

# absolute india

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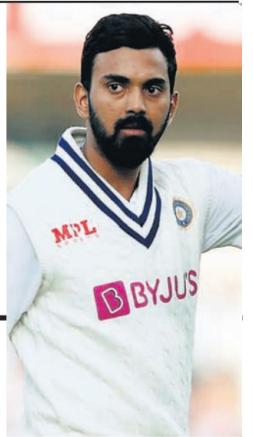
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## The Supreme Court of India steps in to allow women to take NDA exam

# 'MINDSET NOT CHANGING'

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said the "mindset is not changing" and emphasised why judicial orders are required to allow women candidates to take the entrance exam for the National Defence Academy (NDA), even after top court's judgment on extending permanent commission in the Army to women. The top court passed an interim order allowing women to take the exam slated to be held on September 5.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hrishikesh Roy said: "Why are you continuing in this direction? Even after Justice Chandrachud's judgment expanding the horizons and extending Permanent Commission in the Army to women? This is unfounded now! We are finding it absurd!"

Citing the government's counter-affidavit, senior advocate Chinmoy Pradip Sharma, representing the petitioner, submitted it says that this is purely a policy decision and should not be interfered with by the court, and that because girls are not allowed to enter into the NDA does not mean there is any difficulty in their progression or in their career. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, representing the Centre, submitted that such is not the case here and that there are three modes of entry in the Army - the NDA, the Indian Military Academy (IMA), and the Officers' Training Academy (OTA). She added that women are permitted entry through the last two. The bench asked: "Will the Army only act when a judicial order is passed? Not otherwise? We will do that if that is what you want! This has been my impression right from the high court that till a judgment is passed, the Army doesn't believe in doing anything voluntarily."

As Bhati submitted women have been conferred permanent commission in the Army. Justice Kaul replied: "No thanks to you! You kept on opposing it! And till orders were not passed, you didn't do anything! The Navy and the Air Force are more forthcoming!"

As the bench asked: "Why is co-education a problem?" and the ASG responded: "The whole structure is such...this is a policy decision..."

Justice Kaul said: "This is a policy decision based on gender discrimination... respondents (Centre) must take a constructive view. The mindset is not changing only. The Solicitor General who was appearing before the HC in the PC (permanent commission) matter could not persuade the Army. In law also, you did not regularise them! You kept them for 5 years and extended by another five, but never gave them permanent commission." Justice Kaul had



authored the judgment granting permanent commission to women, when he was in the Delhi High Court. The top court added that admissions,

etc. will be subject to its final orders. "Cannot create bar for women in NDA," it noted.

### Notice to WB to probe Pegasus scandal

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued notice to West Bengal government on a plea challenging the setting up of a two-member commission of inquiry headed by retired Supreme Court judge, Justice Madan B. Lokur, to probe the Pegasus snooping allegations. A bench headed by chief justice N.V. Ramana said: "We will hear this along with other similar matters. Issue notice. List on August 25". However, the top court refused to stay the proceedings of the committee and added that the plea will be heard along with petitions seeking probe into Pegasus snooping allegations.

## 'Release caged parrot'

### Madras HC says CBI needs statutory status like EC

Chennai: The Madras High Court has issued a series of directions to the Central government for releasing the "caged parrot", or ensuring autonomy to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Hearing a Public Interest Litigation to transfer a case of cheating by a finance company probed by Tamil Nadu Police to the central agency, the court's Madurai bench on Tuesday said: "Only when the CBI is given a statutory status, (would) the autonomy of CBI would be ensured. Secondly it should have a dedicated cadre of officers on its own without getting the officials on deputation. The CBI should have an autonomy as that of Comptroller and Auditor General of India, who is only accountable to Parliament." The court also said that the CBI Director should be vested with ex-officio powers of the Secretary to the Government of India, reporting directly to the Ministry without having to go through the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT). Pointing out that the Supreme Court and the High Courts entrust the CBI with investigation of cases without the consent of the states, the court ordered that the Centre consider and take a decision for enactment of a separate Act giving statutory status with more powers and jurisdiction to the CBI at the earliest. It also sought that the CBI shall be made more independent like the Election Commission and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, and a separate budgetary allocation shall be made for the agency.



## WHO identifies counterfeit versions of Covishield in India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said it has identified counterfeit versions of India's primary Covid vaccine, Covishield, BBC reported.

The doses were seized by authorities in India and Africa between July and August, a WHO statement said. It also said the vaccine's maker, the Serum Institute of India, confirmed that the doses were fake.

The WHO warned that fake vaccines "pose a serious risk to global public health". It called for their removal from circulation.

Covishield is the Indian-made version of AstraZeneca's jab and is the most widely used vaccine in



India with more than 486 million doses administered so far. Serum had supplied millions of Covishield vaccines to countries in Asia, Africa and South America as part of deals that were inked with various governments and the global Covax

scheme for poorer countries. India, which is the second worst-affected country in the world, aims to vaccinate all its people by the end of this year. About 13 per cent of the population has been fully vaccinated since the beginning of the drive in January.

## Tharoor discharged in Sunanda death case

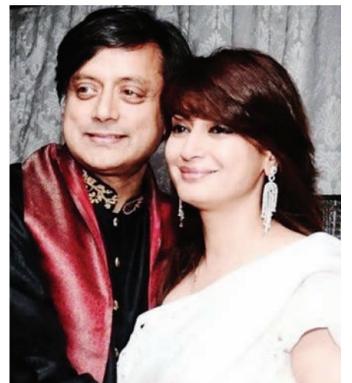
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/NEW DELHI | Agencies

In a statement issued by the dapper Congress Lok Sabha member from the Thiruvananthapuram seat, after he was discharged in Sunanda Pushkar death case, he said justice has been done, at last, will allow all of us in the family to mourn Sunanda in peace.

In a big relief Tharoor, a Delhi court on Wednesday discharged him in the Sunanda Pushkar death case.

Incidentally for Tharoor this is a huge victory in every aspect as few months after she died, he had to face the electorate in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and this case became a bogey for him, but he scraped through but saw his margin dropping from over 99,000 votes to around 15,000 votes, but in the 2019 polls, he triumphed with a similar margin what he got in 2009.

Earlier in the day Special Judge Geetanjali Goel said, "the accused is discharged". The order was pronounced in presence of



Tharoor, senior advocate Vikas Pahwa, appearing on behalf of Tharoor, and additional public prosecutor Atul Shrivastava.

## SAMAJWADI PARTY MP BOOKED FOR SUPPORTING TALIBAN

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party MP from Sambhal Dr Shafiqur Rahman Barq has been booked for comparing Taliban occupation of Afghanistan with India's freedom struggle. A case has been registered against the SP MP at the Sadar police station on a complaint lodged by Rajesh Singhal, regional vice president of BJP Western Uttar Pradesh, late on Tuesday night. The charges against the MP include Sections 124A (Sedition), 153A (Promoting enmity between groups) and 295A (outraging religious feelings). The Sambhal MP had issued a statement on August 16 hailing Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and comparing their assault on the country with India's freedom struggle. "When India was under British rule, our country fought for freedom. Now Taliban wants to free their country and run it. Taliban is a force that did not allow even strong countries like Russia and the US to settle in their country," Barq had said.

## 'By Sept or just after we may have vaccine for children'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The ICMR-National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune has been at the forefront of scientific research on SARS-CoV-2 in the country. "2021 was a difficult but rewarding year for us", said Priya Abraham, Director of ICMR-NIV, in an interview with India Science, the OTT channel of the Department of Science & Technology.

Giving an overview of vaccine development process at the institute, she said, "We quickly isolated and gave a strain to Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL) by the end of April (2020), after which they developed a whole virion-inactivated vaccine in the month of May and gave us back for review. Presently, Phase II and III trials of COVAXIN are going on for children in the age group of 2-18 years. Hopefully, the results are going to be available very soon. The results will be presented to the regulators. So, by September or just after it, we may have COVID-19 vaccines for children. This apart, Zydrus Cadila's vaccine trial is



also going on. This can also be applied for children and will be made available."

## BOY FALLS FROM HILL SEARCHING MOBILE NETWORK TO STUDY, DIES

BHUBANESWAR | Agencies

In a tragic incident, a 13-year-old student in Odisha's Rayagada district died after slipping from a hilltop he had climbed in search of mobile network to attend online classes. The deceased has been identified as Andriya Jagaranga from Pandraguda village under Padmapur block in the tribal-dominated Rayagada district. Andriya, a student of a missionary school in Cuttack, was regularly attending online classes at home during the Covid-induced lockdown period, locals said. As his mobile phone had no signal on Tuesday, he had climbed atop a hill near his village in search of network so that he could attend online classes. Unfortunately, it had rained heavily, forcing Andriya to lose his balance. Subsequently, he slipped and fell down, receiving serious injuries, the locals said. The boy was rushed to the Padmapur Community Health Centre (CHC), where he succumbed to his injuries.

## China takes control of CPEC in Pakistan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The swift dismissal of Lieutenant General (retired) Asim Saleem Bajwa as Chief of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) at China's behest puts the issue of corruption and lack of transparency in the Belt and Road projects in Pakistan in the spotlight once again. The removal of a retired army general also reinforced China's bid to control and micro-manage the infrastructural projects by installing its acolyte, Khalid Mansoor, a civilian energy expert, to push the stalled projects forward. China was unhappy with the pace of the execution of the CPEC projects and had hoped Bajwa, who belonged to the 'deep state' of Pakistan would be able to expedite the projects. However, it was disappointed with the incomplete projects, lapses in security of Chinese personnel working in Pakistan, particularly the latest incident that took place in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on 14 July, killing 13 people, including nine Chinese nationals. Moreover, many Chinese nationals working for CPEC projects across Pakistan have been attacked recently. China has now decided to take control of things directly in the country, making Pakistan seem like a mere puppet in its hands.

## SPINE OF STEEL



Afghan women hold street protest as Taliban fighters look on. Four women in black abayas and hijabs were seen holding up signs and shouting slogans even as armed men patrolled nearby.

## TALIBAN FIRE INTO CROWD, BEAT PROTESTERS, SAYS REPORT

### Taliban release several terrorists from jails

KABUL | Agencies

Several terrorists who belong to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have been released from the prisons in Afghanistan after the Taliban took control over the country. One of the most recognised names is Maulana Faqir Mohammad who is the former deputy chief of the TTP, SAMAA News reported. Faqir had earlier admitted his close ties to Al Qaeda chief Ayman al Zawahiri.

The Taliban have so far released at least 2,300 key TTP commanders and leaders from the prisons of Waziristan, Sargodha, Swat and Bajaur, SAMAA News reported citing a journalist.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Taliban fighters reportedly fired into a crowd and beat protesters in cities throughout Afghanistan on Wednesday, just days after the insurgent group took control of the country.

Al Jazeera reported that at least two people were killed and 12 others injured after shots were fired during a protest in Jalalabad.

Dozens of Afghans gathered in the city to raise the national flag before the country's Independence Day, according to The Associated Press. As Afghans tried to lower the Taliban flag, which was raised after the insurgent group took over the region, fighters started firing shots in the air and attacking the Afghans with batons in an effort to disperse the crowd, the AP reported. Fighters with the insurgent group

have been patrolling the streets in Kabul, at times coming into contact with hundreds of Afghan protesters, The NYTimes noted.

### Taliban Meet Ex Afghan President Hamid Karzai In Talks To Form Government

Kabul: A Taliban commander and senior leader of the Haqqani Network terrorist group, Anas Haqqani, has met former Afghan President Hamid Karzai for talks, a Taliban official said on Wednesday, amid efforts by the Taliban to set up a government. Karzai was accompanied by the old government's main peace envoy, Abdullah Abdullah, in the meeting, said the Taliban official, who declined to be identified. He gave no more details.

### ASHRAF GHANI REACHES UAE

New Delhi: The United Arab Emirates said on Wednesday that it is hosting former Afghan president Ashraf Ghani "on humanitarian grounds", after he fled his country amid a Taliban takeover.

"The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation can confirm that the UAE has welcomed President Ashraf Ghani and his family into the country on humanitarian grounds," it said in a brief statement. Ghani fled Afghanistan on Sunday as the Taliban closed in on Kabul, before the insurgents walked into the Afghan capital unopposed.

In a Facebook post, Ghani said the "Taliban have won" and that he fled to avoid a "flood of bloodshed".



# TIGHT-ROPE WALK FOR JUDGES, MORE SO FOR A SC JUDGE, SAYS CJI RAMANA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Chief Justice N.V. Ramana on Wednesday said the process of decision-making goes beyond the knowledge and application of principles of law, as he emphasised how judges are often caught in the dilemma of morality versus legality, in the quest to deliver justice.

In his remarks at Supreme Court judge, Justice Navin Sinha's virtual farewell function, organised by Supreme Court Bar Association, he cited a quote: "Doing the right thing is not the problem. Knowing what the right thing is, that's the challenge."

"We judges are often caught in the dilemma of morality versus legality, in our quest to deliver justice. There are multiple sleepless nights, that we go through to resolve such issues. It is often a tight-rope walk, more so, for a Supreme Court judge. After all, the Supreme Court is the final arbiter."

Chief Justice Ramana emphasized the process of decision making goes



beyond the knowledge and application of principle of law. "It needs moral courage to render an opinion which might displease many. It is imperative for judges not to be swayed by these external pressures", he said.

He noted that impartiality is not an easy quality to possess or apply to the cases before them.

"We often carry our individual baggage, our biases and prejudices which can unconsciously affect the decision-making process. Our social conditions, upbringing and life experiences often colour our opinions and notions. But, when we adorn the robe of a judge, we must make a conscious effort to cast aside our biases and prejudices," said the CJI, adding

equality, objectivity and even-handedness form crucial aspects of fairness. He stressed judges must not forget the social dimensions that is at the heart of every case before us. "This is our sacred duty and a burden that we bear gladly," he added.

Justice Sinha was elevated to the top court on February 17, 2017. During his tenure, he penned 114 judgments on diverse topics including intellectual property, criminal law, and many more. He has disposed of over 13,671 cases in the Supreme Court.

In his farewell speech, he emphasised on training young lawyers to benefit both the bar and the bench. "Humility lies in recognising one's own shortcoming and address it. In today's time when competition is stiff and laws are tough, I believe younger generation of lawyers need to be trained," said Justice Sinha.

He further added that young lawyers must be taught manner and demeanour of a lawyer. "When the lawyer appears, a judge should be able to trust him..." Justice Sinha said.

# Covid second wave ended in Telangana, says official



Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Covid-19's second wave has come to an end in Telangana and this is the time to reopen educational institutions in the state, a senior health official said on Wednesday. Director, Public Health and Family Welfare, Dr. G. Srinivasa Rao told reporters that Covid pandemic is under control in all the districts. He said that this is the time to reopen schools, colleges and universities in the state. Only vaccinated teachers and staff will be allowed, he added. Rao said they would ensure that Covid-19 tests are conducted regularly.

He said Covid R-factor in the state is 0.7

per cent, and there are more number of people in hospitals with post-Covid complications.

Pointing out that 1.65 crore doses of Covid vaccines have been administered in the state, he said 56 per cent of the people received the first dose at least while 34 per cent have received both the doses. Rao also revealed that 90 per cent of the beneficiaries in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) area have received at least the first dose. He said the Health Department was taking all steps to check the spread of seasonal diseases. Anti-larva measures were being taken in coordination with some other departments.

# India's priority in Afghanistan is getting citizens home safely: S. Jaishankar



Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's priority in Afghanistan is safely getting back home its citizens in the country that has been over-run by the Taliban and it is discussing the matter with UN and US officials, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said here on Wednesday. "Our focus is on ensuring the security in Afghanistan and the safe return of Indian nationals who are there," he told reporters. "That is really what has been very much the focus of my own engagements

here, talking to the UN Secretary General (Antonio Guterres), to other colleagues who are here, as well as with the US Secretary of State (Antony Blinken) a few days ago," he said. India has been running an airlift of its citizens from Afghanistan and Jaishankar discussed it with Blinken, whose country is controlling the Kabul airport.

He said that these were "early days" of the new situation in Afghanistan and "at the moment, we are like everybody else very carefully following developments in Afghanistan". As regards future relations with Afghanistan, he emphasised the historic people-to-people ties.

Asked by a reporter if India, which has made a "considerable investment" in Afghanistan over the last 20 years, would continue that relationship, Jaishankar said: "While you use the word investment, for us it reflected what was historical relationship with the Afghan people. I think that relationship with the Afghan people obviously continues and that will guide our approach to Afghanistan in the coming days."

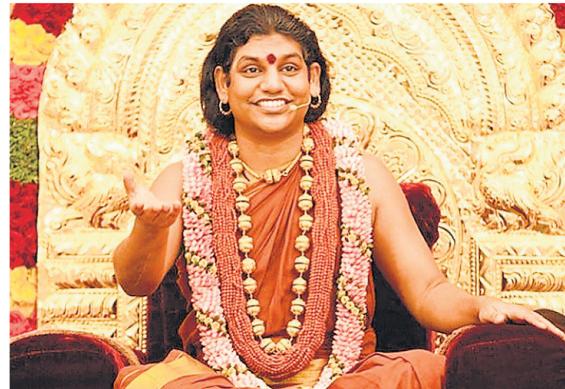
# Fugitive godman Nithyananda names himself as Madurai Aadheenam's 293rd pontiff

Team Absolute | Chennai

Fugitive godman Nithyananda, who has been eluding Indian authorities after facing several charges of rape and other complaints from his former disciples and devotees, has created a major controversy by declaring on social media that he has assumed charge as the 293rd pontiff of Madurai Aadheenam.

The incumbent pontiff, Arunagirinatha Gnanasambantha Desika Paramacharya Swamigal, passed away at a private hospital in Madurai on August 13 due to respiratory illness. He had been the pontiff of Madurai Aadheenam for four decades.

After his mortal remains were laid to rest on August 14, Harihara Desika Gnanasambantha Paramacharya, who was named as the junior pontiff by Arunagirinatha Swamigal in 2019, was announced as his successor. Mut



authorities told IANS that he would be coronated soon.

However to the surprise of devotees and followers of the Madurai

Aadheenam as well as common people, Nithyananda announced on social media on Tuesday that he has assumed charge as the 293rd pontiff

of Madurai Aadheenam.

"All the spiritual, dharmic, traditional rituals as per the cosmic laws of Kailasa and official succession formalities as the 293rd pontiff of Madurai Aadheenam is completed," he said in his post.

The fugitive godman had, in a similar message on August 9 when Arunagirinatha Swamigal was hospitalised, said that he was the successor of the 292nd pontiff as he wished Arunagirinatha Swamigal a speedy recovery.

Nithyananda was formally announced as the junior pontiff by Arunagirinatha Swamigal on April 27, 2012, removed from the post on December 19, 2012. Arunagirinatha Swamigal later appointed and removed two junior pontiffs and was entangled in a legal battle.

Nithyananda in the social media post also said that he was blessing his devotees virtually on a daily basis.

# Protest near Pak High Commission against vandalism of Ranjit Singh's statue

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Hundreds of BJP workers on Wednesday staged a protest near Pakistan High Commission here against vandalism of a statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore.

Workers of BJP Delhi unit, Purvanchal Morcha, Yuva Morcha and Sikh Cell participated in the protest.

Saffron party workers raised slogans against Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and demanded apology for the incident. BJP Delhi president Adesh Gupta, Vice president Rajan Tewari, national spokesperson Sardar R.P. Singh, national youth wing secretary Tajinder Pal Singh Bagga and others participated in the protest.

The BJP workers gathered at Teen Murti area and marched towards Pakistan High Commission, however, Police stopped them before reaching the High Commission.



BJP Delhi Yuva Morcha president Vasu Rukhar told IANS that the Pakistan government must apologise and install a grand statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh where it was demolished in Lahore. "We are demanding not just an apology

from Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan but also demanding for his assurance and arrangements to stop persecution of minorities specially of Hindus and Sikhs and desecration of their shrines and idols," Rukhar said.

# HARYANA BANS USE OF PHRASE 'GORAKH DHANDA'

Chandigarh: The Haryana government announced on Wednesday that it has banned the use of the word 'Gorakh Dhanda', generally used to describe unethical practices.

According to an official statement, a decision in this regard was taken by Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar after a delegation of the Gorakhnath community met him and urged him to ban the use of the word as it 'hurts' the sentiments of Sant Gorakhnath's followers.

The Chief Minister said that as Guru Gorakhnath was a saint and using this word in any official language, speech or in any context hurts the sentiments of his followers, therefore its usage in whatsoever context has been completely banned.

# Probe on into alleged gang rape at Hyderabad hospital

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

One of the two women who went missing after the alleged gang rape at the government-run Gandhi Hospital here remained untraced, police said on Wednesday. A police team continued search for the 40-year-old woman, whose younger sister lodged a complaint with the police two days ago that an employee of the hospital allegedly raped them.

Police were scanning CCTV footage around the hospital premises. Since the woman is said to be a habitual drinker, police were also trying to collect footage from CCTV cameras near liquor shops.

Meanwhile, police continued questioning the four suspects arrested in the case, which



has shocked the largest state-run healthcare facility in the state.

Accused Uma Maheswar and the security guard both denied raping the women. Police also grilled two other suspects, as they sought to ascertain the veracity of the complainant's statement and find out if she and her sister were sexually assaulted as claimed by her.

The 38-year-old woman, in her complaint lodged with Chilkalguda police station, alleged that a lab technician confined her in a dark room, drugged her and raped her for four days. She told police that accused Maheswar's friend also raped her in the room. The victim alleged that the lab technician also raped her elder sister, whose whereabouts are not known.

# DINNER DIKTAT RATTLES BJP MLAS IN UP

Lucknow: A dinner meeting of the BJP legislators, held here on Tuesday night, has started giving sleepless nights to many. Uttar Pradesh BJP in-charge Radha Mohan Singh and BJP state president Swatantra Dev Singh, gave lessons in behavioural changes needed in legislators, as elections approach. While the two leaders told them how to behave inside and outside the state legislature, they also tersely warned MLAs and also aspiring candidates to desist from putting up hoardings of their ticket claim. "It does not look good when the party has sitting MLA and aspiring ones put up their claims for tickets through hoardings and posters," said Radha Mohan Singh. The state BJP chief warned members of strict action against violations. He also said that if someone wanted to contest the election, he should give his bio data in a confidential manner instead of publicly staking his claim. It is a common practice for political leaders in the state to put up hoardings during festivals, especially on the eve of elections, mentioning their Assembly constituencies and staking their claim for the ticket. The diktat has created a flutter among the 200 odd legislators who were present at the dinner

# India extends full support for annual climate meet, but reminds of other commitments

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India on Wednesday extended full support to the UK for the annual climate change summit to be held at Glasgow in November this year, but reiterated its position that COP26 should ensure a balanced outcome with equal treatment to agenda items such as adaptation, finance and technology transfer. Ahead of the annual climate summit COP26 or the Conference of Parties (COP) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to be held in Glasgow in November, its President-designate Alok Sharma from the UK was on a short India trip. On the last day of his visit, Sharma met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav apart from speaking at the Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) National Council Session. He also launched the GreenCellM, an e-bus. Yadav and Sharma discussed issues relating to climate change, COP26, India-UK 2030 Roadmap, and other related matters. "India believes that climate actions must be nationally determined and it strongly advocates that the differentiation and



operationalisation of flexibility provided in the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement for developing countries should be at the core of decision-making," emphasised Yadav, reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on climate justice while fighting climate change. Yadav also informed the UK delegation about the remarkable feat India has achieved in decoupling growth from emission intensity, demonstrating ambitious actions in renewable energy, energy efficiency and rise of

green cover, an official said, adding. "He also conveyed India's position that COP26 should ensure a balanced outcome with equal treatment to agenda items such as adaptation, finance and technology transfer." Sharma and his team were informed about the global initiatives spearheaded by India under Modi's leadership for tackling climate change such as Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT), Coalition on Coalition Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and

International Solar Alliance (ISA), a government release said. Reminding that India is among a few G20 countries on track towards UNFCCC and Paris Agreement goals and has taken decisive actions to tackle climate change, Sitharaman mentioned that India is taking concrete steps at appreciable speed to meet its commitments on the target of 450GW of renewable energy by 2030. "Of these, 100 GW has already been achieved," she said. The Finance Minister also highlighted the extensive work done on the Hydrogen Energy Mission. Sitharaman expressed hope that the commitment made by the developed countries to provide \$100 billion per year to developing countries would be achieved, and sounded optimistic about a positive outcome on the new collective goals on finance in COP26. A release from the British High Commission quoted Sharma as saying: "Claiming that countries need to be more ambitious in emission reduction targets and in accelerating the transition from coal to clean energy, Sharma said, 'I've requested that the Indian government considers whether as part of any revised NDC, that overachievement is taken into account as well as a really ambitious plan for pushing forward on all of this.'"



'STATE WON'T GRANT SANCTION': SC JUNKS DESHMUKH'S PLEA AGAINST CBI FIR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh's plea seeking quashing of the FIR registered by the CBI to probe corruption allegations levelled against him by the former Mumbai police chief.

Senior advocate Amit Desai, representing Deshmukh, argued that the CBI required the sanction of the state government under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act to register the FIR. He said that the Bombay High Court order had only directed the CBI to do a preliminary enquiry (PE) into the matter, and then the investigating agency was required to "act in accordance with law" based on its result.

"In accordance with law" meant the CBI had to seek the sanction of the state government before registering the FIR, he added.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and MR Shah queried Desai if there was an inquiry launched under Section 17 (A) against the Home Minister, then it defeats the purpose, as the state would never grant sanction to prosecute the minister.

The top court was hearing the former minister's petition challenging the July 22 Bombay High Court judgment, which dismissed Deshmukh's petition seeking to quash the CBI FIR.

The bench queried whether requirement of Section 17A sanction will come, if the investigation has been directed by the court. Justice Chandrachud cited precedents stating that the sanction of the state under Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act is not needed for CBI investigation, when the court has ordered registration of the FIR.

He noted: "Why investigation is ordered in the first place? Because the state can't be trusted."

Justice Shah said the high court ordered a PE by the CBI to ensure the rights of the accused are protected to the maximum extent.

Additional Solicitor General Aman Lekhi contested Desai's arguments. He submitted that Section 17A was not applicable in a situation of a court-ordered investigation.

The top court heard arguments in the matter for close to two hours. Concluding the hearing, the bench told Desai it is not keen on entertaining the petition.

Anil Deshmukh skips ED summon for 5th time, sends lawyer's letter

Former Maharashtra Home Minister and senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Anil Deshmukh on Wednesday once again skipped the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) summon and instead submitted an application to the agency seeking exemption from appearance in connection with a money laundering case.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a three-page letter to the ED sent through his lawyer Inderpal Singh, Deshmukh said, "At the outset, I may submit that you have chosen to issue summons immediately after the hearing of my writ petition before the Supreme Court without even awaiting the text of the order to be uploaded on the website of the court and without reading the contents thereof."

With respect to the ED case, he said, "I have since approached the Supreme Court seeking various reliefs, including laying challenge to the validity of various provisions of the PMLA as well as for quashing of the ED case in question. I also sought protection of my personal liberty. The said writ petition had come up for hearing before the Supreme Court on August 16."

On Monday, the Supreme Court had refused to grant Deshmukh interim protection from arrest in the money laundering probe, saying that he can avail remedy under CrPC and other appropriate forum for relief.

Deshmukh in his letter said that from the above, it is abundantly clear that the Supreme Court has made it open for him to take recourse to all appropriate remedies available under CrPC, including the filing of a quashing petition.

The ED had issued fresh summons to Deshmukh on Tuesday. The development came a day after the Supreme Court refused interim pro-



tection to the 71-year-old NCP leader from any coercive action by the federal agency.

Deshmukh has been accused of money-laundering, and the matter is being probed by the ED for the alleged extortion from a bunch of orchestra bars in Mumbai.

It has been alleged that Rs 4.7 crore

was collected as "extortion" from the orchestra bars by now dismissed Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze, allegedly on Deshmukh's instructions. Deshmukh's Nagpur-based educational trust by his son, Hrishikesh. According to the allegation, the transaction was routed via two hawala operators and was shown as a "donation". The NCP leader is the president of the trust and his two sons, Salil and Hrishikesh, are its trustees. On May 11, a case was registered against the former minister and on June 25, the ED had raided Deshmukh's residences in Nagpur, Mumbai and three other locations.

In April, the CBI had conducted raids at four premises of Deshmukh after registering an FIR against him in connection with the case.

Former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, in his letter to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, had alleged that Deshmukh had indulged in "malpractices" and had asked Waze to collect Rs 100 crore extortion money every month.

Porn case: Raj Kundra gets interim relief from arrest till Aug 25

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday granted interim protection from arrest to businessman Raj Kundra till August 25 in a porn film racket case registered in 2020 by the Mumbai Police here.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

When the matter came up for hearing, his lawyer Prashant Patil argued that the other co-accused in the case are already out on bail and the offences against Kundra attract a punishment of less than seven years, and hence deserved protection from arrest.

Opposing the plea, Additional Public Prosecutor Prajakta Shinde said that the role of accused (Kundra) was different from the other co-accused and sought more time for instructions on the merits



of the case. While granting time, Justice SK Shinde allowed an interim order preventing Kundra's arrest till August 25, when the next hearing is scheduled. Earlier, Kundra had sought anticipatory

ry bail in the FIR lodged by the Mumbai Police Cyber Crime Cell in connection with the alleged porn racket case, claiming he was falsely implicated.

He further contended that there is no evidence to link him against the HotShot App and was being made a 'scapegoat'.

However, late on July 19, Kundra was nabbed in a similar complaint registered by the Crime Branch in 2021 for which he was sent to custody. Last week, after a lower court rejected his anticipatory bail plea, he moved the Bombay HC which has granted him interim relief against arrest for a week.

MAHA ATS NABS GLOBAL DRUG KINGPIN FROM DELHI

Mumbai: In a major swoop, the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has arrested a wanted prominent member of an international drug syndicate from New Delhi, officials said here on Wednesday.

The accused was identified as Niranjan Shah, wanted in a case cracked by the ATS Juhu Police station on March 17, 2021.

The ATS Juhu had arrested Sohail Yusuf Memon and recovered 5.65 kg mephedrone, valued at around Rs 2.53 crore, and Shah - who had supplied the contraband - was an absconder in the same

MVA slams BJP ministers' 'Jan Ashirwad Yatras'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra's ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi allies Shiv Sena and Congress have slammed the ongoing 'Jan Ashirwad Yatras' launched by the Bharatiya Janata Party's recently-inducted central ministers.

While Sena MP and chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut warned that these yatras are "invitation for a third wave of Covid-19", state Congress President Nana Patole has said the people have realized how the BJP has duped them and they will "send them back home."

Their sharp comments came after the new Union Ministers Narayan Rane, Bharti Pawar, Kapil Patil, and



Bhagwat Karad launched their thanksgiving processions in different parts of the state from August 16.

"The BJP is doing this deliberately. There is no need for such things. These yatras are an invitation for a third wave of Covid-19 and worsen the Coronavirus situation in the state," Raut asserted, faying the processions. Patole reiterated that the

people of the country have realized how the BJP has defrauded them, so now "nobody is giving them any blessings" in these yatras.

"When the country is reeling under inflation, high prices of fuel, farmers are in distress, and the coronavirus crisis continues, the BJP ministers are busy taking out yatras. The people have decided to send the BJP leaders packing back to their homes," he said.

He also attacked the BJP for spying on the opposition leaders, judges, lawyers, mediapersons and other prominent people through the Pegasus software, though the BJP has consistently denied the allegations.

SC junks Maha govt's plea against CBI FIR on Anil Deshmukh

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday declined to entertain Maharashtra government's plea seeking to set aside two paragraphs in connection with transfer and posting of police officers, reinstatement of an officer from CBI's FIR against NCP leader and former home minister Anil Deshmukh.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and MR Shah said it cannot dilute the direction of a constitutional court, which ordered a CBI probe, by drawing a line for the agency on which aspect

the investigation should be done. The top court refused to interfere with the July 22 order of the Bombay High Court and dismissed the petition.

The top court emphasized that CBI has to investigate all aspects of the allegations and it cannot be limited. It further added that this will be like denuding the powers of a constitutional court.

Advocate Rahul Chitnis, representing the Maharashtra government, submitted that the state has withdrawn consent for the CBI probe and the high court direction for a probe was limited to allega-

tions of collection of money from bars and restaurants.

The top court noted that the purpose of directions passed by a constitutional court will be defeated if consent under Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act comes into play. Justice Shah further questioned, "which government will give consent to investigation where their home minister is involved?"

The high court on July 22, had said the CBI can inquire into the transfer and postings of police personnel and the reinstatement of Waze in the Mumbai police force.

Maharashtra Malls To Close Again Over "Fully Vaccinated Staff" Order

The constraints faced by the state in stepping up vaccination has been the "primary reason" that the staff could not get both the doses, the top industry body said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As Maharashtra takes measured steps to unlock amid fears over Delta variant, malls across the state will close again over challenges in meeting

the requirement of fully vaccinated staff. The Shopping Centres Association of India, however, has urged the Uddhav Thackeray government to consider opening the malls if the staff has "received one dose".

"In light of the modified guidelines issued by the government of Maharashtra on 16 August 2021, restraining mall staff from returning to workplace unless they are vaccinated with two doses with a gap 14 days after the second dose, it is unfortunate that malls across the state have decided to close down," read the official statement by the top industry body Shopping Centres Association of India.

The malls in the state have been

shut for over 300 days since the start of the pandemic, "resulting in huge, irrecoverable losses", the industry body said, adding, "We fear the trend will continue if urgent steps are not taken to ease restrictions that are 'specifically made applicable for malls'. On the other hand, a lot of mall owners have huge debts due to financing and these restrictions are only ensuring greater difficulty in servicing these obligations."

The constraints faced by the state in stepping up vaccination has been the "primary reason" that the staff could not get both the doses. However, 80 per cent of the staff has received at least a single dose, the SCAI said. "With the prevailing restric-

tions, malls will not be able to open and operate as it would be at least a month (tentatively September-end) before a sizeable number of our staff gets their second dose and meets the criteria, provided it is available and there is no shortage," the statement further added.

Lifting restrictions after months, Maharashtra had allowed malls to reopen last Wednesday. The visitors and the staff have to be fully vaccinated, the state government said.

The state has the highest overall number of cases across the country. Even though it has registered a drop in daily cases, there have been concerns over the spread of more infectious Delta variant.

WARD BOY BOOKED FOR USING ELECTRIC GRINDER TO REMOVE RING FROM BOY'S FINGER

Mumbai: According to the police, the incident took place in June but an FIR was registered on August 16 based on the complaint lodged by the boy's family members. The Naupada police in Thane has registered an FIR against a ward boy of a private hospital who allegedly injured a 14-year-old boy by using an electric grinder to remove a metal ring stuck to latter's finger. Doctors said that the injured boy may end up losing his finger. The boy's family claimed that they had gone to the hospital for treatment but a doctor sent them back after giving first aid saying he would operate on the finger tomorrow. However, instead of a doctor, the ward boy came to their house to remove the ring. He allegedly damaged the boy's finger by using an electric grinder to break the ring.

According to the police, the incident took place in June but an FIR was registered on August 16 based on the complaint lodged by the boy's family members. Though the ring was later removed, the teenager ended up with several medical complications and is undergoing treatment for the injuries. Doctors suspect the finger has got gangrene. "We have registered an FIR against the ward boy and our probe is on to ascertain why the ward boy was asked to perform surgery. We will be questioning the doctors and the hospital staffers," said a police officer.

Taliban should realise they also have 'mothers-sisters': Livid Muslim women activists

Expressing 'solidarity' with the besieged Afghanis, especially the womenfolk, as militant Taliban seized control of their country, irate Indian feminists questioned for how long women must bear the brunt of political upheavals anywhere in the world.

Team Absolute | Mumbai/Pune:

As stories of the horrors allegedly meted out on the distressed Afghan women trickled out, Indian feminists expressed serious concerns over their safety, security, dignity and human rights, and point out that the Taliban should realize they also have 'Maa-Behen' (Mothers-Sisters) and must equally respect all women of their country.

"There are fears of impending threats of violent pushback from regressive forces, particularly for women and human rights defenders... But the US and Afghan governments have abandoned the people of Afghanistan to chaos, violence and uncertainties," said Noorjehan S. Niaz and Zakia Soman, Co-Founders, Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA).

Director-General of Wisdom Foundation Prof Zeenat Shaukat Ali termed the Taliban takeover as "horrific and frightful" for Afghan women as patriarchal, misogynistic and barbaric mindsets "always make women soft-targets" and push them back to Middle Ages, in the name of Islam and Shariat.

"The Afghan women were progressing well in all fields... They even had substantial representation in the National Assembly (Parliament). The same Islam which guarantees gender justice, equality and right, took them forward. But the Taliban, as well-documented has robbed them of these achievements," Prof Zeenat said.

While Islam accords a 'high status' to women, she apprehends Taliban will do "exactly the opposite", as we have witnessed earlier brutality against women and children of Afghanistan seeking education, she said.

Hasina Khan of Bebaak Collective (Voice of the Fearless) terms the Taliban control of Afghanistan as "a threat to individual and artistic expression", and a massive drawback for progressive feminist movement there.

Warning that "the lives of many Afghan women are at direct risk from the religion fanatics," Soman pointed at past attacks on girls' schools, women teachers, forced marriages, sexual violence, public



flogging and other atrocities on women in the name of upholding Islam. Activists recall the most high-profile incident - a Pakistan Taliban outfit's murderous attack on the teenaged girl-crusader, Malala Yousofzai, then 15, in Oct 2012 - which sparked universal outrage.

Now, a global celeb, Malala, 24, not only survived the Taliban bullets, but was conferred the Nobel Peace Prize-2014, and ended her long but determined quest for education, by graduating from Oxford University in 2020.

Prof Zeenat and Soman want the Taliban leadership to publicly announce "a guarantee of safety, security and well-being of all Afghan women, female and rights activists" who have retreated underground after death threats.

Apparently basking in the changed scenario after the 'shock and awe' take-over, the Taliban have extended a conditional olive branch to Afghan women, asking them to join the government, etc, but remains to be seen how many takers there are... Pointing out how all South Asian women are subjected to injustice and inequality in their respective societies, Niaz rued that all of them bear the burden of patriarchal systems, but "are concerned by the looming fate of the Afghan sisters", given the past dubious records of the Taliban.

Prof Zeenat reminded the Taliban of Prophet Mohammed who said: "It's the religious duty of every man and woman to seek knowledge," and said the very first revelation in Holy Quran is acquiring 'ilm' (knowledge), followed up with 805 verses dealing with 'ilm' and its derivatives.

Soman and Khan worry that the new Taliban regime may enforce religious fundamentalism in Afghanistan which could be 'selectively' used by the West and other countries "to target Muslims and further Islamophobia", besides the risks of increased terror activities.

Lauding India for its help in giving priority visas to Afghans, Niaz and Soman urged that as the world's largest democracy, "we have a moral obligation to stand by and shelter the persecuted people from neighbouring countries during such grave humanitarian crises."

Prof Zeenat urged the world community, the UN, the UN Women, human and women's rights commissions, and other such influential global bodies to prioritize the cause of the beleaguered Afghan women - "before it's too late..."



# 7 THOUSAND PEOPLE WILL GET EMPLOYMENT: CM

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Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Balaghat is a district of amazing possibilities. Here there is an abundance of many natural wealth including forest, minerals, water, agriculture and deposits of all resources. By utilizing these assets and resources, Balaghat will be made "unemployment free - with employment." Investment promotion assistance is being provided for setting up industries in the district. An additional 25 percent rebate is being given on land allotment along with 50 percent rebate. There is a concession in electricity fee, power tariff. Pollution control validity has been increased from 2 years to 5 years. Assistance for infrastructure development and other incentive facilities are also being made available. There is an investment climate in Balaghat. The state government will provide employment to 7 to 8 thousand people by investing about Rs 4,000 crore.

Chouhan was addressing the Investor Summit 2021 held at Balaghat virtually from his residence. In this summit, debate sessions



regarding setting up of manganese based industries, new rice mills and workshops on bamboo industry and tourism development have been organised.

Chouhan said that employment is necessary for self-reliance. Employment opportunities will be created from industries. Value addition of raw material available in Balaghat will have to be done. Here paddy has immense potential along with minerals. A new policy is being

brought for paddy, so that it can be purchased at minimum support price and people will get employment. There are many opportunities in the food processing sector as well.

Chouhan said that there are possibilities of mineral based industry also. Balaghat's Kabelu (clay roofing tiles) is also famous. Kabelu is used less in pucca roofs, but now people are getting attracted towards the construction of eco-friendly buildings. The design of the Kabelu can be changed

to produce designer floor tiles and pre-fabricated ceilings. The Kabelu industry can also be revived depending on the changing requirement and technology.

Chouhan said that Balaghat's bamboo is very useful. Here bamboo is being produced on private land along with forests. Initiatives can be taken for enterprises like making furniture and incense sticks from available raw material in the form of bamboo.

Chouhan said that there is immense potential for tourism in Balaghat. A large area of Kanha National Park is located in Balaghat district itself. Hence, there are ample investment opportunities in hotels, resorts, wellness centers.

Chouhan said that Balaghat holds immense possibilities. There is a need to move ahead in food processing along with agricultural production. The state government is inviting investors to invest with full confidence. All possible facilities, safe environment and cooperation will be provided in Balaghat. While motivating the investors, Chouhan said that you should invest, give employment in Balaghat, the government is with you.

## Scindia Gifts 44 New Flights In 35 days To State

Jyotiraditya Scindia, who joined the BJP in March last year after a 19-year career in the Congress was rewarded with the civil aviation portfolio in the restructure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Council of ministers last month.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia today said he has started 44 new flights in the last 35 days from Madhya Pradesh. "Today flights are taking off from Jabalpur to Mumbai, Pune, Surat, Hyderabad and Kolkata. From August 20, flights will start from Jabalpur to Delhi and Indore," Scindia said.

Eight of these flights would be under UDAN scheme, which focuses on connecting smaller airports to metros and other cities, he had said earlier. The government has set a target of operationalising 100 unserved and underserved airports under the UDAN scheme, Scindia's predecessor Hardeep Puri had said. Scindia who joined the BJP in March last year after a 19-year career in the Congress was rewarded with the civil aviation portfolio in the last restructure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Council of ministers last month. The portfolio was once handled by his father, Madhavrao Scindia.

Speaking to the media during his visit to Indore, the Rajya Sabha member from Madhya Pradesh said, "I am dedicated and it



will be my endeavour to take India forward in the civil aviation sector under the leadership of the Prime Minister. "I want to thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP President JP Nadda that they believed in me, I am ready to serve the people," he added. Scindia handled the Commerce and Industry ministry in the UPA-II government between 2009 and 2012. Between 2012 and 2014, he was in charge of the power ministry. Restive after the Congress defeat in the 2019 general elections, Mr Scindia moved to the BJP with 22 loyalists in March 2020, bringing the state's Kamal Nath government tumbling down. He was later rewarded by the BJP with a Rajya Sabha seat.

His elevation to the government now entails a challenge. For the aviation sector, it is a tough time, given the Covid-induced restrictions on travel. The hospitality industry and travel sector has been brought to a grinding halt and airlines are struggling to survive as flights have drastically reduced all over the world.

## Eco-tourism places will be operated by private institutions

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Forest areas with potential for eco-tourism are being identified and developed in the reserved forests of the state as recreation and wildlife experience areas. Tender will be issued for the selection of private businessmen for the purpose of operation, management and maintenance of eco-tourism activities at 29 such eco-tourism sites.

CEO of Eco Tourism Development Board Satyanand informed that 29 sites for eco-tourism would be entrusted to private institutions for operation, management and maintenance for a period of 10 years. New dimensions of eco-tourism development will be created

by developing infrastructure in these areas. Additional employment opportunities will be provided to forest dwellers residing near such forest areas by conducting eco-tourism activities. On completion of this arrangement, tourists will also get an opportunity to get closer to nature and understand its various components and the interactions between these components. The agency has been selected for eco-tourism after completion of all the works of Panpatha near Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve and Dudhiya Talab and Bison Highway Retreat located near Pench Tiger Reserve. Tender will be issued for the remaining sites soon which include Ramgarh, Kerwa, Samardha, Bagonia in

Bhopal Forest Division, Kathotia, Digambar Waterfall, Amargarh Waterfall in Sehore, Dhari Kotla, Boria Mal and Gunjari, Amondagarh, Ammamai, Sharda Mandir Hill, Mahadev Gufa and Fareed Baba, Lamajoti Tala, Jungle Cottage in South Seoni Forest Division, Butterfly Park, Zip Line Kharbai, Satdhara Jungle Camp in Raisen, Sesaipura in Kuno Palpur, Ratnai Pahad, Gidli Ghughra, Bokur Dahar, Khurkhari Dadar, Barwah Chidiya Bhadak in Dindori, Gangulpara Reservoir in South Balaghat, Deogarh in South Chhindwara, Notghat in Tikamgarh, Burhanpur and Dakshin Betul forest divisions include the destinations of Jhanjhar Dam and Sapna respectively.

## IISER Bhopal identifies mechanism behind breast cancer spread

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Bhopal have found the mechanism by which breast cancer cells proliferate and spread.

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The findings have important implications in designing of therapeutic interventions for breast cancer as in India, it accounted for 11.1 per cent of cancer deaths in 2020, driving the need for aggressive research to understand and treat this malady.

The study, published in the peer-reviewed journal Oncogenesis, analysed the regulation of a particular gene, called a ESRP1, in breast cancer. The team found that there is a difference in the expression of the ESRP1 gene between the normal and tumour tissues of breast cancer patients. The researchers explored the regulatory mechanism behind ESRP1 upregula-

tion in breast tumour tissues. "Our research, for the first time, shows the reason behind an elevated expression of a key gene, ESRP1, in breast tumour tissue supporting tumour progression," said Dr Sanjeev Shukla, Associate Professor, Department of Biological Sciences at IISER Bhopal. "Another important part of the discovery was a novel epigenetic regulatory mechanism that governs ESRP1 downregulation in hypoxic tumour tissue, which might help the cancer cells to evade the surrounding tissue and enter the bloodstream," he added. The team found that in tumour tissues, a transcription factor called E2F1 that regulates transcription of ESRP1 gets upregulated, which

increases its expression and eventually leads to excessive growth of breast cancer cells. Thus, E2F1 could be a molecular drug target to inhibit the growth of both normoxic as well as hypoxic breast cancer cells, Shukla suggested. "The finding that such intelligent regulatory mechanisms exist in cancer cells to alter the expression of essential genes as and when required, resulting in cancer progression, lays the foundation towards a better understanding of a complex disease and for improved therapeutic strategies," he said. Further, the team also found the mechanistic aspects of cancer spread to other parts of the body or metastasis. Cancerous tumours develop regions of reduced oxygen due

to poor blood circulation. It has been known that such oxygen-deprived regions instigate metastasis. The team showed that it is because E2F1 fails to bind the ESRP1 promoter in oxygen-deprived breast cancer cells, downregulating the expression of ESRP1. This down-regulation causes the cancerous cells to break free from primary cancer and join the bloodstream to be carried to other parts of the body, thereby resulting in metastasis, the researchers explained. "Our research shows that there is orchestrated activation of ESRP1 in breast cancer, depending on the tumour microenvironment," Shukla noted.

## CM PAYS TRIBUTES TO INVINCIBLE WARRIOR BAJIRAO PESHWA (I)



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid tributes to the great army general and invincible warrior Bajirao Peshwa (I) on his anniversary. Chouhan garlanded the portrait of Bajirao Peshwa (I) at his residence on Wednesday. Chouhan tweeted and said that many tributes to the unconquerable and unrivaled warrior Veer Peshwa Bajirao (I) on his anniversary. The future generations of India will always be proud of your saga of heroism, valour, and courage. Salute to Veer Shiromani.

Bajirao Peshwa (I) was the Peshwa (Prime Minister) of Shahuji Maharaj, the fourth Chhatrapati of the Maratha Empire, from 1720 to 1740. He was born on 18 August 1700. People also called him the undefeated Hindu warrior emperor. On the strength of his efficient leadership and tactical skills, he expanded the Maratha Empire, especially in North India. Due to this, 20 years after his death, the Maratha Empire reached its climax during the reign of his son. He died unexpectedly on April 28, 1740 due to sudden illness in the middle of the zenith of his fame. The tomb of Peshwa Bajirao (I) is at Raver Khedi in Khargone district.

## MADHU KAMINI SAPLING PLANTED BY CM

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a sapling of Madhu Kamini in Smart Garden on Wednesday. Chouhan plants saplings every day in fulfillment of his resolve. Today Agriculture and Farmer Welfare Minister Kamal Patel was with him at the time of plantation.

Madhu Kamini is a medicinal plant. It is an evergreen and ornamental tree. Its small, fragrant flowers bloom in spring, which are also used for perfume. The flowers are also used in the production of cosmetics.



## Farmers' leader threatens to move court against 'wrong' IMD predictions

Bharat Singh Bais, an Ujjain-based farmers' leader, said at times, farmers prepare themselves for sowing as per the IMD's weather forecast.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Farmers' Union leader in Malwa region has threatened to move court against what he claimed as the IMD's "wrong" predictions leading to crop losses for cultivators in recent times.

However, a senior scientist of the India Meteorological Department said farmers might have been "misled", as a private weather service predicted early monsoon this year, in contrast to forecast of the IMD (an agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India).

He also said that cultivators should check whether the information was coming to them from genuine sources.

In most of the cases, the weather predictions released by the IMD have failed. This has led to huge losses for farmers," Bharatiya Kisan Sangh's

Malwa prant (region) spokesman Bharat Singh Bais claimed on Wednesday.

He said they were planning to move court against the IMD's "wrong predictions" and a final decision in this regard will be taken soon.

Bais, an Ujjain-based farmers' leader, said at times, farmers prepare themselves for sowing as per the IMD's weather forecast.

But the failed predictions led to huge losses and sown crops got damaged, as it happened during the recent rains. About 300-400 hectare of land was lying unused (without sowing) in Ujjain district alone due to the IMD's wrong rain predictions, he said. In such a situation, farmers cannot trust the IMD's forecast, he added. Bais said in the US and other countries, weather predictions are precise and people can prepare themselves according to them.

"In India, the government is spending huge money, but the weather predictions are coming out to be wrong, he claimed.

Bais said he was collecting the data of losses incurred by farmers due to the "wrong weather predictions" of the state's MeT department.

The data of wrong forecasts in the past two-three years was also being collected, he informed.

After collecting the data, we will take a decision about moving court against the IMD by next month, after holding a meeting, he said, adding that at present, he and his associates are engaged in organisational elections. Bais also said they had earlier staged a protest against the IMD's "wrong predictions" and it yielded results. When contacted, a senior scientist of the IMD's Bhopal centre refuted the allegations and said that farmers might have been "misled" by

the weather forecast from more than one source.

The farmers should at least check that all weather-related information is coming to them from genuine sources. A private weather forecast service predicted early monsoon arrival, in contrast to the IMD's predictions. This might have led to the problem, he said.

In several districts, some self-proclaimed weathermen were making forecasts as if they were IMD's representatives, which was leading to confusion, he said.

There is no truth in such allegations. This is not the problem of farmers...rather, some 'netas' (leaders) had earlier staged a protest to get compensation," he said.

The scientist also said that media should also be cautious while publishing weather-related predictions.

## TWO WOMEN KILLED, FIVE INJURED IN ACCIDENT

Panna: Two women were killed and five others injured when an auto-rickshaw collided with a tractor in Panna district on Wednesday, police said. The accident occurred near Chandrabal village, about 75km from the district headquarters, around 11am, Simaria police station in-charge Sandeep Bharti said. The victims were returning home to Mohandra village, when the auto-rickshaw they were travelling in collided with a tractor coming from the opposite side, he said. The women, aged 22 and 17 years, died on the spot, while five others were critically injured, the official said, adding that four of the injured persons have been referred to Katni and Damoh for further treatment.

## Efforts should be made to take the saga of the heroes to the people: Governor

Efforts should be made to take the saga of the heroes to the people: Governor

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that freedom has come after the hard struggle, sacrifice and valour of our ancestors. Giving more and more respect to the freedom fighters is the least we can do. We should always be grateful to them because the happy life that we are leading today is due to the freedom fighters. It is the duty of every citizen to always work in the interest of the country.

Patel was addressing the Felicitation of Gallantry Awards to Ex-Servicemen and Serving Fraternity programme organised by Sudarshan Chakra Corps of Army at Panchjanya Auditorium Dronachal on Wednesday. Patel said that the aim of the Amrit Mahotsav of Azadi is to disseminate

information about the sacrifices of the freedom heroes and the meaning of freedom, so that the life stories of those who have not been recognised in history also reaches the people. He said that is why the celebrations are being held especially at places like the Cellular Jail in Andaman and Jallianwala Bagh in Punjab, the pilgrim sites of our independence. He said that we should take the inspiration of the elixir of energy of freedom from the freedom fighters, and resolve to build the nation with the basic qualities and ideas of our culture. Prime Minister Modi has also said that the feelings of 130 crore people of the country should be involved in organising the Amrit Mahotsav. Therefore, those who are currently working for the country and society, all of them should connect with the organisation of Amrit Mahotsav. He asked to organise the fes-

tival as a public festival, with public participation. Along with these events of Amrit Mahotsav, he expressed happiness on the information that the army is celebrating 75 years of the independent Indian Army.

Patel said that there are many examples of patriotism, courage and valour of Indian soldiers. Even after independence, the war with China in 1962, the war with Pakistan in 1965 and 71, the Kargil War and more recently the disputes with China in the Galwan Valley, the three wings of the army have faced with courage and valour. Be it war or peace, our brave soldiers are always alert. Apart from war, they also face the natural calamities in the country with alacrity. He appreciated the cooperation of the Army in the relief and rescue operations of the recent floods in the northern part of the state. He told the retired

military officers and soldiers that they should not consider themselves retired, the passion and fervour of the soldiers can never end. He also appealed to use indigenous products to build a self-reliant India.

Governor Patel honored retired Vir Chakra awardee Air Vice Marshal Aditya Vikram Pethia, Shaurya Chakra awardee Colonel Yashwant Kumar Singh, Naik Badrimal and Sena Medal awardee Colonel Arvind Nigam as well as serving soldiers, Sena Medal awardee Brigadier Ashutosh Shukla, Brigadier Ajay Kumar Sharma, Col Prashant Sanjayrao Nikam, Col SS Khanna, Col AJ Singh, Col Vijay Singh Mehta, Col Munish Kumar Sharma and Major Ajay Kumar Sharma. The Governor was welcomed by General Officer Commanding 21st Corps Lieutenant General Dheeraj Seth.



EDITOR'S SPECS

CLIMATE ACTIONS MUST BE NATIONALLY DETERMINED

India is always committed to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement and extended full support to the UK for COP26 to be held in Glasgow in November this year. India believes that climate actions must be nationally determined and strongly advocates that the differentiation and operationalization of flexibility provided in the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement for developing countries should be at the core of decision-making.

India's indispensable role in Afghanistan's development

Tessa Toms

For India, a strong, prosperous and economically independent Afghanistan is a strategic priority, as said by former External Affairs Minister of India, Salman Khurshid reflects Afghanistan's priority in India's foreign policy and is vital to India's strategic interest in the region.

Although from 1996 to 2001, when the Taliban captured Kabul, bilateral relations between New Delhi and Kabul came to a halt. However, since 2001, when the US-led war on terrorism pushed Taliban regime from Kabul, New Delhi re-established ties with Kabul and poured in reconstruction and development assistance in the country.

India's Investments in Key Infrastructure

- SALMA DAM: The 42MW Salma Dam located on the Hari Rud River in Chishti Sharif District of Herat Province in western Afghanistan has been India's most expensive investment in Afghanistan. The hydropower and irrigation project, completed against many odds was inaugurated in 2016, is known as the Afghan-India Friendship Dam. Besides generating electricity, with its water storage capacity of over 640 million cubic meters and irrigation capacity of 2,00,000 acres of farmland from the Chishti Sharif district of Herat to the Zulfikar area of the Iran Border, the dam assumes a vital function in the country's agriculture sector.

blocked due to tensed relations between New Delhi and Islamabad. Therefore, the highway is of strategic importance to India. During the virtual Afghanistan Conference in November 2020, India's External Affairs minister, S. Jaishankar, stated that 'India transported 75,000 tonnes of wheat as part of its humanitarian assistance to strengthen food security of Afghanistan through the Chabahar port during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 300 Indian engineers and workers had toiled alongside Afghans to build the road.

- PARLIAMENT: The Afghan Parliament in Kabul was built by India at \$90 million. It was opened in 2015. Prime Minister Narendra Modi while inaugurating the building described it as India's tribute to democracy in Afghanistan.
STOR PALACE: In 2009, Governments of India and Afghanistan along with the Aga Khan Development Network signed a tripartite agreement for the restoration of the Stor Palace, reviving it to its former glory.
Air Freight: Two air corridors Kabul-Delhi and Herat-Delhi were inaugurated in 2017.
Defence: India has supplied military hardware, four Mi-25 attack helicopters to the Afghan Air Force in 2015 and 285 military vehicles to the Afghan National Army.
Power Infrastructure: India provided \$111 million for the construction of the 202-km Phul-e-Khumri transmission line that provided electricity to Kabul city.

from Pul-e-Khumri, north of Hindukush, to Kabul via the 13,170-foot high Salang Pass. Indian engineers were exposed to several dangers during this project, which included the hazardous task of surveying the transmission route passing through the heavily-mined Hindukush ranges on both sides of Salang that had been the site for many battles over more than 3 decades. Other investments in Afghanistan's Power infrastructure projects include 220 kV DC transmission line from Baghlan to the north of Kabul and installation of solar panels in several remote villages. Further, two additional power substations at Doshi and Charikar were taken up to service the 220kV transmission Line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul that was built earlier to meet emerging demands.

aid plays an important role in capacity building in agricultural sciences. In the area of skill development, India has been providing education to Afghan nationals in the field of agriculture through the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) scholarships. Further, India provided desks and benches for schools in various cities and played an important role in building capacity with mentoring programmes in the civil service, and training for doctors and others. So far, more than 65,000 Afghan students have also studied in India.
Transportation and mobility: According to the MEA, India gifted 400 buses and 200 mini-buses for urban transportation, 105 utility vehicles for municipalities. Several smaller roads in the country were built with India's assistance.
Trade: India-Afghanistan trade has grown substantially with the establishment of the air freight corridor in 2017.

international

JOHNSON, BIDEN VOW TO WORK TOGETHER ON AFGHAN SITUATION

London | Agencies

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and US President Joe Biden have spoken over telephone about the current situation in Afghanistan following Taliban takeover, the Downing Street said in a statement.

The two leaders welcomed their countries' cooperation in recent days to help evacuate their nationals, current and former staff, and others from Afghanistan, the statement said, Xinhua news agency reported.

"They resolved to continue working closely together on this in the days and weeks ahead to allow as many people as possible to leave the country," it added.

Johnson and Biden, during the phone call on Tuesday, also agreed on the need for the global community to come together to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.



Britain's plans include increased humanitarian aid to the region and resettlement of refugees, it said. Britain's Home Office said on

Tuesday night that up to 20,000 Afghan refugees will be offered a route to set up homes in Britain over five years.

In their phone conversation, the two leaders also agreed to hold a virtual Group of Seven (G7) leaders' meeting in the coming days to discuss the Afghanistan situation.

In a televised speech on Monday, Biden stood by his decision to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan while acknowledging Kabul's collapse to the Taliban came much sooner than Washington had anticipated.

Just over a week, the Taliban, which the US overthrew in 2001, went from winning control of its first provincial capital to taking over Kabul, capital of the war-torn Asian country.

Johnson said on Sunday that the US decision to pull out of Afghanistan has "accelerated things."

We will have to talk with Taliban: EU foreign policy chief

Brussels | Agencies

The European Union (EU) foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell has said there are many lessons to be learned over Afghanistan and the Taliban's takeover, adding that the EU will have to talk with the Taliban as it has won the war.

"The Taliban have won the war, so we will have to talk with them," Borrell said after an emergency video conference of EU foreign ministers on Tuesday afternoon, adding that this does not mean moving quickly to officially recognize the Taliban's government, Xinhua reported.

"I just said that we have to talk with them about everything, even to try to protect women and girls. Even for that, you have to get in touch with them," Borrell said.

"We have to get in touch with the authorities in Kabul, whatever they are," Borrell noted, "in order to engage in a dialogue, as soon as necessary, to prevent a humanitarian and a potential migratory disaster."

Borrell added that any cooperation by the EU with the new government of Afghanistan "will be conditioned on a peaceful and inclusive settlement and respect for the fundamental rights of all Afghans, including women,



youth and persons belonging to minorities," as well as respect for other commitments such as fighting against corruption and preventing the use of Afghan territory by terrorists.

He said the new reality in Afghanistan comes 20 years after the beginning of the military operation launched by the United States with the support of NATO in October 2001. The original military and political commitment, which is to destroy the Al-Qaeda terrorist group, shifted to the nation-building of a modern state in Afghanistan.

Vaccine stockpiling by nations may bring new Covid variants

Toronto | Agencies

Vaccine nationalism may strongly impact global trajectories of Covid-19 case numbers and increase the potential emergence of novel variants, warn researchers. A team of researchers from the US and Canada projected forward the incidence of Covid-19 cases under a range of vaccine dosing regimes, vaccination rates, and assumptions related to immune responses.

They did so in two model regions: One with high access to vaccines (HAR) and a low-access region (LAR). The models also allowed for the regions to be coupled either through case importation, or the evolution of a novel variant in one of the regions. The study is published in the journal Science.

"Certain countries such as Peru and South Africa that have had severe Covid-19 outbreaks have received few

vaccines, while many doses have gone to countries experiencing comparatively milder pandemic impacts, either in terms of mortality or economic dislocation," said Caroline Wagner, Assistant professor of bioengineering at McGill University.

Overall, the study found that increased vaccine-sharing resulted in reduced case numbers in LARs.

"Because it appears that vaccines are highly effective at reducing the clinical severity of infections, the public health implications of these reductions are very significant," said Michael Mina, Assistant Professor at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. On the other hand, the models predicted that sustained elevated case numbers in LARs with limited vaccine availability will result in a high potential for viral evolution, underlying the importance of rapid, equitable global vaccine distribution.

WORLD LEADERS, EXPERTS CRITICISE US POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN

Brussels | Agencies

World leaders, political commentators and foreign affairs experts have joined the international chorus denouncing the US policy in Afghanistan, under which a 20-year military deployment suddenly came to a chaotic end on Sunday.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has said that the sudden downfall of the Afghan government and the Taliban's swift takeover has cast a "long shadow" over the West's efforts to build a stable and lasting community, the Xinhua news agency reported.

"Scenes of despair at Kabul airport are shameful for the political West," Steinmeier said in a statement. The "failure" of the West's years-long efforts in Afghanistan "raises questions about the past and future of our foreign policy and military engagement", he said.

Earlier on Monday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel had said that the international deployment in Afghanistan was "disappointing," urging countries to learn lessons from the failure in Afghanistan.

French President Emmanuel Macron has called for "a responsible and united response" within the United Nations Security Council on Afghanistan where the Taliban has regained power, warning against the risk



of irregular migration flows to Europe caused by the destabilization of Afghanistan.

In an interview with Parliament's Listy newspaper on Tuesday, Czech President described the US withdrawal from Afghanistan as cowardice and a dramatic failure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), warning of intensifying mistrust within NATO of the legitimacy of the US existence as a so-called world leader.

"It has been rather catastrophic. It has been a long-term commitment for 20 years to make a better Afghanistan," former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt told Swedish Television. Describing the US withdrawal as "unforgivable," Bildt questioned the move,

saying that he was surprised by "the lack of preparation, the fact that one or the other knew what was going to happen." In an interview with Belgian newspaper Het Laatste Nieuws, David Crieckemans, professor of international politics at the University of Antwerp in Belgium accused US President Joe Biden of making a monumental mistake in withdrawing all US military troops from Afghanistan. "President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw all military forces is simply the West's biggest strategic mistake since the turn of the century," he said. French national daily Le Monde has listed "the painful questions after the mistakes in Afghanistan."

"US President Joe Biden, by decreeing a

military withdrawal from Afghanistan before the 20th anniversary of 9/11, put an end to a double error. On one hand, the West had no reason to deploy in Afghanistan in 2002, the year following the victory of the anti-Taliban forces -- one does not occupy militarily a country where there is no longer an enemy to fight," it wrote. "On the other hand, their very presence served as a magnet for the Taliban to resume the fight, fueling an Afghan civil war that did not exist at the end of 2001," said Le Monde. "Now that the Taliban have reconquered Kabul and will exercise power, there are only painful questions left," it said.

Newspaper Le Figaro quoted congressmen who criticized Biden for his failure to plan the withdrawal, now a humiliating failure being played out in front of cameras around the world. "This is an absolute disaster, of epic proportions," "Joe Biden has blood on his hands," "The very fact that we did not even succeed in securing the civilian area of Kabul airport speaks volumes about our moral and operational shortcomings," the congressmen was quoted as saying. Peter Neumann, a German political scientist at King's College London, told state broadcaster ARD that the Taliban was often presented as a terrorist organization but neglected as a Pashto militant deeply rooted in the local religious and social establishment, whose support has been always there.



# Camila Cabello lucky to have Shawn Mendes

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Camila Cabello labels her relationship with singer Shawn Mendes as built on "sweetness and tenderness". She says she is lucky to have a 'nurturing partner' like him. "I probably have a nurturing attitude because I also like being nurtured. I'm lucky that my partner is the same way. There's a lot of sweetness and tenderness," Cabello said, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She added, "I think we're both sensitive. I'm really lucky to be able to surround myself with tenderness; it's really important to me."

The couple keeps each other grounded and is always on hand to help each other through rough patches with their mental health.

The 'Havana' hitmaker recalled helping Mendes overcome his anxiety about maintaining his physique, after he said last year that he would sometimes only get three hours of sleep so that he could wake up early to hit the gym.

Cabello has encountered her own struggle with body image, and addressed her critics in a TikTok video. Now, the 'Senorita' crooner said that posting the video was so liberating.



# MAE WHITMAN COMES OUT AS 'PANSEXUAL'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Mae Whitman, who has starred in films such as "The Duff", "One Fine Day" and "Independence Day", has come out and spoken about her sexuality. She talked about her sexuality on social media and praised her animated fantasy-comedy show "The Owl House". "Just taking a moment to say I am SO proud to be even a small part of a show like The Owl House. Being pansexual myself, I wish I had such incredible characters like Amity and Luz in my life when I was growing up," Whitman wrote, reports femalefirst.co.uk. "Queer representation is sooooo important ... keep it up world! #TOH," she added. "The Owl House" has been loved by the critics and audiences alike for its LGBTQ+ representation.



# Alex Rodriguez gets pizza pranked by Ben 'Afflec'

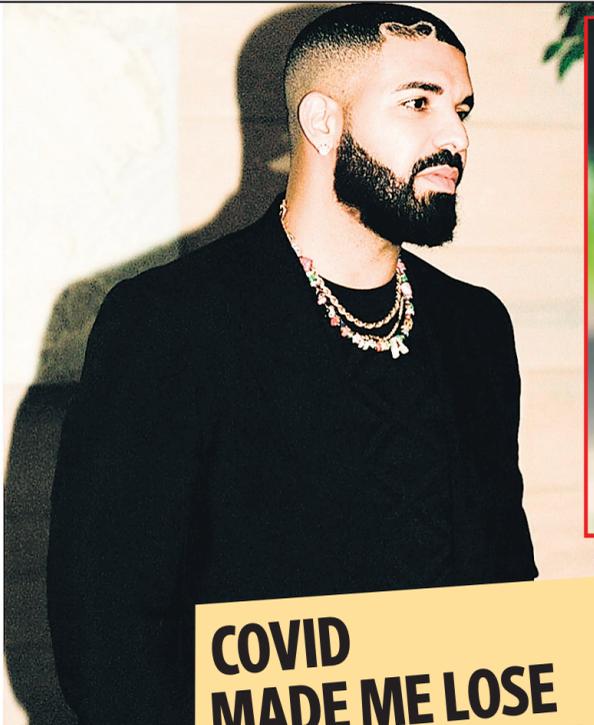
Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Jennifer Lopez's ex-fiance Alex Rodriguez got pranked by an anonymous person, who used the name 'Ben Afflec', similar to Lopez's current love interest, actor Ben Affleck. According to tmz.com, someone named Ben called up the Florida-based online pizza joint Bulls Bears & Squares, and ordered pizza worth \$141.32 to Rodriguez's home on June 17. The joint's owner, Samuel Tadros, said that the only topping requested was chicken. The name used for the order was 'Ben Afflec'. The troll ordered the pizza to Rodriguez's Hamptons mansion, clearly taking a dig at Rodriguez's past. There was no note on the pizza delivery.

# BTS Army makes 'WeDemandApology' trend in India

Los Angeles | Agencies

Fans of the band BTS, also known as the ARMY, are demanding an apology for an insulting Spanish podcast that surfaced on Tuesday night. In the podcast, five radio jockeys are seen disparagingly describing BTS as "Chinese backstreet boys". They alleged that "they have got surgeries done to look like a mix of Asians and North Americans." The fans, naturally, were upset and very soon the hashtag #WeDemandApology was trending at No.1 in India. Also trending was the related hashtag #StopAsianHate. BTS is globally one of most popular boy bands, whose members are RM (Kim Namjoon), Jin (Kim Seokjin), Suga (Min Yoongi), J-Hope (Jung Hoseok), Jimin (Park Jimin), V (Kim Taehyung) and Jungkook (Jeon Jungkook).



# COVID MADE ME LOSE MY HAIR: DRAKE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rapper Drake had Covid and has suffered hair loss as a result and he had to take a step to cover that up. Drake recently had a heart shape shaved into the top left of his head, and when one fan took to Instagram to mock the new look, the 'God's Plan' hitmaker called it a drastic measure to cover up his hair loss, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

The fan posted: "That heart is stressed."

Drake replied: "I had Covid that s\*\*\* grew in weird I had to start again. It's coming back don't diss."

He shared his battle with Covid more than a month after he was spotted on a dinner date with influencer Johanna Leila. It was later revealed the two had been dating for "several months" before their trip to the stadium.



# Kerry Katona doing yoga to get back in shape

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Kerry Katona says she has taken up yoga to shift the pounds after putting on weight due to not having time for her fitness regime.

Katona is now getting back to working out and has started with some yoga each morning with the help of her personal trainer and fiancé -- Ryan Mahoney, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

"I've been feeling a bit rubbish recently, so I've been doing some yoga in the morning to try and get myself back into shape. Routine, consistency and a good mindset is key," she wrote in her latest New! magazine column. Katona and Mahoney also enjoyed a short break together at The Tytherington Club, in Cheshire, and she says it was great to get away from her work commitments and have a short respite from the responsibilities of raising her five kids.

# ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Zara Holland



# RAHUL, SIRAJ MAKE BIG GAINS IN ICC TEST RANKINGS

Dubai | Agencies

Indian opening batsman K.L. Rahul has jumped 19 slots to reach 37th place while pacer Mohammed Siraj has climbed 18 places to reach at 38th position in the ICC Test Rankings released on Wednesday.

Rahul and Siraj were the chief architects of India's 151-run victory over England at Lord's in the second Test on Monday, helping the tourists take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series. Rahul was adjudged Player of the Match for his knock of 129 in the first innings. The 29-year-old opener, whose career-best is the eighth position attained in November 2017, had re-entered the Test rankings at 56th position last week after the first Test at Trent Bridge.

The 27-year-old Siraj took four wickets in both innings of the Lord's



Test. His total haul of eight wickets for 126 runs ensured that India sealed a win in a riveting Lord's Test. His fellow pacer Jasprit Bumrah dropped a spot to be at tenth place while

Ravindra Jadeja moved down one spot to be third in the all-rounders' chart. Indian captain Virat Kohli retained his fifth place to be the top-ranked Indian batsman. Opener

Rohit Sharma and wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant held on to their sixth and seventh positions respectively. Other gainers from the Lord's Test include England captain Joe Root. Root's unbeaten knock of 180 in the first innings resulted in him moving two places to be ranked second with 893 rating points, only eight less than top-ranked New Zealand captain Kane Williamson.

James Anderson moved one spot to sixth place after a five-wicket haul in the first innings. His fellow pacer Mark Wood jumped five places to be ranked 37th after taking five wickets in the match. A thrilling first Test between West Indies and Pakistan in Kingston saw Pakistan skipper Babar Azam gain two slots to be placed eighth in the batting chart after scores of 30 and 55. Faheem Ashraf and Fawad Alam also rose up to 48th and 55th places respectively.

# Indian Contingent's Eight paralympic players reach Tokyo

Team Absolute | New Delhi

High jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu, along with two other para-athletes and six support staff, reached Tokyo on Wednesday morning ahead of the Paralympics that begin on August 24.

India sent its first batch of Paralympians to Tokyo Paralympics with just days left for the global event to begin. Mariyappan, who won gold in Rio, is India's flag-bearer for the Tokyo Paralympics. Discus thrower Vinod Kumar, men's javelin thrower Tek Chand have reached the venue along with Mariyappan.

Before they left for Tokyo, the contingent was given a send-off by the members of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport. On August 17, the Indian contingent also interacted with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi via video conference where he had praised the para-athletes for overcoming so many obstacles in life and had said, "we have to keep on improving our ways and system to develop a sports culture



in India, shed fears of earlier generations". Thanking the Prime Minister for his interaction with the Tokyo Paralympics contingent, the president of the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) Deepa Malik said, "I am sure the athletes will do their absolute best to keep the Indian flag flying high at the Tokyo Paralympics."

India is sending its largest-ever contingent to the Tokyo Paralympics with 54 athletes who are set to compete in nine disciplines. The mega event will kick off on August 24 and will go on till September 5.

# I am an army man and we don't surrender: Boxer Satish

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Satish Kumar was India's hero at the Tokyo Olympics despite losing in the quarterfinals to Uzbekistan's world champion Bakhtiyor Jalolov in the super heavyweight boxing category.

The Indian sustained two deep cuts on his forehead and chin during the pre-quarterfinals and was in doubt for his medal-deciding clash against the Uzbek heavyweight. However, Satish decided to fight his next bout against Jalolov nonetheless, winning several hearts including his opponent's. "Jalolov hugged me and said 'you are a true warrior'," Satish told IANS from Lucknow, where he will be honoured with the other



Tokyo Olympics heroes by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

"There will be lots of ups and downs in boxing. I knew that it was an important fight for my country. I could give India another medal. My father also motivated me that I should fight no matter what the result would be. I am an army man and we don't surrender. Ek junoon tha ladne

ka bas (There was a passion to fight)," said the Subedar Major. "I am happy that despite my loss they are loving me and congratulating me as if I won the bout. But I assure you that I will work harder to win a medal next time," he added.

Satish is now planning to start training for the World Championship scheduled to take place in October.

# Kohli most foul-mouthed individual: Compton

London: Former England batsman Nick Compton has referred to Indian skipper Virat Kohli as the "most foul-mouthed individual".

In a tweet, the 38-year-old who scored 775 runs in 16 Test matches between 2012 and 2016, recalled an incident from 2012 during a Test series in India.

"Isn't Kohli the most foul mouthed individual. I'll Never forget the barrage of abuse I received in 2012 when the swearing [emotion: swearing face] stunned me to the point that he did himself a serious disservice. It highlights what a level headed and grounded man Root, Tendulkar, Williamson et al are," said Compton in a tweet in which he also praised the level-headedness of Sachin Tendulkar, Kane Williamson and Joe Root.

Kohli was involved in an altercation with England pace bowler James Anderson during the second Test which India won on the fifth and final day.

However, Kohli shook hands with the 39-year-old England pacer who is the third highest wicket-taker in Test cricket.

The 32-year-old India No. 4 batsman has been expressive on the field and has also been involved in altercations with players like Steve Smith.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) on

Wednesday acquired the media rights of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) competitions for the Indian subcontinent in a four-year agreement. The deal -- signed with Football Marketing Asia, the exclusive commercial partner of the AFC -- gives FSDL exclusive media rights ownership of all major AFC national team and club competitions, including but not limited to the AFC Asian Qualifiers -- Road to Qatar Final

Round, AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022, the AFC Asian Cup China 2023, as well as the annual club competitions, AFC Champions League and AFC Cup from the 2021 season. FSDL founder & chairperson, Nita Ambani, said, "This is a hugely significant development for Indian football. To bring Asia's best footballing action for our fans is a key part of our long-term strategy, commitment, and desire to have as many Indian youths participate, follow, and engage with the sport. I believe the live telecast of AFC competitions to our homes will

FSDL acquires media rights for AFC competitions

enable a generation of youth to follow the 'beautiful game' and continue to raise and develop the profile of the sport. "We are fully committed to the development of Indian football and will continue to work with the stakeholders in India, AFC, and FIFA towards building a strong ecosystem," she said. FSDL will be sub-licensing the media rights to partner channels and partner digital services providing significantly more coverage of AFC competitions on both linear and digital channels in the sub-continent that has previously had very little exposure to Asian football.

# Japanese Grand Prix cancelled due to rise in Covid-19 cases

Tokyo | Agencies

The 2021 Japanese Grand Prix has been cancelled after race organisers cited "ongoing complexities" related to the Covid-19 pandemic, said Formula 1 on Wednesday.

The race, which was also cancelled last year because of the pandemic, was due to be held on October 8-10 at the Suzuka circuit.

"Following ongoing discussions with the promoter and authorities in Japan, the decision has been taken by the Japanese government to cancel the race this season due to ongoing complexities of the pandemic in the country," read a statement from Formula 1. "Formula 1 is now working on the details of the revised calendar and will announce the final details in the coming weeks. Formula 1 has proven this year, and in 2020, that we can adapt and find solutions to the ongoing uncertainties and is excited by the level of interest in locations to host Formula 1 events this year and beyond," said Formula 1 further in a release.

The cancellation is a blow to Honda Racing F1 team. The team will be deprived of a home race in its final season of Formula 1.



The Formula 1 season continues with the Belgian Grand Prix on August 29. Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes holds an eight-point lead over Red Bull's Max Verstappen in the driver standings.

# We really need to start: Smriti on women's IPL

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Indian opener Smriti Mandhana feels that the women's IPL should start with five or six teams as there is a lot of depth in women's cricket in the country.

Smriti recently came back from the Hundred, scoring 167 runs in seven matches at an average of 27.83. She took Trailblazers to victory in the women's T20 challenge in the UAE last year. Smriti has also played for Western Storm in the Kia Super League in England and represented Brisbane Heat in the women's Big Bash League in Australia. "There are same number of states for men and women. So, when they started men's IPL, there were same number of states. But the quality went higher and higher as the years passed by. What IPL is today, it wasn't the same 10 or 11 years back. I think it's the same for women's cricket. We have same amount of girls playing cricket. For now, I think we will have good five or six teams to start with and



probably grow to eight teams in one or two years. But till the time we don't start, we don't know," said Smriti in an episode on Ravichandran Ashwin's YouTube channel. The 25-year-old also said that there is no point in having a conversation about knowing the depth of women's cricket in India without any competition like IPL. "We can't always

have the conversation like there any depth or no. We have never had a competition in women's cricket which is like six teams in a T20 tournament. So, we don't know if we have or no. How can we just judge and say we don't have?" Smriti concluded by giving an example of Australia. "I played in Big Bash four years back and now the quality is very different. You can see in Australia where they have 40-50 cricketers ready to play international cricket any day. So, I really want that to happen in Indian cricket. I think IPL will play a huge role in that."

# COCO GAUFF SETS UP BLOCKBUSTER CINCINNATI CLASH WITH NAOMI OSAKA

Cincinnati (US): Coco Gauff of the United States reached the second round of the Western & Southern Open after dispatching veteran Hsieh Su-wei of Chinese Taipei, 6-1, 6-2, to set up a blockbuster showdown with No.2 seed Naomi Osaka here on Wednesday. World No. 14 Victoria Azarenka of Belarus, who won the title when the event was played in New York last season, got past big-hitting Russian Liudmila Samsonova, 6-2, 6-3, in their first-round battle. In their first meeting, 17-year-old Coco fended off the challenge of 35-year-old Hsieh to claim a spot in the second round of the event for the first time in her career, after exactly an hour of play. Coco had 20 winners to 16 unforced errors, while Hsieh's 11 winners were undone by 19 unforced errors. Gauff also took utmost advantage on break points, converting five of six on the day. "I think I did well just focusing on my side of the court," Coco said after her win. "She hits a crazy shot, and trying to not let that get into my head, because she's talented and she will hit great shots." It will be a all-star clash as Coco will take on Naomi Next. They will be facing off for the third time, with each of their meetings taking place at a top hardcourt event. Naomi defeated Coco in the third round of the 2019 US Open, 6-3, 6-0, but at the next major, Coco got her revenge in the same round, beating Naomi 6-3, 6-4 in the third round of the 2020 Australian Open.

# Smith, Finch on road to recovery for ICC T20 World Cup

Sydney | Agencies

Top Australian batsmen Steve Smith and Aaron Finch could be seen in action in the ICC T20 World Cup to be held in the UAE and Oman in October-November after showing quick recovery from the injuries they suffered earlier this year.

While Smith, who is recovering from an elbow injury suffered earlier this year during the IPL, has started batting in the nets at the New South Wales training ground, Finch, the Australian limited-overs captain, who is currently recovering from a knee surgery, is also optimistic about his chances of playing in the ICC T20 World Cup.

Smith, who had to miss the recent West Indies and Bangladesh tours due to a left elbow injury, had earlier said that he would like to prioritise



the Ashes over the T20 World Cup if he was forced into choosing. But, now it seems he might want to play in the T20 World Cup following reports that he is already spending time on the wicket at NSW.

"It (rehab) seems to be going really

well (for Smith). I know that he's been building up his batting time over the last couple of weeks -- I know that would have been difficult to have a time limit on his net times," Finch told cricket.com.au on Wednesday.

"I'm confident of that (being fit for the World Cup). It will be come down to pretty minimal match practice which I think being older and being around for quite a while plays into my hands a bit, having (previously recovered from) some injuries where you don't have a lot of lead time into a series.

"I think that will help me. The surgery went as well as it could have and I'm walking around with no pain, which is the most important thing at this stage."

Australia is expected to name their World Cup squad later this week.

# AFGHAN TRIO SET TO FEATURE IN CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2021

Basseterre: Three players from Afghanistan have been named in the rejigged squads for the upcoming Caribbean Premier League starting from August 26. Leg-spinner Qais Ahmad will play for Jamaica Tallawahs' while pacer Naveen-ul-Haq and left-arm wrist-spinner Waqar Salamkheil will turn out for Guyana Amazon Warriors.

Ibrahim Zadran and Shafiqullah Ghafari, who were named by the Tallawahs and Barbados Royals respectively in May, are not a part of the rejigged squads. Rashid Khan, Mohammad Nabi and Mujeeb Ur Rahman were not named in the initial list in May. The spin trio are expected to play in the three-match ODI series against Pakistan in Sri Lanka in September. Naveen was playing for Leicestershire in the T20 Blast in England. He was the leading wicket-taker in the competition with 26 wickets in 14 matches.

There were doubts on the participation of the cricketers from Afghanistan in franchise leagues. The country is in the middle of a major crisis with the Taliban taking over the country. This happened after USA President Joe Biden announced the withdrawal of troops from the country.

The entire CPL will take place in the Warner Park Stadium from August 26 to September 15. The tournament will allow fans to attend matches in 50% capacity of the venue with 8000 seats. Fans can enter stadium after showing proof of vaccination.

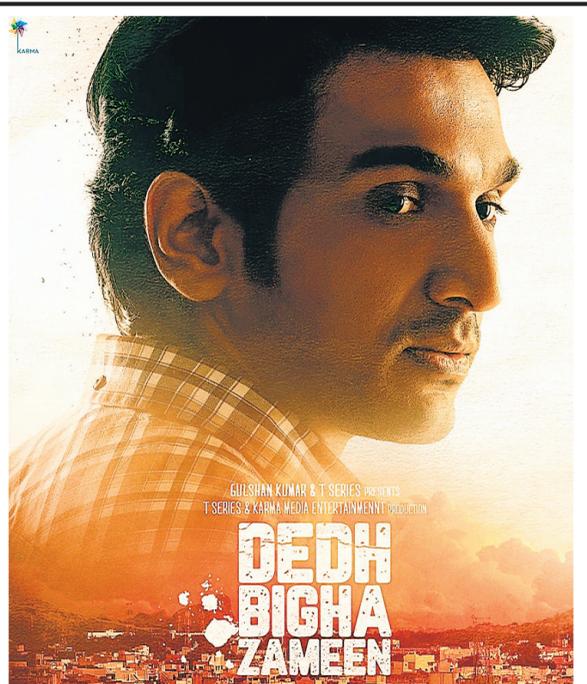
## 'Could have framed it better'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ananya Panday's opinions on nepotism and her 'struggling days' became the talk of the town after a roundtable interview with Rajeev Masand, where she equated struggle to not being part of Koffee With Karan. The actress on the latest episode of Arbaaz Khan's show, Pinch, expressed that 'She could have framed it better'. Going by the format of the show, Arbaaz reads out hurtful tweets to the celebrities and they respond to the haters. Ananya is no stranger to trolling and hate, and has faced attacks for her takes on nepotism, Instagram photos and captions, and other opinions.

Speaking about trolling has now become an inevitable package with social media, Ananya said, "There's no solution to the hate. If someone is filled with so much hate and poison, the response should be love. If you also respond with love, there will be more hate in the world." She said, "Everyone has opinions, some are funny, if they aren't too mean or something personal."

Ananya Panday on her 'struggling' backlash



## PRATIK GANDHI'S FIRST LOOK IN 'DEDH BIGHA ZAMEEN' UNVEILED

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Pratik Gandhi's first look in the upcoming film 'Dedh Bigha Zameen' was unveiled on Wednesday. The actor took to Instagram to share the poster of his look.

He wrote, "A story of a common man's struggle to fight for what is rightfully his. Resenting the first look poster of Dedh Bigha Zameen. Shoot commences today in Jhansi." The film marks singer Khushali Kumar's debut opposite Pratik Gandhi. Set in the small town of Uttar Pradesh, this family drama written and directed by Pulkit is the story of a dignified struggle of a common man to win what is his. A T-Series and Karma Media and Entertainment production, 'Dedh Bigha Zameen' is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Shaalish R Singh, and Hansal Mehta. Pratik Gandhi is known for his role in 'Scam 1992' directed by Hansal Mehta.



Naga Chaitanya Sai Pallavi's 'Love Story' gets release date

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Actors Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi's much awaited romantic film 'Love Story' will have a theatrical release on September 10. The film has been ready for release but was on hold due to the pandemic and lockdown. It was earlier scheduled to release in April this year. Chaitanya took to Instagram to make the announcement on Wednesday. Uploading a still from the film, he

captioned it: "This Vinayaka Chaitvi is extra special. #Lovestory releasing in theatres near you on Sep 10."

Sai Pallavi, too shared the news on her Instagram stories. Earlier, there were multiple speculations around the film going for an OTT release. However, the official announcement has put that to rest. Directed by Sekhar Kammula, the film also stars Devayani, Rao Ramesh, Posani Krishna Murali, Rajeev Kanakala and Easwari Rao in pivotal roles.



## Raqesh Bapat breaks down on 'Bigg Boss OTT'

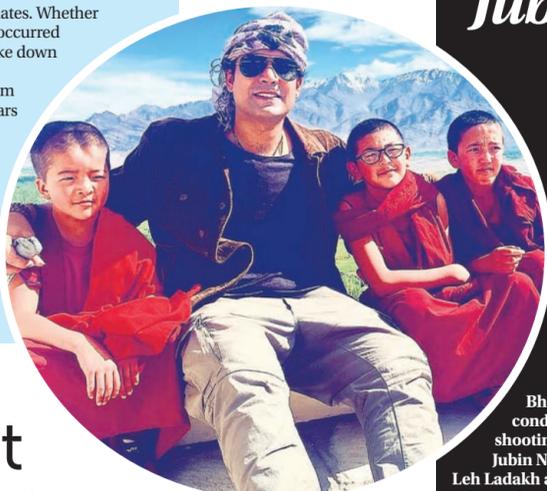
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The 'Bigg Boss OTT' house has witnessed all emotions of housemates. Whether it's bold, angry, depressing or laughter, well, one such situation occurred with the calm and composed contestant Raqesh Bapat who broke down as he was missing his father.

With Pratik Sehajpal passing personal comments and instigating him for a couple of days, Raqesh couldn't hold back and broke down in tears and said "My father wouldn't be happy to see me like this!" Looks like Raqesh being called "spineless" by Karan Johar and some of the housemates is triggering him!

His friends in the 'Bigg Boss OTT' house Shamita Shetty, Ridhima Pandit and Karan Nath immediately consoled him and helped him calm down. "I am an Army personnel's son, and my father would always tell me to fight for what's right. He wouldn't be happy to see me fighting over small matters, he would always say, go and fight for the country," said Raqesh.

Later, Pratik realised his mistake and apologised to Raqesh for passing comments on him.



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Konkona Sen Sharma and Mohit Raina-starrer 'Mumbai Diaries 26/11' is all set to release on September 9 on Amazon Prime. Created by Nikkhil Advani and produced by Emmay Entertainment, 'Mumbai Diaries 26/11' is a fictional drama that pays tribute to the frontline workers set against the backdrop of the 26/11 terror attacks. The other actors in pivotal roles are Tina Desai, Shreya Dhanwanthary, Satyajeet Dubey, Natasha Bharadwaj, Mrunmayee Deshpande, and Prakash Belawadi. 'Mumbai Diaries 26/11' is a fictional edge-of-the-seat medical drama set against the backdrop of the unforgettable night that also united the city. The series is an account of events that unfold in the Emergency Room of a government hospital while exploring the challenges faced by the medical staff at the hospital as well as other first responders across the city of Mumbai in dealing with a crisis of immense magnitude.



## Jubin Nautiyal: Shooting in Ladakh is always special

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As Jubin Nautiyal and Khushali Kumar finished shooting their upcoming music video 'Khushi Jab Bhi Teri' within 72 hours under harsh weather conditions in Ladakh, the singer opens up on his shooting experience.

Jubin Nautiyal said, "It's always special shooting in Leh Ladakh and I've been there often. The locals informed us that this was the hardest time in the year owing to the extremely cold weather but thankfully we managed to film there and the video is looking amazing."

Khushali added, "Leh Ladakh is as beautiful and breathtaking as it is challenging. There were times we couldn't breathe properly and because of our looks in the video we couldn't protect ourselves from the cold with layers of clothes. But it was completely worth all the effort because the music video and the locations in it look incredible."

The song is written by A M Turaz and composed by Rochak Kohli.

'Khushi Jab Bhi Teri' is releasing on August 23 on the YouTube channel of T-Series.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Janhvi Kapoor