter) revealed the modus operandi. She said that Raj Kundra's associate Umesh Kamat called her and asked to be naked in a video call. Zoya revealed that Kundra's network misuse the aspirants as everybody needs to earn bread & butter.

How erotic content is produced for OTT platforms, reveals Gehana

Another accused in the case, Gehana Vasisth, said that Kamat used to make demands for such videos which were not porn but erotica or bold content with song sequences in them. Gehana Vasisth, who is out on bail after spending five months in jail for her involvement in the porn video racket, has spoken to India Today. The actress said, "Producers used to finalise artistes, script and location for the video and then start with the shoot. Kamat used to speak with the artiste personally, before he/she was finalised for the shoot and confirm that they were ready to shoot bold scenes." The actress added that the budget for the content which was shot for HotSHots was Rs 3 lakh. She revealed that after all the expenses, a producer would get to keep Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000. "The content was shot on a Red Dragon camera, which is expensive. Payment of artistes, supporting staff, costumes and location would add on to the budget of the project. The producer would try to finish the shoot in just a few days as more days of shoot meant more budget," Vasisth said. Gehana Vasisth had provided content for HotShot application earlier and maintained that no woman was forced to act in these videos. "After the shoot, all artistes are asked to record a no-objection video in which they say that they have acted in the movie out of their own will and they have shot it for a particular platform," added Vasisth.

ED SEEKS DETAILS OF FIR, BANKING RECORDS OF KUNDRA IN PORN CASE

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is all set to launch a probe into the alleged financial dealings of Raj Kundra. According to senior ED officials familiar with the development, the financial probe agency has sought the copy of the FIR from the Mumbai Crime Branch. An official of the ED said that the agency has also sought the details of the banking transactions of Kundra related to Hotshots and BollyFame. The official said that before filing a case, the ED will also check financial transactions in other countries into the bank accounts of Kundra.

ACTOR UMESH KAMAT TAKES LEGAL ROUTE FOR LINKING HIM TO RAJ KUNDRAS CASE

Mumbai: Actor Umesh Kamat, who has starred in shows such as "Asambhav" and "Eka Lagnachi Teesri Goshta", has come out with a statement stating that he has been "unnecessarily dragged in the controversy concerning businessman Raj Kundra". He said: "I, Umesh Kamat an actor by profession, have been unnecessarily dragged in the controversy concerning businessman Raj Kundra, due to the lack of due diligence by news channels/media platforms. Mr. Raj Kundra and his associate Mr. Umesh Kamat, who co-incidentally shares my name have been accused of allegedly producing and creating pornographic content. While this news is being reported by various news channels/media platforms my name and image are being tainted by leading media platforms/portals as my pictures/photographs which are available in the public domain are being misused by representing me as the accused involved. The linkup to this controversy has made me pay a heavy price because of irresponsible journalism."



SHILPA SHETTY BROKE DOWN

Shilpa Shetty fought with Raj Kundra, during a raid at their home by the crime branch on Monday, Mumbai Police sources told reporter. She is said to have burst into tears during the argument and the team had to step in to calm her down. She told cops that she was unaware of Kundra's pornography business.

Basavaraj Bommai chosen as new Karnataka Chief Minister

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

Basavaraj Somappa Bommai was on Tuesday chosen as the new Chief Minister of Karnataka, succeeding B.S. Yediyurappa. A strong Lingayat leader from north Karnataka, he was elected to the post at the legislature party meeting held at a private hotel, and chaired by Central observers, Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and G. Kishan Reddy. Yediyurappa proposed Bommai's name and it was agreed upon by the BJP legislators. Bommai will be sworn in as the 30th Chief Minister at the Raj Bhavan at 3.20 pm on Wednesday.



The son of former Karnataka Chief Minister and Janata Dal leader S.R. Bommai, he had joined the BJP from the Janata Parivar in 2008, and though being a blue-eyed boy of Yediyurappa, his ability to defend the party is appreciated by all.

Border clash: Amit Shah urges Assam, Mizoram CMs to maintain peace

SILCHAR (ASSAM)/AIZAWL | Agencies

As the Assam-Mizoram border row turned violent on Monday with a spate of clashes and five Assam Police personnel being shot dead, Union Home Minister Amit Shah talked over phone with both the Chief Ministers and urged them to maintain peace and protect the people. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who on Tuesday rushed to the border area, said Assam would, at any cost, protect its territory and the reserve forest along the Mizoram border for the sake of the future generations. Paying tributes to five killed policemen, he announced a government job and Rs 50 lakh as compensation to their next of kin and Rs one lakh for the 42 policemen and civilians injured in the border firing and clashes. On the other hand, Mizoram Home Minister Lalchamliana said that around 200 Assam Police personnel, led by an IGP, forcibly crossed the post manned by CRPF personnel, and overran a duty post manned by the Mizoram Police personnel. The Mizoram Government "strongly condemns the unjustified act of the Government of Assam in this intrusion and aggression into the territory of Mizoram", it said. Lalchamliana had also alleged that crops of Mizo farmers had been destroyed at Buarcheap in Kolasib by the Assam Police earlier this month and demanded compensation.

Assam shares borders with six other northeastern states and has boundary disputes with four - Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya besides Mizoram. Following clashes, Central para-military forces had been deployed on the borders.

RAHUL TOOK A SWIPE AT AMIT SHAH

"Heartfelt condolences to the families of those who've been killed. I hope the injured recover soon. HM has failed the country yet again by sowing hatred and distrust into the lives of people. India is now reaping its dreadful consequences."

Mamata meets PM Modi, starts anti BJP campaign

Team Absolute | New Delhi

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for what she called a courtesy meeting. This is the first official meeting between Prime Minister and Banerjee after recent WB assembly polls. The meeting, held at Prime Minister's residence, lasted for around 45 minutes. After meeting with the Prime Minister, Banerjee said, "It was a courtesy meeting. I told the Prime Minister about need of more vaccines and medicines in the state." In a bid to unite the Opposition against the BJP, Banerjee will meet several leaders on Wednesday, including Sonia Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal and Sharad Pawar. Speaking to the media Banerjee said, "Opposition unity will take shape on its own," making it obvious that she will leave no stone unturned to build a political front against the BJP. When asked if she will lead such a consortium of Opposition parties, Banerjee said, "India will lead and we shall follow."



CENTRE SEEKS DATA FROM STATES ON DEATHS DUE TO LACK OF OXYGEN



New Delhi: The Centre has asked states to provide data on deaths due to lack of oxygen during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Source said that the Central government had written to the states and Union Territories, seeking statistics of such deaths, and will, after compilation of the data, present it in the Parliament. The opposition has been continuously attacking the government after it told the Parliament on July 20 that states have not reported any death due to oxygen during the second wave.

IMF cuts India growth to 9.5% from 12.5%

India's growth rate is expected by the IMF to moderate next year to 8.5 per cent, an increase of 1.6 per cent from the April projection, and continue to be the fastest growing economy.

ARUL LOUIS | UNITED NATIONS | Agencies

The Delta variant-spurred Covid-19 second wave has shaved off 3 per cent from the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) previous projection for fiscal year 2021-22, pegging it now at 9.5 per cent, but the country still remains the world's fastest-growing large economy. The IMF's World Economic Outlook Update (WEOU) on Tuesday made the cuts to the projection of 12.5 per cent made in April, and the January projection of 11 per cent. The IMF stressed the importance of vaccinations in the economic recovery from the pandemic and noted that countries like India that lagged in the rate of vaccinations would suffer if more infectious variants developed. Despite the cut, India is projected to remain the fastest-growing large



economy, followed by China with a gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 8.1 per cent - 0.3 per cent less than the projection made in April. The US and the UK come next with growth projections of 7 per cent each - an increase of 0.6 per cent since April for the US and 1.7 per cent for the UK. "Growth prospects in India have been downgraded following the severe second Covid wave during March-May and expected slow recovery in confidence from that setback."

SONA MOHAPATRA IN TIMES SQUARE BILLBOARD



New Delhi: Artist and producer Sona Mohapatra made her debut appearance on the iconic Times Square billboard in New York on Monday. She is one of the first independent musicians to be given this place as a pop-culture milestone. Sona appeared on Times Square billboard as part of the Spotify 'EQUAL' global campaign leading the Indian leg. Her single track 'Aise Na They' is being featured on the 'EQUAL' playlist for the entire month.

Senior journalists move SC for probe into snooping scandal



Team Absolute | New Delhi Veteran journalists N. Ram and Sashi Kumar have moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction for an independent probe by its sitting or retired judge into the alleged Pegasus snooping scandal. The plea said mass surveillance using a military-grade spyware abridges several fundamental rights and appears to represent an attempt to infiltrate, attack, and destabilise independent institutions, which are critical pillars of the country's democratic set-up. The petitioners sought direction should be issued to the Centre to disclose if any of its agencies have obtained license for Pegasus spyware or used it either directly or indirectly, to conduct surveillance as alleged. Meanwhile, Amid logjam in Parliament over the snooping row and farmers protests, seven opposition parties on Tuesday wrote to the President of India Ram Nath Kovind to intervene. These parties want the President should direct the government to take up Pegasus issue and farm laws for discussion.



Schemes for Covid orphans shouldn't remain only on paper: SC



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed state governments and Union Territories to file status reports providing details on the number of children who have become orphans in wake of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, as it emphasised that schemes meant for orphans should not remain on paper only.

A bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Aniruddha Bose emphasised that "there is a need to ensure the schemes meant for the orphans reach the real beneficiaries and not

just remain on paper".

It directed all District Magistrates to issue necessary directions to district child protection officers to identify orphans, and they could seek assistance from police, civil society organisations, gram panchayats, and ASHA network.

The bench reiterated its direction that state governments should ensure the orphans were permitted to continue in the same schools for the academic year. The top court was hearing a suo motu case seeking identification of children orphaned due to the pandemic or otherwise, and providing them immediate relief.

MADE IN INDIA SPUTNIK V TO BE AVAILABLE IN SEP-OCT: DR REDDY'S

Hyderabad: Drug maker Dr Reddy's Laboratories said on Tuesday that the locally-manufactured Covid-19 Sputnik V vaccine is expected to be available in the September-October period.

"The local manufacturers of Sputnik V vaccine are currently in the process of technology absorption and scale up, and we expect that the vaccine will be available from September-October period," the pharma firm's CEO, Branded Markets (India & Emerging Markets), M.V. Ramana, said. He told reporters that due to the sudden spike of Covid-19 cases in Russia, the arrival of Sputnik V doses are getting delayed, and the company expects the situation to ease by August-end. Dr Reddy's soft-launched the vaccine on May 14 after receiving Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) in April. So far, the vaccine has been launched in about 80 cities and towns across India and over 2.5 lakh people have been administered the jab. It expects to ramp up vaccination from August onwards after receiving balance doses for the second jab. The Hyderabad-based drug maker, which has tied up with Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) for Sputnik V in India, is in discussions for ramping up supplies.

EX-CBI SPECIAL DIRECTOR RAKESH ASTHANA APPOINTED DELHI POLICE CHIEF

New Delhi: The Centre on Tuesday appointed former Special Director of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Rakesh Asthana, as the new Commissioner of Delhi Police.



The Ministry of Home Affairs said in an order, "Consequent upon the appointment of Rakesh Adthana, IPS, (GJ:84) Director General, BSF, as Commissioner of Police, Delhi, the competent authority has approved that S.S. Deswal, IPS (Hy:84), Director General of ITBP, shall hold the additional charge of post of DF, BSF, vice Asthana, till the appointment and joining of the regular incumbent or until further orders, whichever is earlier."

The order further stated that accordingly, it is requested to relieve Asthana immediately to enable him to join as Commissioner of Police, Delhi. Asthana will be in charge of Delhi Police for a period of one year, till July 31, 2022. His date of retirement was July 31, which has been extended by one year "as a special case in public interest".

Asthana, a 1984 batch IPS officer of Gujarat cadre, was holding the posts of Director General of Border Security Force (BSF) and chief of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

Politics heats up in Chhattisgarh Congress as Singh Deo to boycott House

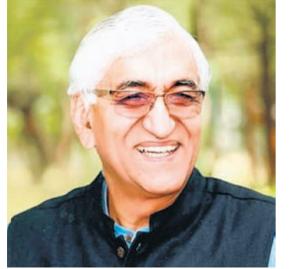
Team Absolute | Raipur

Saying "it is too much", a disgruntled Chhattisgarh Health Minister T.S. Singh Deo on Tuesday walked out of the Assembly after the opposition created an uproar demanding a House panel probe into a Congress MLA's charge that the Minister was behind an attack on him. Singh Deo, who has been lobbying hard for months to replace Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, said this on the second day of the Monsoon Session and walked out of the House. He said he will keep away from the Assembly proceedings until the government cleared the air regarding the allegation against him by a senior tribal legislator of his party.

During Zero Hour, Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu read out a statement about some youths attacking a vehicle in Ramanujganj Congress MLA Brihaspati Singh's convoy at Ambikapur town on Saturday.

Leader of Opposition Dharamlal Kaushik called it a 'serious matter' as a ruling party MLA had alleged a threat to his life at the hands of a senior Cabinet minister.

The Speaker denied receiving any communication from the legislator. The Opposition asked the Speaker to take cognizance now that it has come to his notice. Amid the chaos, Singh Deo stood up and declared: "Now, it is too much. I am also a human being and everyone knows my character and the background of my parents. I



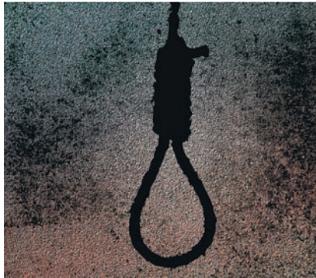
do not think it is rational to continue in this august House until the government clears the air on the allegations made against me. "With the opposition still creating noisy disturbances, the House was adjourned for 10 minutes. When the House resumed, the opposition continued to seek a House panel probe. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel tabled the supplementary appropriation bill amid the chaos while opposition members reached the well of the House. Later, the Speaker adjourned the House for the day. On Monday evening, AICC General Secretary P.L. Punia cancelled his return to Delhi. He then met the legislator and the Minister in a bid to work out a truce. Three youths attacked the vehicle in the convoy of Brihaspati Singh after their vehicle was overtaken by the MLA's vehicles at Ambikapur. One of them turned out to be a relative of Singh Deo. Police have registered a case and all the three have been arrested.

MOTHER BEATEN BY POLICE IN UP, SON COMMITS SUICIDE; 10 COPS SHIFTED

Baghpat | Agencies

Ten policemen in Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat have been relieved of their duties after a 22-year-old man - the son of a local RSS leader -- allegedly ended his life by hanging when his mother was roughed up and their house ransacked by police, following a brawl at a Covid vaccination camp in the district, officials said on Tuesday. Superintendent of Police, Baghpat, Abhishek Singh said 10 policemen of Binauli police station have been relieved of their duties and attached to police lines. Akshay, a son of a local RSS leader, had taken his mother to a vaccination centre, set up by the Health Department in a primary school in Ranchhad village, to get her vaccinated against Covid on Monday. He wanted to get her the jab first instead of standing in queue, and cited her age as the reason. This led to an altercation with police and one of the policemen allegedly slapped Akshay and got into a scuffle.

Later, policemen raided the family's house and broke chairs and a window of the car and also vandalised a tractor, the family claimed.



When the women of the house protested, they were insulted. Akshay's mother Madhu, her sister-in-law Kamlesh and Dharamveer Singh of the village were taken into custody and brought to the police station. A case was also filed against Akshay. Upset over this, Akshay allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself, the family said. After the news of the suicide reached the villagers, they held a demonstration demanding that a case be lodged against policemen.

Very heavy rains batter Delhi-NCR, northwest India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi-NCR and northwest India, including the western Himalayan states, received very heavy to extremely heavy rainfall on Tuesday and the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a day more of heavy rainfall on this region.

The current spell of widespread rainfall activity with isolated heavy to very heavy falls is very likely over Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana and west Uttar Pradesh till Wednesday and will see a reduction thereafter, the IMD said in a release here.

Meanwhile, in Delhi, IMD data showed that for 24 hours ended till 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday, Delhi Sadarjung had received 100 mm rainfall, Palam received 68 mm, Lodi Road had received 86.8 mm,



Aya Nagar 69.8 mm and the Delhi Ridge received 38.2 mm rainfall. From 8.30 a.m. till 11.30 a.m., Aya Nagar received substantial rainfall of 23.3 mm.

The all-time high for Delhi Sadarjung has been 632.2 mm rainfall in 2003. In recent years, it witnessed cumulative rainfall of 340.5 mm in 2013 and on Tuesday, the cumulative total

went reached 380.9 mm, as per the IMD data.

The IMD also said that fairly widespread to widespread rainfall with isolated heavy to very heavy falls likely over Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Bihar till July 30 and over east Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh between July 29 and 31.

sachin Pilot rushes to Delhi ahead of Maken's meeting with Congress MLAs

Jaipur | Agencies

Rajasthan's former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot on Tuesday went to Delhi, a day before the scheduled meeting of Congress' state in charge Ajay Maken with ruling party MLAs. In Delhi, Pilot had around an hour-long meeting with Maken, and sources said the state's political situation was discussed at length.

According to informed sources, Pilot and other leaders discussed a road map which has been prepared for Rajasthan after discussing the matter with Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. Apart from this, the names of MLAs to be included in the cabinet were also discussed, even though those from the Pilot camp tipped for ministerial berths are yet not known. On Wednesday and Thursday, Maken shall be taking one-on-one feedback with all Congress MLAs to evaluate the performance of present ministers which will further pave the way for cabinet expansion and reshuffle as well.



Retain crescent shape of Ganga: Scientist tells Modi

Team Absolute | Varanasi

Professor U.K. Choudhary, a well-known river engineer and former professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University (IIT-BHU), has sent a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to help in maintaining "the crescent shape of Ganga river in Varanasi".

Choudhary said that the ornamental crescent shape of the Ganga is the unique morphology of the river, and this is the path of least resistance of friction, form and pressure drag forces of the soil in Varanasi.

"This is the anatomy which defines the development of centrifugal and centripetal forces in upper and bottom layers of flows, responsible for generation of secondary current and transportation of fine clay and pollutant particles towards the concave bank (city side bank) and that of sand on the convex bank (sand beside bank), respectively," he explained.

He further said that the Ganga water longitudinally runs, circulating and vibrating on the cross section. Thus, the sustainability in the crescent shape of the Ganga at Varanasi is only due to the Assi and Varuna, the tributaries of the Ganga.

As the Assi has been shifting course, the Ganga left the Assi Ghat forever.

The Varuna (responsible for filling the erosion pockets) and Assi (responsible for keeping the sediment load in suspension) are needed for the protection and con-



servation of boundary conditions for the crescent shape. This, conceptually, must be realized.

"The Assi river needs to be returned to its original position at Assi Ghat in the form of a river not of a nullah," he pointed out.

Regarding the construction of the spur at Lalita Ghat and development of the channel in sand bed to facilitate the cargo/ship, he said that the massive work of the spur at Lalita Ghat is with different solid materials arranged in different forms not able to create the resonance with Ganga.

As such, the anatomy and morphology of the Ganga has been

permanently changed. The dynamics of the region in turbulence, responsible for carrying the sediment will be damped out. This will cause more sedimentation. Thus, the Ganga will leave the Ghat in the upstream and sedimentation and pollutants logging are bound to take place in the downstream of Lalita Ghat, he stated.

In this way, the crescent shape of the Ganga will slowly change. And the pollutants logging will be very acute. The wall created along the Ghats will restrict the ground water movement and the water logging problem in the city will increase.

Choudhary also questioned the efficiency of the sewage treatment plants (STPs), saying that an STP is capable of removing the organic pollutant load maximum up to 50 per cent only at the cost of several fold enhancement of microbiological load. And it is causing the pollution of all five constituents of nature.

"Investment of several crores of rupees under Namami Gange programme is just like a face-washing work of the diseased Ganga. This investment should have been made for the treatment of the base level diseases of the Ganga," said Choudhary in his letter.

BJP MPS BOYCOTT PARLIAMENTARY PANEL MEET HEADED BY THAROOR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Bharatiya Janata Party MPs on Tuesday boycotted the meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on information and technology chaired by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, accusing him of arbitrary behaviour. The BJP MPs alleged that Tharoor tried to push through his own agenda in the meeting. They said the agenda should be set with the consent of the committee members. BJP MPs also accused Tharoor of breaching secrecy, saying that he makes the agenda public without the knowledge of the members.

The BJP MPs led by Nishikant Dubey boycotted the IT Parliamentary Standing Committee meeting on Tuesday. They said



that they will complain against Tharoor to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. Dubey told the media that the agenda of the meeting should be given to the members in advance, but was not given and the meeting was held at a time when both the Houses are in session.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology has a total of 32 members headed by Tharoor. BJP's Nishikant Dubey, Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, Syed Zafar Islam, Tejasvi Surya, Parvash Verma, Locket Chatterjee among others boycotted the meeting. Shashi Tharoor had called the meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on IT to discuss Cinematography Amendment Bill, 2021, which is to be tabled in the Lok Sabha.

KISAN SANSAD DEMANDS REPEAL OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES AMENDMENT ACT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After two days of debate, the Kisan Sansad on Tuesday reiterated its demand that the Essential Commodities Amendment Act 2020 should be immediately repealed. The other two resolutions passed were that the state governments, in consultation with farmer unions, should strengthen the marketing, transportation, storage facilities, and food processing for crops, and bring improvements in food delivery system to ensure basic food and nutrition security to all people, while the Central government should frame a policy to ensure establishment of such basic facilities and infrastructure that will ensure that farmers and their families, not corporate and MNCs,



earn from the food production, storage, processing and marketing, a statement from the Kisan Sansad said. The farmers deliberated and agreed that the provisions of the Essential Commodities Amendment Act 2020 are designed to favour agribusiness companies and big traders at the expense of common consumers and farmers, and the dismantling of existing regulation and

oversight mechanisms will lead to domination of agricultural markets by big corporate and global food processing and marketing companies. "The Act removes the power of the government to prevent hoarding and black-marketing of foodstuffs by big companies and traders, and hence should be termed the 'Freedom to Hoard and Black-market Foodstuffs' Act," the statement said.



MAHARASHTRA FLOODS:

DEATH TOLL CLIMBS TO 207, HIGHEST IN RAIGAD WITH 95

According to the state government's report, Raigad has recorded the highest death toll with 95 deaths so far followed by 45 in Satara and 35 in Ratnagiri. While 51 people have sustained injuries, 11 people were reported missing till Tuesday morning.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The toll in the Maharashtra flood climbed to 207 with 15 more deaths recorded on Tuesday morning.

Maharashtra governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari will be on a day's visit to the flood-affected areas of the Raigad and Ratnagiri districts today. The Governor will be visiting the Taliye village and Chiplun during his visit. According to the state government's report, Raigad has recorded the highest death toll with 95 deaths so far followed by 45 in Satara and 35 in Ratnagiri.

The government said that the rescue teams have evacuated 3,75,178 people so far with the highest number of 2,06,619 rescued from Sangli fol-



lowed by 1,50,365 from Kolhapur. In all, 1028 villages have been affected in the state due to the heavy rains since July 22. At present, 18 rescue teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and three teams of the armed forces have been deployed. Besides, 313 animal deaths have been reported so far in the affected districts and 28,787 poultry deaths in the Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara and Sindhudurg districts. On Monday, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray held a meeting to review the flood situation and assess the damages caused in the flood-

affected districts in the state during which he instructed the administration to restore the electricity and water supply immediately and carry out the road repair works on war-footing in the affected districts.

Thackeray also said that a flood warning system should be set up in Konkan in three months and to avoid the repeat of such natural disasters, district-wise proposals should be prepared for the construction of the flood protection walls for the localities or small pockets in the villages.

According to the government offi-

cial, in all, the power supply of 9.59 lakh consumers have been affected of which the electricity of 6.50 lakh consumers has been restored so far. Besides, the 14,737 transformers have been damaged of which 9500 have been repaired so far.

Besides, the water supply schemes in the flood-hit 746 villages have been damaged in various parts of the state. The 290 roads need immediate repairs and the traffic has been stopped on the 469 roads. Around 800 small and large bridges have been submerged, said an official.

Pawar moots construction of flyovers on Mumbai-Bengaluru highway

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who was in Kolhapur to review the flood situation in the district which witnessed heavy rains last week, also called for strict action against encroachments on natural water bodies flowing into the Panchganga river.



Team Absolute | Kolhapur

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Tuesday said he will speak to Union minister Nitin Gadkari about the possibility of building flyovers on the Mumbai-Bengaluru national highway stretch passing through Kolhapur for uninterrupted vehicular movement during flooding.

Pawar, who was in Kolhapur to review the flood situation in the district which witnessed heavy rains last week, also called for strict action against encroachments on natural water bodies flowing into the Panchganga river.

The Mumbai-Bengaluru national highway was reopened for vehicular traffic near Kolhapur on Monday after remaining shut for four days due to water-logging.

The highway stretch near the western Maharashtra district was closed for traffic on Thursday due to which around 2,000 Karnataka-bound vehicles, including trucks and small cars, remained stranded.

Pawar said he would talk to Union Transport Minister Gadkari about the possibility of building flyovers on stretches of the Mumbai-Bengaluru highway near Kolhapur where flooding takes place.

"I will talk to Gadkari saheb. The national highway should always be open for vehicular traffic. I will talk to Gadkari saheb about the

possibility of building flyovers at different stretches in the district so that vehicular traffic on the (Mumbai) Pune-Bengaluru highway is not interrupted in case of flooding," he said. Pawar also said a lot of people have blamed constructions and encroachments on nullahs (drains) and drains for flooding in Kolhapur city and elsewhere in the district.

"I have given instructions to the Kolhapur civic and district administration to take stringent action against such encroachments and remove them from the natural course of the water bodies. If officials show laxity in taking action against such structures, action will be taken against them also," the NCP leader said.

He also said generally flooding in Sangli and Kolhapur is attributed to the Almatti dam in neighbouring Karnataka. "However, a committee formed during the previous (BJP-led) state government concluded that flooding was not taking place due to the Almatti dam," Pawar said. He further said the state government is planning to form an expert committee that will suggest long-term measures to deal with and minimise the danger of landslides. He also said in view of certain orders from courts and environment department, sand mining auctions did not take place in Kolhapur. "The possibility of increase in sand and silt on the Panchganga river bed in Kolhapur can be checked. We can check if we can lift the silt and sand and increase the flowing capacity of the river," he said.

Maharashtra, Telangana zoos to exchange two lions Sena slams political tourism as BJP leaders visit flood-hit areas of Maharashtra

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Telangana and Maharashtra Forest Departments on Monday agreed to exchange two lions between the Nagpur Zoo and the Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad.

Two lions of similar breed will be exchanged between the zoos of the two states, it was agreed during a meeting Maharashtra's Principal Chief Conservator of Forests GS Sai Prakash had here with his Telangana counterpart R Shobha and other officials.

The forest officials also discussed movement of tigers

across inter-state borders, evacuation of human settlements in the tiger reserves, and setting up of checkpoints to curb smuggling.

The officials also discussed the measures taken up in both the states for the protection of vultures. Sai Prakash praised the Telangana Forest Department for its effective works towards forest conservation along with greenery programme 'Harithaharam.'

The official from Maharashtra wanted to know about success rate of Harithaharam saplings and its conservation with mutual tie-ups with Panchayat Raj

and implementation/amendments under municipal acts and rules. Targets and of greenery goals and activities undertaken for success of Harithaharam were explained by PCCF, Social Forestry, RM Dobriyal through a power point presentation. Sai Prakash said they were keen to know the guidelines drafted by Municipal and Panchayat Raj Departments and amendments brought to ensure 85 per cent survival rate of planted saplings. Responding to this, Shobha explained the steps taken by the government for the success of Harithaharam in detail.

Shiv Sena on Tuesday said that "political tourism" should not hamper relief work in flood, and landslide-hit regions of Maharashtra

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena on Tuesday said that "political tourism" should not hamper relief work in flood-, and landslide-hit regions of Maharashtra. This comes amid visits of Opposition leaders to flood and landslide hit areas and now, governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari is set to visit Chiplun and Taliye along with BJP leader Ashish Shelar.

An editorial in Sena mouthpiece Saamana on Tuesday added that such tourism should stop to expedite relief

and rehabilitation work. Sena leader Sanjay Raut said Opposition must not visit such spots and pressure the administration. "Globally, wherever such a disaster occurs, there should not be any hindrance to the relief work. In Maharashtra when such incidents happen, allegations, counter-allegations, attack on administration, political tours should be stopped, as far as possible... This is not a battle for credit, and if somebody thinks it is, then they are devoid of humanity... politicians should exercise restraint during such times as their visit hinders relief work," said Raut. The editorial also stated that relief and rehabilitation work can be expedited if such political visits stop. While chief minister Uddhav Thackeray was sitting in the state secretariat and was instructing the administration, Pravin Darekar,

Opposition Leader in the Legislative Council and former minister Girish Mahajan attempted to reach Mahad but were stuck due to heavy rains and had to be rescued through boats by authorities, it said.

"After CM, Union minister Narayan Rane and Opposition leader in Assembly Devendra Fadnis reached the Taliye village. Now, the Maharashtra governor is also going there. The relief work is underway there. While the government authorities are involved in the relief work, such tourism is creating a lot of chaos," it said. Referring to Fadnis's statement that victims will get the required help from the Centre, the editorial asked, "Should a former chief minister say that the Centre will help the flood victims? The Union government is supreme for the states and there is no reason to have a dif-

ferent opinion on it. But his stand that they do not recognise the state's elected government is not in the interest of the state. The state government has not made any complaints against the Centre. Despite this, how appropriate is it for the Opposition to take the stand that they recognise only the Union government?" asked the editorial.

Speaking to reporters on the issue, Raut added, "The state government is capable enough, but the Union government also has its responsibility towards the states. The state and Centre are coordinating; the CM is personally speaking to the Centre. We are confident that the Centre will provide a [relief] package. And if it is less, then Leader of Opposition is there, we have Union ministers from Maharashtra, they will take up the issue of relief package."

BNHS to conduct study on migratory birds at wetlands in Maharashtra

The Mangrove Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Monday with BNHS for the five-year study costing Rs 2.77 crore. The studies will take place at Nandur-Madhmeshwar Sanctuary, Gangapur Dam, Jayakwadi Bird Sanctuary, Hatnur Dam, Ujjani Reservoir and Visapur Dam.



Monday with BNHS. The project will cost Rs 2.77 crore and is an extension of already ongoing research by the BNHS, under the banner of

'Elucidating the status of migratory waterbirds in ornithologically important wetlands of Maharashtra; Central Asian Flyway perspective.' Wetlands

are ecologically important as they stabilise the coastline, control erosion and provide a habitat conducive for plant and animal species. However, due to several development activities and agriculture across the state, these areas are under constant threat.

All six sites are part of the Central Asian Flyway (CAF), one of the nine migratory flyways identified under the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS). It covers migratory bird routes across 30 countries with around 80 per cent of routes passing through India. "Migratory birds coming to Maharashtra mainly use the CAF which is one of the major migratory routes for birds coming to the Indian Subcontinent from Central Asia and this study will help in understanding the population dynamics, movement and dispersal patterns, and threats to various migratory birds using the CAF," the Mangrove Foundation said in a statement Monday.

Trains on Central Railway, Konkan Railway back on track

Heavy rain had caused extensive damages in many areas, including the Karjat-Khopoli section; travellers upset over refunds due to cancellations

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Days after rail traffic was disrupted on Central Railway, particularly the Karjat-Khopoli section, and the Konkan Railway due to heavy rain, services have resumed on both the lines.

Shivaji Sutar, CR's public relations officer, said the Karjat area received 1,418.84 mm rain that battered the Bhor ghat two days ago resulting in extensive damages. "There were breaches at four locations for a total length of 150 metres and at seven locations ballasts washed away resulting in suspension of services on this section. Six overhead wire poles with foundations were damaged. Two digital circuits and four-point machines were also damaged," he said.

CR engaged over 300 workers to restore the line and by 3.30 pm on Sunday, the

track was declared fit and a trial run was conducted. After clearing the machinery from the section, traffic resumed on the Khopoli route on Monday morning, Sutar said.

Services on the Konkan Railway were also restored late last week and trains are now plying regularly. Passengers, however, complained of issues over ticket refunds as a number of trains were cancelled or short-terminated. Passenger Sunil R Agarwal said, "Passengers are facing problems over the refund of full fare due to abrupt cancellation of trains. The railways updated about the restoration of services promptly, but not about cancellation." He added, "Passengers with tickets usually get messages on the phone and many seem to have been left out, because of which many could neither travel nor cancel their tickets."

Another traveller, Yogesh Sapkal, said he had booked train tickets both ways for Latur. "Since the train from Mumbai had been cancelled, I could not reach there and the ticket was automatically refunded full fare. But I had to cancel the return ticket and charges were deducted. It is an undue loss for the passengers," he said.

Portion of Beed dam razed amid opposition from locals

The reservoir is located at Aranwadi village in Dharur tehsil of Beed and residents of some adjoining villages had been protesting against its dismantling as they were of the view that such a move would lead to wastage of the dam's water, which was used for irrigation and drinking purposes



Aranwadi resident Sunil Shingare, who is also the chairman of Dharur Agriculture Produce Market Committee, said that locals had been demanding a dam in the area for last 15 years and the construction of this reservoir was completed recently. "It got filled up completely in this month and would have solved the problem of water scarcity in Aranwadi, Choramba, Thete Gavhan, Dhagewadi and Pahadi Pargaon villages located in the drought-prone area," he said. He said when they got to know that the authorities were planning to bring down a portion of the reservoir, locals agitated till late night on July 24. A 500-metre-long road had been constructed

in the dam's catchment area, but its quality was not up to the mark. If the water level of the dam was not decreased, the authorities feared the road would get washed away. Hence, to save the bad road, our water has been wasted (by razing a portion of the dam)," Shingare alleged. Balaji Chavan, a resident of neighbouring Choramba village, said a national highway connecting Khamgaon and Pandharpur town passes through the place. "The road could not have faced the pressure of water, hence the dam was dismantled. People in the area are hardly able to get drinking water in the summer month of May and with this razing of a portion of the dam, we will face scarcity in future," he claimed. When contacted, the minor irrigation department's executive engineer Umesh Wankhede said the dam is currently filled up to 87 per cent of its total storage capacity following rains in the last fortnight, and the decision to dismantle a portion of it was taken considering the safety of the reservoir and nearby places.

"The Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) also wrote us about the ongoing road work and the high water level could have damaged it. There is no gate system (in the dam), so we had to dismantle a portion of its wall. By next monsoon, we shall reconstruct it," the official said. Dharur tehsildar (revenue officer) Vandana Shedolkar said they have submitted a report over the issue to the district collector.

Pegasus snoop-gate: Maha Cong urges Thackeray to order probe

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra Congress on Tuesday called upon Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to order a judicial enquiry - on the lines of West Bengal - into the alleged snoop-gate scandal.

State Congress president Nana Patole and party MP from Chandrapur Suresh alias Balubhai Dhanorkar made the identical demand, seeking a judicial commission comprising retired judges to investigate the issue and unravel the truth behind the spying scandal. In a statement, Patole said it has come to light in the global media that important political leaders, lawyers, journalists, social activists and others were being monitored through

phone hacking by the Pegasus spyware. "Though the central government has yet to order a probe, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has constituted a committee to delve into the issue. The Maharashtra government should also form a similar committee to go into the matter," Patole. Penning a letter to Thackeray, Dhanorkar said that there have been media reports that the then CM Devendra Fadnis had sent some officials to Israel. "The Bharatiya Janata Party has said that it was an agriculture study tour. But, prominent lawyer Sushil Uke had written to Nagpur Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar on May 23, 2021 whether any surveillance carried out by the BJP leaders, needs to be probed," said.



Necessary changes will be made in the format of the scheme

NOW LADLI LAXMI YOJANA WILL MAKE DAUGHTERS SELF-SUFFICIENT: CM

CM held virtual dialogue with Ladlis from Mantralaya

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that all possible assistance will be provided to the girls connected with Ladli Laxmi Yojana from college studies to getting jobs. Chouhan said that I promise that this Mama of Ladli Laxmis will stand with them at every turn of life. Necessary arrangements will be made to make the daughters self-sufficient under the Ladli Laxmi Yojana, which was started to eradicate the discrimination existing in the society about son and daughter.

Chouhan distributed scholarship amount from Mantralaya to the beneficiary girls of the scheme and also interacted with them. Chief Minister gave scholarships amounting to Rs. 27 crore 90 lakh to 95 thousand 434 girls. Along with this, Ladli certificates were also distributed to 69 thousand 337 new girls.

Chouhan said that there was a time when people wished for a son. The son was considered the support of old age and the daughter as a burden. To change this thinking and to develop the spirit of considering the daughter as a boon, Ladli Laxmi Yojana was started. The idea was that as soon as a



28 crore scholarship distributed to more than 95 thousand girls
Ladli certificate issued to over 69 thousand girls

daughter is born, she should be guaranteed to have a lakh rupees and this scheme should be such that it should also be associated with education so that parents make special efforts to educate their daughters. While encouraging the daughters, Chief Minister asked them to set goals in life. Chouhan also urged the parents to give a lot of love and affection to their daughters and motivate daughters to make their own decisions. In his interaction with the daughters,

Chief Minister while motivating them said that I want to see the daughters becoming collectors, doctors, engineers. He said that discipline is the basis of success. You set your goal, make a roadmap and set a timetable daily and follow it. I make my timetable every day even today and complete the work of the whole day according to it.

Chouhan told Sehore's Muskan Raikwar that you always keep smiling. When Muskan expressed her desire to become a doctor,

Chouhan said that you should clear NEET. Keep faith and have courage, you will definitely reach the destination.

Anku Mishra of Rewa while expressing gratitude to Chief Minister for helping with Ladli Laxmi Yojana said that it is thanks to Mama who has run such a scheme for us. Anku's father is a farmer and she wants to become a police officer. Chouhan suggested Anku to focus on PT, sports and exercise from now on. Chouhan told Saira Khan of Betul that you clear NEET, I will get you MBBS done. Saira's father is a labour, she is in 12th standard and wants to become a doctor. Chief Minister told Saira that the 12th board exam is the basis of life ahead. Take it seriously. Principal Secretary Women and Child Development Ashok Shah informed that girls born on or after January 1, 2006 are the beneficiaries of the scheme implemented from April 1, 2007 in the state. So far 39 lakh 50 thousand girls have been benefitted. Till the last academic year, scholarships worth Rs 136 crore were distributed to 5 lakh 91 thousand 203 girls who took admission in class 6th, 9th, 11th and 12th. In the year 2020-21, 11 lakh 65 thousand NSCs were deposited in the post office by running a campaign by the department.

Cabinet meeting chaired by CM

Total 419 posts sanctioned for health services

Recruitment to the sanctioned posts will be done in a phased manner over the next three years.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

In a meeting of the Cabinet held at Mantralaya on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, approval was given to sanction 419 posts for Directorate Health Services under Public Health and Family Welfare Department. Recruitment to the sanctioned posts will be done in a phased manner over the next three years.

In this, one post each of Joint Director Dental Health,

Deputy Director Dental Health and 7 posts of Deputy Director Dental Health at divisional office level and 34 posts of Dental Specialist in District Hospitals in urban area, 46 posts of Dentist, thus total of 89 posts will be created. 330 posts of dentists will be created in 330 community health centres in rural areas.

The cabinet gave its approval to extend the country liquor supply system for the year 2020-21, implemented till July 31, 2021 by the Commercial Tax Department till March 31, 2022.

CM chairs 70th meeting of Narmada Control Board

Water should reach the last farmer's field in all Narmada Valley projects: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that it should be ensured that water reaches the last farmer's field in all the projects being constructed under Narmada Valley Development. For this, ministers and officers must visit their areas. Procurement of cent percent profit for the investment being made for Narmada Valley development must be ensured. Chouhan said that the problems being faced by the farmers in the fields where water is going through pipes should also be surveyed. If farmers have any problem then it should be solved immediately. Chief Minister said that the supply of water will definitely increase the production of farmers. A sense of responsibility must be developed in farmers to deposit water and electricity charges. This responsibility should be handed over to the committees of farmers. Chief Minister Chouhan was addressing the



70th meeting of Narmada Control Board organized in Mantralaya on Tuesday.

Public Works Minister Gopal Bhargava, Farmers' Welfare and Agriculture Development Minister Kamal Patel, Water Resources Minister Tulsi Silavat, Finance Minister Jagdish Deora, Revenue and Transport Minister Govind Singh Rajput, Minister of State for Narmada Valley Development Bharat Singh Kushwaha, Chairman Narmada Valley Development Authority and Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains, Vice President Narmada Valley Development and Additional Chief Secretary ICP Kesari were present in the meeting. Revised administrative approval was

granted to Shaheed Bhima Nayak Sagar (Lower Gai) project. Along with this, approval was given for extension of time in the work of construction of the right bank main canal of Bargi Diversion Project from 104 kms to 129 kms including Slimnabad Tunnel. The time extension of the contract for the construction work of Jawar Micro Irrigation Project was also approved in the meeting. In the meeting of the Control Board, approval was also given for extension of time in the contract of construction work of group micro irrigation projects of Killaud, Pamakhedhi, Bhurlai, Kodwar and Punasa Extension. Along with this, approval was given to increase the irrigated area of ISP Kalisindh Lift Micro Irrigation Project. Approval was granted to transfer the Omkareshwar Guest house of Narmada Valley Development Authority alongwith its infrastructure for Shankar Museum, Statue of Oneness and International Vedanta Sansthan, being built in Omkareshwar.

Covid norms go for toss, crowd at Mahakaleshwar temple gone haywire

Thousands of devotees had gathered at Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain on Monday flouting all COVID protocols.

Team Absolute | Ujjain

With the second wave of COVID-19 that wreaked havoc across the country and a forthcoming third wave, adhering to COVID-appropriate norms was nowhere to be seen at the Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain, where over 3,000 people had gathered to offer prayers. A stampede-like situation erupted at the temple on Monday due to which several people, including women and



children, were injured. A video of the incident has been doing the rounds on social media, where several people could be seen in a chaotic situation. The frenzied crowd flouted nearly all possible COVID protocols as no sign of maintaining social distancing or even wearing masks were seen at the spot. As the number of devotees kept on increasing with time, the situation became bad to worse and security officials were seen

struggling to manage the crowd that were toppling on one another. The situation aggravated further due to the presence of VIPs, that include chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and BJP leader Uma Bharti. According to Hindu mythology, the first Monday of the Hindu month of Shravan is considered auspicious by a large number of Hindus. They visit the temples of Lord Shiva to offer their prayers. As it was the first Monday of the holy

month of Shravan, the numbers were huge. Devotees were permitted to stand in queues for darshan apart from pre-booking. However, the crowd that turned up was much larger than what we expected," the temple's assistant administrator Moolchand Joonwal said.

The rush was reportedly seen at gate number 4, at around 8:30 am. That is when a large number of people tried to enter the temple complex for darshan and while doing so, they broke the barricade at gate number 4 of the temple complex. Following this, a tumultuous situation erupted and people tried to rush inside. Some even lost their balance and fell on each other, according to Joonwal. "COVID-19 protocols cannot be followed in the kind of free-for-all we had today.

CM MAKES COURTESY CALL ON GOVERNOR



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan made a courtesy call on Governor Mangubhai Patel at Raj Bhavan on Tuesday. The Governor was welcomed by presenting a bouquet of flowers. It is noteworthy that Chief Minister Chouhan had reached Raj Bhavan on Tuesday afternoon to meet the Governor.

CM takes meeting on prevention of illicit liquor

Making and selling poisonous liquor should be kept in the category of serious crime: CM ■ Death due to spurious liquor is no less than murder. Strictest punishment should be given

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that death due to spurious liquor is no less than murder. The manufacture and sale of spurious liquor should be kept in the category of serious offense and strictest punishment should be given. Necessary amendments should be made in the law in this regard. A campaign against illegal liquor should be launched in the entire state with immediate effect. The accused in the incident in Khakrai village of Mandasari should not be spared under any circumstances. Additional Chief Secretary Home Rajesh Rajoura should investigate the entire matter and submit the report immediately.

Chief Minister Chouhan was addressing a meeting



organized in Mantralaya on Tuesday for the prevention of

illicit liquor. Home Minister Narottam Mishra, Commercial Taxes and Finance Minister Jagdish Dewda, Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains, Director General of Police Vivek Johri, Additional Chief Secretary Home Rajesh Rajoura and Principal Secretary Commercial Tax Deepali Rastogi were present in the meeting. Chief Minister Chouhan directed to prepare an action plan on the measures to control the production and trade of illicit liquor. Discussions were also held in the meeting regarding the use of State Industrial Security Force to stop the business of illicit liquor in the state. Information was sought about the action taken in relation to the incident in Khakrai village during the meeting. It was informed in the meeting that police station in-charge Pipalya Mandi, acting sub-inspector and excise sub-inspector have been suspended.

CM PLANTS SAPTAPARNI SAPLING



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a Saptaparni sapling in Smart City Park today. Chouhan plants a sapling every day in fulfillment of his resolve. Saptaparni is an ever-green medicinal tree, which has great importance in

"Substandard" Covid Test Kit May Have Worsened MP's 2nd Wave

Many people in Madhya Pradesh, whose families suffered during the second Covid wave, have blamed the faulty testing kits for their plight.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Kundan Punjabi has never had a worse time than the months of May and June this year. As the second Covid wave peaked, the Bhopal-based businessman lost five members of his family to the pandemic, including his brother.

Among other things, Punjabi pointed to a specific cause for the tragedy: "Had it not been the test results, my brother would have been alive with us. If the report came negative, what could we do? We believed he was not infected."

Earlier, in April, four members of home maker Santosh Kansana's family got infected, leaving them all in critical condition. She, too, alleged that a false negative result following a rapid antigen test (RAT) complicated things.



"We got the test done for my in-laws. My elder grand-daughter tested positive, the rest of them negative. But in a few days, the situation worsened. A CT scan confirmed that around 70 per cent of their lungs had been infected...we suffered because of the test," Kansana said. These are among the many now raising a key question: Did the Madhya Pradesh government supply substandard or faulty covid testing kits? A letter written by Dr KK Agarwal, head of Madhya Pradesh's Covid-sampling team, delves into the matter.

In his June 29 letter, addressed to the Managing Director of the Madhya

Pradesh Health Services Corporation, Dr Agarwal said that the testing kit was substandard. "On being put on a buffer, the sample gets flooded. As a result of which even (Covid) positive patients are shown as negative. Also, the kit is not registered on the ICMR portal because of which rapid test entries cannot be made," it said, seeking better quality kits. At the peak of the second wave in May and June, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's government had supplied 15 lakh RAT kits across all districts. Named Bio Credit Covid 19 AG, these kits were made by a South Korean company called Rapagin and were bought for Rs 7.18 crore, costing Rs 47.89 per unit. The purchase was made despite the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) putting the product in the non-approved category. While this deal is a confirmed one, there are indications that the same product was purchased earlier, too. The opposition Congress is now calling the whole affair "a scam."

CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO FORMER PRESIDENT KALAM

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday remembered former President AP. Abdul Kalam by paying homage to him on his death anniversary. Chouhan also garlanded the portrait of Kalam. Kalam is known as Missile Man. He was born on 15 October 1931 in Dhanushkodi Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu. He was the 11th elected President of the Republic of India. Kalam gave his services as a scientist and administrator of science for the Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for four decades. He was instrumental in India's space programme and military missile development. He played a decisive, organisational and technical role in nuclear testing.

Anna Utsav will be held in the state on August 7: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, Anna Utsav will be celebrated in the state on August 7. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the programme virtually. Food grains will be distributed from 25 thousand 435 ration shops in the state. Ration will be given in bags to 100 beneficiaries symbolically at each shop. This event will be held at the shops while following the Corona protocol.

Chouhan said that with the joining of 100 people each at all fair price shops of the state, more than 25 lakh people would join the programme. Besides, the people of the state will also be connected virtually through social and electronic media. This will be a major programme not only of the state but also of the country. A nodal officer will be made for each shop. Chouhan said this in his address before the meeting of the Council of Ministers. The meeting of the Cabinet began with the recitation of Vande-Mataram. Expressing satisfaction over the rainfall received in the state, Chief Minister said that crops have got new



lease of life due to this.

Chouhan said that 2 crore 42 lakh people have been given the first dose in the vaccination campaign in the state. In this way, the first dose has been administered to 44% of the eligible population of the state. The second dose of vaccine has also been administered to 47 lakh 30 thousand people in the state, which is 9% of the eligible population. Chouhan said that efforts are going on continuously to vaccinate 11 people in the state through a vial for ten. In month of July, 25 lakh people have been vaccinated. Maximum vaccination should be done in the month of August also. Efforts are being made for this. Chief Minister directed the ministers to continuously monitor the vaccination campaign in their districts. Chouhan said that the corona test should also continue in the state.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Impact of rainforests

An international team of scientists, including from NASA, have created a tropical rainforest vulnerability index which shows how the world's rainforests are responding to warming climate and deforestation. The index was developed by a team of scientists and conservationists who were convened by the National Geographic Society in 2019. It is based on multiple satellite observations and ground-based data from 1982 through 2018, such as Landsat and the Global Precipitation Measurement mission, covering climate conditions, land use, and forest characteristics. The index shows that the world's three major rainforest areas -- Amazon Basin in South America, Congo Basin in Africa and Asian rainforests face two main categories of threats: the warming and drying climate, and the consequences of human land use such as deforestation and fragmentation from encroaching roads, agricultural fields, and logging. It showed that these diverse ecosystems have different degrees of susceptibility to these threats. The Amazon basin, Congo basin and most Asian rainforests appear to be suffering more from changes in land use than from the changing climate. These three diverse ecosystems are home to more than half of the planet's life forms and contain more than half of all the carbon in land vegetation. They serve as a natural brake on the rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from fossil fuel burning because they "breathe in" carbon dioxide and store carbon as they grow. But in the last century, 15 to 20 per cent of rainforests have been cut down, and another 10 per cent have been degraded. Today's warmer climate, which has led to increasingly frequent and widespread forest fires, is limiting the forests' capacity to absorb carbon dioxide as they grow while also increasing the rate at which forests release carbon to the atmosphere as they decay or burn.

US-JORDAN TIES REJUVENATED

Asad Mirza

Jordan's King Abdullah II became the first Arab leader to meet US President Joe Biden at the White House on July 19. By granting him this honour, the new US administration is putting its weight behind Jordan to become the voice of the region and non-gulf Arab nations, once again.

As the Jordanian monarch for the last 22 years, King Abdullah II has been seen by American Presidents as a moderate, reliable ally in the Middle East, besides being the eyes and ears from the Arab world in Washington.

However, during the last four years that special relationship was put into cold storage, as former US President Donald Trump, favoured working with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states instead.

For instance the Trump administration didn't consult King Abdullah II on the Mideast peace plan, which originally provided for annexation of the Jordan Valley.

Reports say that in his renewed role as representative of moderate, pro-Western Arabs, Abdullah brought several messages to Biden. Impact on Jordan-Saudi relations President Biden may have little appetite for Israeli-Palestinian peace-making efforts, but he seems determined to prevent certain third parties from exploiting the regional stalemate to their advantage.

Although the US' and Biden's foreign policy priorities are heavily focused on China and Russia, the Middle East is a region that the new administration understands very well it cannot afford to ignore. Relations between Jordan and Saudi Arabia had their own ups and downs during the last four years. The Saudis were irked by the King's fierce rejection of Trump's recognition of all of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Jordan also refused to consider the President's Israeli-Palestinian peace plan.

King Abdullah II suspected that the US and Israel were favouring a Saudi role in the administration of the Muslim sites on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Jordanian officials denied reports last year in Israeli newspapers quoting Saudi diplomats as saying that Jordan was willing to grant Saudi Arabia observer status in the endowment administering the Muslim holy sites on the Temple Mount.

The Saudi interest is marked by various moves initiated by the country in recent years, though it has not officially declared its desire to wrest control of the Temple Mount from Jordan, yet.



Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud announced at the Arab Summit in Dhahran in April 2018 that he was donating \$150 million to support the Islamic holy places in Jerusalem. The donation was aimed to counter Turkish bequests. Saudi Arabia has since clashed with Jordan at various Arab forums over Jordan's exclusive control of the administration of the Jerusalem sites and is believed to have been wooing Palestinian religious dignitaries to achieve its objective. Here the risk for Saudi Arabia is that broadening the administration of the Jerusalem sites could lead to demands that the custodianship of Mecca and Medina should also be internationalised. This proposition, often put forward by Iran, sounds horrific to the Saudis.

For much of the past century, the administration of Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites has vested in a Jordanian government-controlled endowment. And Jordan views the Saudi and other interested Islamic nation's efforts as an affront, which certain observers also describe as the battle to emerge as the supreme leader of the Islamic world. The stakes in the struggle for control of Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem are high. For Riyadh's ruling Saud family, this is about bolstering its religious claim to leadership of the Muslim world. For Jordan and its Hashemite monarchs, who trace their ancestry back to the Prophet Muhammad, this is more about politics than religion. Palestinians account for more than 40 per cent of Jordan's population, thus maintaining the status quo in Jerusalem - which most Palestinians hope to be the capital of a future Palestinian state - is

key to ensuring the regime's survival. Despite his fraught relationship with the Saudi Crown Prince, the Jordanian monarch told Biden, "we have to work with MBS", the sources said. This magnanimity stems from the confidence, which King Abdullah II has in revival of his ties with the new US administration. Jordan as the regional peacemaker

King Abdullah II also discussed Iraq and Syrian affairs with Biden. It is reported that he urged Biden to back Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al Kadhimi, who will be visiting the White House this week. The King's pro-Kadhimi argument were based on the fact that he enjoys support of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, as well as Jordan, and was described as the best bet to offset Iranian militias and influence in Iraq.

King Abdullah II also urged Biden to join a task force to help stabilise Syria. The approach he advocates would bring together the US, Russia, Israel, Jordan and other nations to agree on a road map for restoring Syrian sovereignty and unity.

Reports say that Biden hasn't yet committed to the proposal, as it would mean realigning the US interest with both Russia and the Bashar-Al-Assad regime in Syria, both of which are controversial decisions to be made. US academic Curtis Ryan, a widely acclaimed Jordanian expert opines that Jordan and its partners see the new three-way alignment or axis with Iraq and Egypt as an alternative power centre in Arab politics that will help to bring non-Gulf voices back to the forefront of Arab politics. In this regard Egyptian

President Abdel Fattah-Al-Sisi's visit to Baghdad can be described as a "positive step" to limit Iranian influence there. Bruce Riedel, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution says that Abdullah has been the most energetic Arab leader by far in trying to support a stable Iraqi government. This summit in Baghdad of Iraq, Jordan and Egypt is the first time that the Sunni Arabs have ever done anything in 18 years since the fall of Saddam - that they have actually done something to not only stabilise Iraq, but to offset Iranian influence. A final major area of discussion was Jordan's relationship with the new Israeli government. King Abdullah II labelled a recent meeting he had with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett as reassuring, and said he trusts the two governments could cooperate on security and other issues. Although Jordan and Israel have a peace treaty, relations remained tense during Benjamin Netanyahu's long tenure as Prime Minister. However, this time though King Abdullah II has apparent support of Biden, but he also will have to outmanoeuvre his younger rivals like Sheikh Mohammed of the UAE and Prince MBS of Saudi Arabia to regain the regional Islamic leadership.

(Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi. He writes on Muslims, educational, international affairs, interfaith and current affairs. The views expressed are personal)

international

CHINESE FM, US DEPUTY STATE SECY DISCUSS RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT OF TIES

Beijing | Agencies

In a first face-to-face meeting, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and visiting US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman discussed "ways to set terms for responsible management" of bilateral ties.

The meeting took place in Beijing on Monday. According to a readout of the meeting issued by the US State Department, Sherman and Wang had a "frank and open discussion about a range of issues, demonstrating the importance of maintaining open lines of communication between our two countries". Although Sherman underscored that the US "welcomes the stiff competition" between the two superpowers, Washington "does not seek conflict" with Beijing, it added. According to the State Department, Sherman raised a series of concerns in private, in particular, human rights, including Beijing's anti-democratic crackdown in Hong Kong; the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang; abuses in



Tibet; and the curtailing of media access and freedom of the press. "She also spoke about our concerns about Beijing's conduct in cyberspace; across the Taiwan Strait; and in the East and South China Seas," the readout said. The Deputy Secretary also raised the cases of American and Canadian citizens detained in China or under exit bans and "reminded officials that people are not bargaining chips".

She "reiterated concerns about China's unwillingness to cooperate with the World Health Organization and

allow a second phase investigation into the Covid-19 origins".

Meanwhile, Sherman also affirmed the importance of cooperation in areas of global interest, such as the climate crisis, counter-narcotics, non-proliferation, and regional concerns including North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, and Myanmar, said the readout. On his part, Wang, who is also the State Councillor, said it requires serious consideration for the US side to make correct choices as to whether the bilateral ties will head to confrontation or improvement, reports

Xinhua news agency. Calling Sherman's visit a part of mutual contact and dialogue, he said the two sides should enhance mutual understanding, erase misunderstanding, avoid misjudgment and better manage differences via constant dialogues. The Foreign Minister also said that China's development is aimed at seeking happiness for all Chinese people, rather than challenging or replacing the US. "We take no interest in betting winnings or losses of the US side. China's development is not based on the premise of US decline."

He said issues regarding Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong have never been about "human rights" or "democracy", but about fighting against "Xinjiang independence," "Tibet independence" and "Hong Kong independence."

"We have a clear view on where China-US relations are headed, that is, to find a way for two major countries with different systems, cultures and stages of development to coexist peacefully on this planet through dialogue," he added.

Beirut | Agencies

Najib Mikati was named as Lebanon's new Prime Minister with 72 votes in parliament following months of political turmoil in the crisis-hit country.

Mikati gave a speech following his appointment on Monday, calling upon all political parties to cooperate with him on finding the right solutions to the country's crises, reports Xinhua news agency.

"The vote of confidence by MPs is necessary for my appointment but I am keen to gain the confidence of the Lebanese population, every man and woman, and the youths," Mikati said at Baabda Palace after his meeting with President Michel Aoun. Mikati said he has



Movement and Progressive Socialist Party.

However, Mikati faced opposition from the country's two main Christian parties, the Free Patriotic Movement and the Lebanese Forces. Mikati's appointment came a few days following the resignation of Saad Hariri as Prime Minister-designate for failing to form a non-partisan cabinet. The country has been without a cabinet since August 10, 2020 when caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab resigned in reaction to the Port of Beirut blasts which killed over 200 people and wounded thousands of others. Hariri was appointed as new premier on October 22, 2020 but he failed to form a new cabinet given his differences with President Aoun over distribution of ministerial shares.

Canada, Germany to lead roadmap in mobilising climate finance

In a boost for the COP Presidency's goal of getting finance flowing for climate action, Germany and Canada have agreed to take forward a delivery plan for mobilising \$100 billion a year from developed countries, which is critically needed to help others in their fight against climate change.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Climate ministers have taken a step forward towards a successful UN climate summit named COP26, as a constructive meeting in London concluded with countries, including India, coming closer on key issues such as actions to keep the 1.5-degree Celsius goal alive, adaptation finance and concluding the Paris rulebook.

At the two-day ministerial, convened by COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma to discuss critical negotiating issues and climate actions ahead of COP26, ministers from around the world sketched the outline of the Glasgow summit outcome and agreed on collaborative ways forward to reach it.

Ministers from Singapore and Norway agreed to continue consulting informally with

the ministers on Article 6, which relates to carbon markets, while Rwanda and Switzerland's ministers agreed to consult on common time frames for emissions reduction commitments, or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

In a boost for the COP Presidency's goal of getting finance flowing for climate action, Germany and Canada have agreed to take forward a delivery plan for mobilising \$100 billion a year from developed countries, which is critically needed to help others in their fight against climate change.

The countries were clear that COP26 needs to deliver actions, not just words. Many highlighted the importance of ending coal power, coal financing and fossil fuel subsidies. The ministers looked forward to Italy's G20 leaders' summit on October 30-31 as a pivotal

moment for action. Ahead of the meeting, there was a recent show of leadership from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), including the Solomon Islands, Bhutan and Ethiopia, as well as more ambitious NDCs from Paraguay, Morocco and Canada, which will help keep the critical goal of limiting global warming to 1.5-degree Celsius in sight. The ministers participating in the meeting called for all countries to deliver ambitious NDCs and long-term strategies towards net zero before COP26. Sharma welcomed the progress, but stressed that significant further work is needed, particularly on finance, adaptation and other crucial issues, with less than 100 days to go before the countries come together in November for the COP26 in Glasgow. Following the meeting, Sharma said: "The

steps we have taken over the past two days bring us closer to securing an outcome at Glasgow that people and our planet are crying out for. "However, fault lines remain on some critical issues, and there is more work to do. We have asked the ministers to lead conversations in order to bridge the divide and get us in the best possible position for COP26. Each country must now give its all to this process; lives and livelihoods depend on it, and we have no time to waste." Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, said: "There can be no neutral position when it comes to climate action. It is necessary to come to an understanding and ensure the full implementation of the Paris Agreement, which is the most comprehensive and the only reliable strategy to address climate change."

Mary Simon sworn in as Canada's 30th Governor General

Ottawa | Agencies

Mary Simon has been sworn in as Canada's 30th Governor General, becoming the first-ever indigenous person to take over the post.

Simon, an Inuk from Quebec, was recommended by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to take the role earlier this month, reports Xinhua news agency.

The swearing-in ceremony was held in the Senate on Monday where about 50 dignitaries and guests, including Trudeau and the speakers of the House of Commons and Senate, were in attendance.

In addition to official oaths and signatures overseen by senior federal officials, the event had included several cultural performances.

A prominent Inuk leader and former ambassador, Simon as Governor General will play a crucial role in constitutional matters and within minority governments when it comes to questions of con-



fidence and calling elections. She also becomes the top commander of the Canadian Armed Forces. Simon's appointment comes amid renewed focus on Canada's efforts towards reconciliation with indigenous peoples, prompted by the continuing discovery of unmarked graves on former residential school grounds across the country. Canada's indigenous leaders, particularly representatives of the Inuit community, have praised the appointment.



Ben, JLo recreate romance from 20 years ago



Los Angeles | Agencies

From loved-up snogs on yachts to sexy sunbathing, Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez, affectionately nicknamed Bennifer, are seen recreating romance from 20 years ago. The A-list couple first fell for each other on the set of film Gigli in 2002 - and now they appear to be recreating the most romantic moments from their first stab at love almost 20 years ago. Photos emerged this weekend of Ben, 48, and Jen sunbathing on a £94-million super yacht in Saint-Tropez in the south of France that were remarkably similar to scenes of them fondling each other while filming the video for her 2002 hit Jenny From The Block.

Twitter was filled with theories the couple are doing it deliberately as a gift to fans who have been rooting for them to get back together ever since their split 2004. In the video for the single, Ben was cast as his then real-life girlfriend's love interest. And he is seen patting Jennifer's famous bum in a scene that went down in music history. On Sunday, Ben was snapped doing exactly the same thing - with Jennifer even wearing a similar-looking pink bikini - during their romantic French getaway for her 52nd birthday. Photographs of the couple getting hot and heavy on a balcony also caught the eye of fans, who could not get over how similar they were to another scene in the music video.

Lady Gaga risks breaking an ankle!



Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Lady Gaga was towering above the rest as she took the streets of NYC wearing a pair of outrageously high platform boots and a sophisticated black dress on Monday. Taking footwear to the extreme, Gaga, 35, risked a tumble donning the insanely tall, lace-up stiletto Pleaser shoes, which appeared around a foot in height. While Gaga went wild with her boots, her figure-hugging black Magda Butrym dress was the definition of sophisticated and sexy. The ribbed cocktail dress showed off her hourglass figure and toned arms courtesy of its clingy fabric and thin ribbons for shoulder straps. And when she turned, the frock's wire-free bustier moved to reveal a sliver of skin under her sternum. Gaga's ensemble continued with a boxy suitcase-style bag by designer Mark Cross and big cat-eyed Dita Eyewear shades with a retro feel. Gaga's Big Apple outing comes after she announced she'll be playing a special show with pal Tony Bennett at Radio City Music Hall in honor of his 95th birthday next month.

SHAKIRA: 'I TRY TO GIVE MY KIDS NORMAL CHILDHOOD'

Los Angeles | Agencies

The "Waka waka" singer has two sons, Milan, eight, and Sasha, six, with her partner and football star Gerard Pique. "I don't make (my kids) listen to my music. I try to avoid playing my own music in my house. I try to give them as much normalcy as I can," Shakira told ET Canada, reports femalefirst.co.uk. The 44-year-old singer says she cannot deny the fact that she is a "public person". She added: "I can't deny they can't escape the reality that I'm a public person, as well as their dad. But we try to provide as much normalcy as we can, and live really as very simple people." Shakira had recently written a powerful essay about child separation to shine a light on the children who have been separated from their parents and detained at the US border. She wrote: "I am the daughter of a New Yorker who was born to Lebanese immigrants amidst the great economic depression of the 1930s, immigrants who, thanks to their entry into the US, were able to build a solid foundation for themselves and their family before they finally settled in Colombia, where I was born and grew up. "Colombia is one of the most beautiful and diverse countries in the world but rife with inequality and lack of social mobility. America, in contrast, seemed to me a place that was always held up as a paragon of equal opportunity and limitless aspirations, where anyone could succeed. "How, then, could a nation built on the shoulders of immigrants, one that purports to hold family values in such high regard, have such unimaginably cruel immigration policies? "What rationale could justify separating children from their families, with no intention of ever reuniting them, when the US has prided itself on being a beacon of hope for those who come from places where not even basic needs or safety are a guarantee?"



Issa Rae says 'I do' to Louis Diame

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Issa Rae simply stuns in a custom Vera Wang gown as she says 'I do' to Louis Diame during intimate South of France wedding. She's an award-winning actress and writer known for her comedic excellence in Insecure and The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl. Issa revealed the news on Instagram sharing a gorgeous scene from their intimate wedding. The 36-year-old producer simply stunned in a gorgeous custom made Vera Wang gown for the ceremony in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat at the Villa Ephrussi de



Rothschild. Rae's beautiful princess dress featured a corset bodice with a sweetheart neckline and layers of tulle with sparkling rhinestones throughout. Dame looked incredibly sharp wearing a crimson red D&G suit with a bow tie and black dress shoes. The pair married in a dreamy ceremony overlooking the Mediterranean Sea at the stunning villa on the French Riviera which was built in 1905. Issa and Louis are notoriously private about their relationship and only confirmed their engagement after she wore her ring on the cover of Essence in 2019.



Singer Shakira says she is trying to give her children a normal childhood and that she avoids playing her own music.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Amy Hart

Paris Hilton: I never had Botox or fillers

Los Angeles | Agencies

Socialite Paris Hilton affirmed that she hasn't felt the need to turn to the popular cosmetic injections to keep her wrinkle-free. 'I've never done an injection - no Botox, no fillers,' she said during an interview for the Telegraph newspaper's Stella magazine. She continued, 'Most of my friends have been doing that [Botox or fillers] for years, since they were in their 20s, but I'm so happy that I've not done anything.' The reasons behind was she swears by her non-invasive microcurrent machine - called a Neurotris - to naturally firm her facial muscles. Although her skin is showing no signs of aging just yet, the blonde model thinks her fashion choices have naturally matured over time because she no longer wants to look like a 'Barbie-raver' and, instead, come across as more 'elegant.'

'I'M SO HAPPY THAT I'VE NOT DONE ANYTHING'

WATCHOUT FOR LOVLINA

Boxer Lovlina Borgohain beats German opponent in 69kg to reach quarters



Tokyo | Agencies

India's Lovlina Borgohain advanced to the next round in the women's 69kg boxing competition by beating Germany's Nadine Apetz, a boxer nearly 12 years older to her, 3-2 to reach the quarterfinals at the Tokyo Olympics here on Tuesday.

Lovlina, the 23-year-old from Assam, prevailed over her 35-year-old opponent from Cologne in a well-contested bout in which three of the five judges scored in her favour.

Of the five judges, judge one from

Argentina scored the bout 29-28 in the German's favour but for judges 2, 3 and 4, Lovlina was the winner as they scored it 29-28, 30-27, 30-27 in the Indian's favour. The fifth judge from Sri Lanka gave it to Nadine 30-27.

Lovlina will next take on Nien-Chin Chen of Chinese Taipei in the quarter-final on Friday. It was a close encounter and Lovlina was in good rhythm from the start and launched some good combinations. She was aggressive and did not allow Nadine to land scoring punches. The first round went 48-47 in her favour as three of the five judges gave her 10

points. Lovlina continued in the same vein in the second round, launching good combinations and defending well as the German came out on the counter. She again got 10 points each from three judges while two awarded her nine points apiece. Lovlina won this round 48-47 as Nadine managed to get 10 points from only two judges.

The third round went in the German's favour by one point as three judges thought she was the better boxer in this round. But the difference was not big enough to undo the good work she had done in the first two rounds.

Olympics: After Australia disaster, India overcome Spain 3-0

Tokyo | Agencies

An inspired team change by coach Graham Reid and some solid work by the defenders helped India redeem themselves from a 1-7 thrashing at the hands of world No. 1 Australia to hand Spain a convincing 3-0 defeat in a Group A match that put their Tokyo Olympic Games men's hockey tournament campaign back on track.

It was a test of character for the Indian team after the disastrous outing against the Kookaburras -- they not only had to win their match against Spain but also show the world that they had the ability to come back and fight for the spot in the quarterfinal. They also had to improve their goal difference, which was down to -5.

And coach Reid too responded by bringing in the more experienced Simranjeet Singh into the 16-member team sheet in place of Gurjant Singh.

The Indians managed to do both -- win the match and improve their goal difference by keeping a clean sheet (Goal difference -2 now) as Simranjeet Singh repaid the confidence shown in him by scoring the first goal in the 14th minute, while veteran drag-flicker Rupinderpal Singh scored a brace (15th, 51st minutes) -- the first off a penalty stroke awarded to India when his drag flick off India's third penalty corner slammed into the body of the Spanish defender on the



goal-line. The Indians defended well in the second and third quarter as Spain went in search of a goal and did not allow the Europeans to capitalise on the many chances they created.

It was not a perfect display by the Indians as they failed to maintain the tempo in the second quarter, soon after taking a 2-0 lead by scoring within 90 seconds in the final minutes of the first quarter. They allowed Spain a lot of space to launch attacks. Spain played very aggressively during this period but could not score a goal.

Coach Reid was satisfied with the performance of his wards, though he was not happy with the number of

penalty corners that India conceded to Spain.

The Indians allowed Spain to make 17 attacking penetrations into their circle, take 16 shots at the goal, attempt nine field goals, and conceded seven penalty corners.

Indeed, the Indians trailed Spain on all statistical parameters except the all-important one -- goals scored, and in the end that's what mattered.

Simranjeet goal came against the run of play when Amit Rohidas sent a long ball into the shooting circle from the sidelines on the right flank. Simranjeet, who was lurking nearby, deflected the shot into the net to make it 1-0 for India.

It was 2-0 in favour of India

within a few seconds as India earned a series of penalty corners and off the third, they were awarded a penalty stroke as Rupinderpal's drag-flick went straight into the body of the Spanish defender on the line.

Spain was also reduced to 10 men during this period as their skipper Andres Miguel de Delas was shown a yellow card for having more than 11 players on the field. However, the Indians failed to capitalise on this advantage.

The fourth quarter was more evenly contested and it was in this quarter that Rupinderpal found the back of the net again -- converting India's fourth penalty corner with a superb drag flick.

Heartbreak for India as Chaudhary-Manu pair finishes 7th in air pistol mixed team

Tokyo | Agencies

There was more heartbreak for Indian shooters as the team of Saurabh Chaudhary and Manu Bhaker -- favourites to win a medal -- failed to qualify for the 10m air pistol mixed team medal matches at the Tokyo Olympics, finishing seventh in Qualification Stage 2 at the Asaka Shooting Range on Tuesday.

The other Indian pair of Abhishek Verma and Yashaswini Singh Deswal in the event bowed out with a 17th place finish in Qualification Stage 1 on Tuesday.

India's string of poor performances at the shooting range has seen them go without a medal in six events they have competed in so far.



Chaudhary and Manu, who were strong favourites after winning all four mixed team gold medals in the four World Cups in 2019, suffered due to a poor start in the eight-team field and finished with a total score of 380

(Chaudhary 194/200 and Manu 186/200). They needed to be in the top four to qualify for any of the two medal matches.

While Chaudhary shot a solid 96/100 in series 1 of the Qualification Stage 2, Manu was off-colour shooting 92, which saw the Indian pair sink to the bottom of the eight-team field.

The duo did marginally better in series 2 scoring 192 -- Chaudhary 98 and Manu 94 -- but it wasn't enough to lead them into the top-four.

Earlier in the Qualification Stage 1, Chaudhary and Manu had given indication that they were gunning for the top prize when they topped the 20-team field with a total score of 582/600 (Manu 286/300 and Chaudhary 296/300).

Abhishek Verma (283/300) and Yashaswini Singh Deswal's (281/300) combined score of 564, however, was not good enough as the pair finished 17th.

Chaudhary and Manu started the Qualification Stage 1 in sensational fashion, combining to score 195/200 (Chaudhary 98/100 and Manu 97/100) in the first series to move to the top right away.

In the second series, the duo consolidated their position with Chaudhary shooting a perfect 100 with his 10 shots while Manu turned up with a 94. They came up with imposing numbers in the third series as well, combining for 193 (Chaudhary 98 and Manu 95) to move into Qualification Stage 2.

OLYMPICS: SHARATH KAMAL GOES DOWN FIGHTING TO WORLD NO. 1 MA LONG

Tokyo | Agencies

India's Achanta Sharath Kamal put up a superb fight against world No. 1, China's Ma Long -- the reigning Olympic and world champion -- but went out with his head held high as he lost 1-4 in a men's singles third-round match of the Tokyo Olympics table tennis competition.

Kamal took a game off Ma Long and fought a neck-and-neck battle in another as he went down 7-11, 11-8, 11-13, 4-11, 4-11 in the 49-minute encounter.

The 39-year-old Kamal, ranked 32nd in the world and playing his fourth Olympics, put up a great fight against the man considered one of the greatest table tennis players the world has seen. He played aggressively, went for low-percentage shots, and succeeded in executing them perfectly.

For some time in the match, Kamal had the Chinese superstar shaking his head in frustration as things weren't going in his favour.

Kamal, who was representing the country in his fourth Olympics, had reached the third round at the Games for the first time.

Ma Long won the first game easily at 11-7 but Kamal countered his tactics well. The Indian went for his shots, attacked the Chinese on his backhand, and earned an early lead. He maintained that advantage throughout the game though Ma Long cut



down the gap. Kamal kept his nerves and won the second game 11-8.

The third game was very close and could have gone either way as the players went neck-and-neck from 6-6 onwards. Kamal caught his Chinese rival at 11-11 but Ma Long won the next two points to win the game.

Errors crept into Kamal's play in the fourth and fifth games as he tried some high-risk shots that did not come off properly. This was enough for a player of the calibre of Ma Long to take control of the match and win the next two games with identical scores of 4-11.

That ended India's table tennis campaign at the Tokyo Olympics as Manika Batra and Sutirtha Mukherjee had lost in the women's singles on Monday, while G Sathiyan had crashed out in the second round after a bye in the first.

GYMNASTICS SIMONE WITHDRAWS FROM TEAM FINAL

Tokyo | Agencies

American Simone Biles, the biggest name in world of gymnastics, was withdrawn from the team event final following an error on vault which led to a low score and mental health issues. The USA team competed with only three gymnasts in the final and finished second to the team from Russian Olympic Committee (ROC). "Simone Biles has withdrawn from the team final competition due to a medical issue," said a statement from USA Gymnastics on Tuesday. "She will be assessed daily to determine medical clearance for future competitions," added USA Gymnastics in the statement. Her



coach was quoted as saying in the media that she has not suffered any injury, implying that she has pulled out due to mental health issues. Simone has to compete in individual finals too having qualified for the all-around, floor exercise, beam, vault as well as uneven bars. The 24-year-old was supposed to execute a Yurchenko vault with two-and-a-half twists, but could perform only one-and-a-half twists. Her knees buckled on the landing although she avoided falling on the ground. Her score of 13.766 is among the lowest she has got in years.

Simone, who won four gold medals in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, had qualified for all five individual event finals and was expecting to add six more Olympic gold medals with victories at these Games. However, now, she may have to return without any further gold.

NRAI Chief: Will overhaul coaching, support staff

Tokyo | Agencies

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) president, Raninder Singh, said on Tuesday that there will be an "overhaul of coaching and support staff" after several top medal hopefuls in shooting kept disappointing one after another at the Olympic Games in Tokyo. In 2016 also, after India's disastrous show at the Rio Olympics, Singh had said that, "The NRAI has been liberal in nominating coaches to the 12-member shooting contingent (for 2016 Rio)" and that he was taking the blame for the debacle.

On Tuesday, after the mixed team pairs' disastrous show in Tokyo in 10m air pistol and 10m air rifle events, Singh said, "Yes definitely the performances have not been on expected



lines and I have spoken of an overhaul of coaching and support staff as I feel something is lacking in getting our shooters prepared for these big occasions." "Because clearly the talent is there and we have seen it here as well. Having said that we still have starts left and the team is fighting, so let's continue to back the team and I am sure we'll get results. Post-mortems can wait till after the Games," said Singh. India's Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary finished seventh in the 10m air pistol mixed team competitions on Tuesday, day four of the Olympics shooting competition at the Asaka Shooting Range. The second Indian pair of Abhishek Verma and Yashaswini Deswal could not make it beyond the first qualification round, finishing 17th with a score of 564.

KRUNAL PANDYA TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19, 2ND T20I POSTPONED

Colombo: The second T20 International between India and Sri Lanka scheduled to be played on Tuesday night has been postponed by a day after Indian all-rounder Krunal Pandya tested positive for Covid-19. A Sri Lanka Cricket official confirmed to IANS that Pandya had tested positive following a routine test on Tuesday morning. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) also confirmed it through a statement. "The second T20I between Sri Lanka and India originally scheduled to be played on July 27 has been pushed forward by a day and will now take place on Wednesday, July 28," said a statement from the BCCI. "Following the Rapid Antigen Tests conducted ahead of the match on Tuesday morning, Team India all-rounder Krunal Pandya was found to be positive. The Medical Teams have identified eight members as close contacts," the BCCI added in the statement. "The entire contingent is undergoing RT-PCR tests today to ascertain any further outbreak in the squad," it said further.

The eight members identified as close contacts are said to include Suryakumar Yadav and Prithvi Shaw, who are due to travel to England for next month's Test series.

The second and third T20 Internationals will be played on Wednesday and Thursday.

Naomi bows out as Garbine, Paula & Belinda advance

Tokyo | Agencies

Four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka's bid for a gold medal in her home country ended quickly on Tuesday with the world No. 2 being ousted by Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic 6-1, 6-4 in the third round of the Tokyo Olympic Games here.

Naomi was competing in her first event since pulling out of the French Open in May. "I've taken long breaks before, and I've managed to do well," Naomi said after the loss. "I'm not saying that I did bad right now, but I do know that my expectations were a lot higher. I feel like my attitude wasn't that great because I don't really know how to cope with that pressure, so that's the best that I could have done in this situation."

The top three seeds, Australia's Ashleigh Barty, Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka and Naomi, have all fallen early at the Olympics. No. 4 Elena Svitolina of Ukraine, a 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 winner over No. 14 Maria Sakkari of Greece on Tuesday, is the highest seeded player in the tournament.

After falling to Marketa, Naomi said she understood the pressure at these Games.

Also on Tuesday, Switzerland's Belinda Bencic, the No. 9 seed, defeated No. 8 Barbora Krejickova of the Czech Republic 1-6, 6-2, 6-3 to reach the quarterfinals. It was only the second loss for Barbora in her past 24 matches.

Belinda's opponent in the quarterfinals will be No. 13 Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of ROC, who beat Spaniard Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-1,



6-3. Camila Giorgi of Italy also pulled off an upset, as she defeated No. 5 Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic, 6-4, 6-2 in 75 minutes.

Garbine Muguruzza, the No. 6 seed, defeated Alison Van Uytvanck of Belgium 6-4, 6-1 to secure her fourth win in five tries against the Belgian.

Paula Badosa made it two Spaniards in the quarterfinals. She eliminated Argentina's Nadia Podoroska, 6-2, 6-3 in an hour and 24 minutes.

No. 15 seed Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan completed the quarterfinal lineup as she beat Donna Vekic of Croatia, 7-6(3), 6-4.

Riteish - Genelia to replace Shilpa Shetty in Super Dancer 4

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shilpa Shetty hasn't appeared on the sets of Super Dancer 4 ever since the arrest of her husband Raj Kundra. The actress, who is one of the judges on the show along with Geeta Kapur and Anurag Basu, won't be seen this weekend. However, popular Bollywood couple Riteish Deshmukh and Genelia D'souza will be seen filling in for her as guest judges.

It is being believed that the actress has not stepped out of her house after Raj's arrest. She has neither communicated with the channel in the last few days, nor did she share any update on whether she will come back.

According to a source close to the reality show, "Riteish and Genelia both love the show and agreed instantly. It would be fun to have them. Anyway, a fresh take on the proceedings is

always welcome."

The couple will be seen grooving to popular numbers with Super Dancer - Chapter 4 contestants.

This week, when Shilpa was missing from the dance reality show, Karisma Kapoor was seen on the show as a special guest. She was seen dancing and having a great time with the contestants of Super Dancer.

URVASHI RAUTELA: I HAVE LEARNED TAMIL FLUENTLY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Urvashi Rautela is leaving no stones unturned for her Tamil debut film. She says she has even learned the language and shared that the yet-untitled movie will always hold a special place in her heart. Urvashi on Monday had shared a glimpse from the shoot of her upcoming film on Instagram, where she could be seen coming out of a luxury yellow coloured sports car. Talking about her character, Urvashi said that she will be seen essaying the role of a microbiologist. "Additionally, I also appear in the film as an IITIAN and Microbiologist conducting a study. I am totally excited about this second schedule because this is the first time I have properly shot it in Chennai after the first schedule occurred in Himachal Pradesh," the 27-year-old actress said.

She added: "The directors Jerald Arockiam and Joseph D sami with whom I am currently working with are truly special to me as they have supported me throughout. They have also worked with Amitabh Bachchan and Ajit Kumar." She calls the yet-untitled film as a "perfect launchpad" for her in Tamil Cinema. "Furthermore, I have learned Tamil fluently and continue to practice it. Throughout my life, this film will always hold a special place in my heart," she concluded.



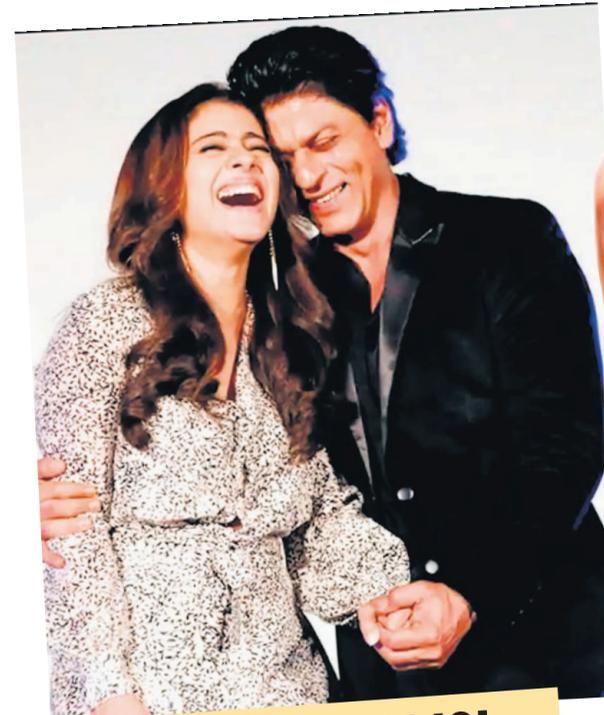
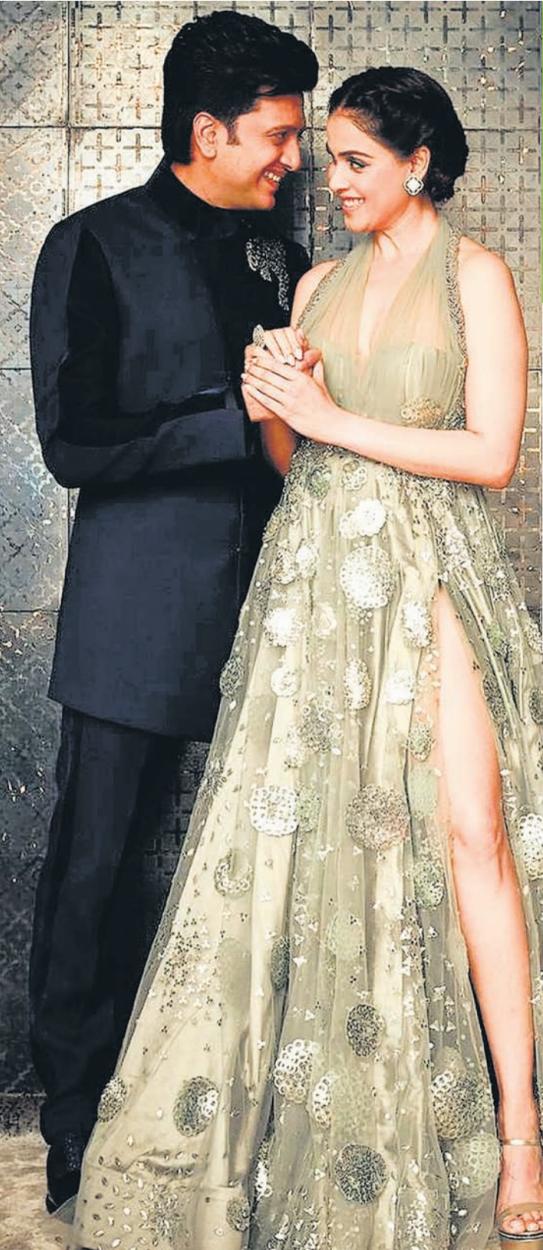
Radhika Apte, Vikrant Massey to star in thriller 'Forensic'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actors Radhika Apte and Vikrant Massey will be seen sharing screen space in the upcoming suspense crime thriller titled 'Forensic'. Radhika said: "There is a particular way to navigate thriller movies and with Forensic, it hits all the right notes. I am looking forward to start this project and work with a talented costar like Vikrant and our director Vishal who has such a clear and interesting vision for this film."

The first look of the suspense crime thriller, which is directed by Vishal Furia, was revealed on Tuesday. 'Forensic' will also mark the reunion of Vikrant and Furia, who have previously worked

together on the web show 'Criminal Justice'. Talking about the upcoming film, Vikrant shared: "I have always believed in the story being the frontrunner for a film and when director Vishal Furia narrated the script to me, I was intrigued as an actor and as a member of the audience." Furia said that with the content landscape going through a drastic shift, he feels this film will keep the audience on the edge of their seats. The film is all set to go on floors and is produced by Deepak Mukut, Mansi Bagla and Varun Bagla under their banners of Soham Rockstar Entertainment Pvt Ltd, Mini Films, and co-produced by Hunar Mukut. Deepak Mukut of Soham Rockstar Entertainment Pvt Ltd said: "I am excited to see this film come to life."



SHAH RUKH -KAJOL REUNITE FOR RAJKUMAR HIRANI FILM

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol are said to be reunite on big screen for Rajkumar Hirani's new project. It is also said that Taapsee Pannu and Vidya Balan have also been approached to play key roles in the film.

According to a key source close to the development, "The film is a social comedy based on immigration and the journey of a man and his family across two countries - Punjab and Canada."

"While Kajol plays the role of SRK's wife, Taapsee Pannu has been approached to play a reporter who covers his story across the borders. Vidya Balan has been approached to play someone who helps Shah Rukh Khan in his journey," added the source.

The source also revealed that Rajkumar Hirani was extremely impressed with Vidya's performance in Sherni and apparently she fits the role.

Vidya has always spoken about being a fangirl to Shah Rukh and how she has never been approached for an SRK film. Shahrukh and Kajol last worked together in Rohit Shetty's Dilwale (2015), and the pair has given several blockbusters and has an excellent box office track record. It's an exciting combination as Hirani and Kajol have never worked together.

Mani Ratnam's 'Navarasa' trailer out

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The trailer of the much-awaited Tamil anthology 'Navarasa' spearheaded by Mani Ratnam and filmmaker Jayendra Panchapakesan is out on Tuesday. The film is all set to premiere on Netflix on August 6.

The anthology is an amalgamation of nine short films based on nine 'rasas' or human emotions - anger, compassion, courage, disgust, fear, laughter, love, peace and wonder.

Talking about the anthology, Mani Ratnam said, "Emotions may be momentary but some of those moments stay with us for life. Emotions are part of every day of our lives and yet some of these can change the course of our lives. This is what makes Navarasa interesting." As the project is also intended to support film workers in Tamil cinema impacted by the pandemic, Jayendra Panchapakesan added, "We are extremely happy and proud of our colleagues in the industry, directors, actors and technicians, who have created engaging, exciting stories from these nine emotions or the classical 'rasas'. We are sure viewers across the globe will enjoy and celebrate this confluence of 'rasas'." The films are directed by - Arvind Swami, Bejoy Nambiar, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Karthik Subbaraj, Karthick Naren, Priyadarshan, Rathindran R. Prasad, Sarjun and Vasanth S. Sai.



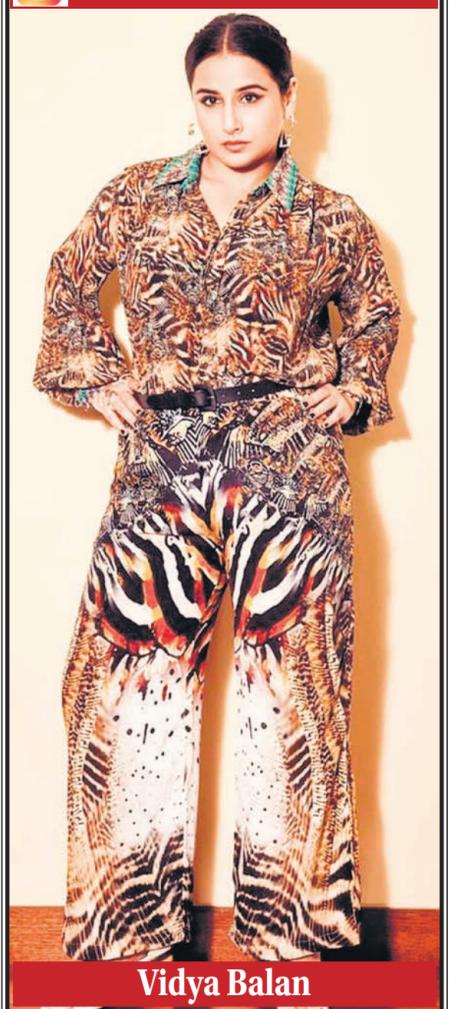
JUBIN NAUTIYAL, PAYAL DEV'S SINGLE 'DIL LAUTA DO' OUT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singers Jubin Nautiyal and Payal Dev have come together for a soulful single titled 'Dil lauta do'. The video

features Saiyami Kher and Sunny Kaushal. Payal Dev has also composed the song which has been penned by Kunaal Vermaa. Talking about the song, Jubin Nautiyal shared: "There is a special place in my heart for love songs that are within the heartbreak zone because they draw out all the emotions from you as an artist. I hope my fans enjoy it." Jubin and Payal had earlier collaborated on the romantic single "Tum hi aana" from the film "Marjaavaan". "Tum hi aana received a lot of love and it was great collaborating with Jubin again on Dil lauta do. It's an intense track that will leave you with a feeling of love and longing," Payal Dev said. Shot in the picturesque locales of Leh, Ladakh, the video of 'Dil lauta do' featuring Sunny Kaushal and Saiyami Kher, has been directed by Navjot Buttar. Sunny Kaushal shared: "The first time I heard Dil lauta do, I literally fell in love with it because it had that old-school vibe to it. Navjot sir and the team have a knack of picking out the ideal locations that suit the narrative, characters and the song." "It was a nostalgic moment for me to shoot in Ladakh. The weather conditions were difficult but I'm glad we went through the trouble because the song turned out beautiful."

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Vidya Balan